

# Give Me Liberty Study Guide

by Carol Clark

For the novel by  
L.M. Elliott



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## **Synopsis**

Life is difficult for an indentured servant, especially when you're only 13 years old and your mother has died on the way to seeking a new life in the American colonies. Young Nathaniel Dunn is sold away from his grieving father to an abusive owner. Rescued by a kind schoolmaster, Basil Wilkinson, Nathaniel's services are traded out to a Williamsburg, Virginia, carriage maker. With his new apprenticeship and Basil to teach him, Nathaniel is introduced to a new world of music, politics, and philosophy.

When the fiery speeches of Patrick Henry stir the colonists to revolution, Nathaniel desires to take up arms to fight for freedom, but learns he is too young. How can he enlist? What role can a young boy take in forging a new nation?

Nathaniel struggles with the question of how a young nation can seek its own liberty but still keep men and women in bondage through slavery and indenture. When Governor Dunmore promises freedom to any slaves who agree to defend England, Nathaniel finds himself on opposite sides of the war from his best friend. What happens when they meet in battle? What hope do either of them have in finding liberty?

## Part Five: Chapters 17–19

### Vocabulary:

Synonyms are words that mean the same or a similar thing. *Antonyms* are words of opposite meaning. For example: *pretty*, *lovely*, and *beautiful* mean almost the same thing, so are synonyms. *Ugly*, *ordinary*, and *plain* mean the opposite of pretty, so they are antonyms. Each group of words below contains synonyms of a word in the Word Bank, as well as one antonym. Underline the antonym in each grouping and add the word from the Word Bank that is a synonym to the other words..

*Word Bank*

contempt	debtors	interrogated	balm
phantoms	stammered	steel	withering

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_

fortify  
harden  
soften  
brace

owes  
creditors  
borrowers  
mortgagees

restoring  
weakening  
deteriorating  
eroding

4. \_\_\_\_\_ 5. \_\_\_\_\_ 6. \_\_\_\_\_

examined  
questioned  
answered  
scrutinized

disdain  
scorn  
despising  
approval

apparitions  
specters  
realities  
illusions

7. \_\_\_\_\_ 8. \_\_\_\_\_

stuttered  
hesitated  
chattered  
faltered

medication  
salve  
poison  
ointment

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### Questions:

1. Why is Mrs. Maguire hesitant about giving Nathaniel a coin for the advertisement?
2. How does Ben apply the political cartoon of the divided snake to their situation in Edan's carriage shop?
3. How do Ben's father's actions and political beliefs influence Ben?
4. Why has Moses run away? How does Nathaniel's understanding of Moses' desire for freedom change his own attitude toward his indentureship? How does he demonstrate this change?

### Thinking About the Story:

5. An author uses *anthropomorphism* when he or she applies a human quality or human action to an inanimate object or an idea. For example, in the book of Proverbs we read, "Righteousness guards the man of integrity, but wickedness overthrows the winner." Here the qualities of righteousness and wickedness are given the human actions of guarding and overthrowing.

Underline the anthropomorphism in the following passage:

"I had hoped that John would stay to join in our fight. But he chose to run now to secure his own freedom instead. That's all right. Liberty called to him in a different voice than it does me."

What do you think Ben means by his statement?

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6. An *idiom* is an expression that does not literally mean what it says, but has an understood meaning. For example, if you say you are *hanging around* the park, we know that you aren't literally *hanging*, nor are you literally *around* the entire park.

In explaining the typesetting to Nathaniel, Pinkney says, "I really have to mind my *ps* and *qs*. . . ." What does Pinkney mean by this expression? What does the idiom "mind my *ps* and *qs*" mean today?

7. Read the following allusions and answer the accompanying questions:

- a. "As Nathaniel is leaving Moses, the slave whispers in his ear, 'The Lord will show us the way to the promised land. I'm going to follow. You do, too.'"

Read Genesis 12:1–7 and Genesis 15:18–19. To what is Moses alluding when he whispers to Nathaniel? What do you think Moses literally means? What is he asking of Nathaniel?

- b. "Like Gulliver, Nathaniel had stepped onto a foreign land with no familiar compass to guide him."

Look up the novel *Gulliver's Travels*, by Jonathan Swift, and write a one- to two-sentence summary. How does the analogy explain how Nathaniel feels?

8. Reread the song that opens Part Five of *Give Me Liberty*. Examine especially the couplets (two lines of poetry) which close each stanza of the song. How does the focus of slavery and freedom progress through the stanzas? How has Moses's idea of freedom changed from the beginning of the story to now?

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**Dig Deeper:**

9. Explain the quandary Nathaniel faces in finding John's partially destroyed note in the fireplace. What are his own risks in this situation? What helps Nathaniel decide how to deal with the note?

10. It can be very hard to make decisions such as Nathaniel faced with John and the note. Read the verses in the right column. Match each reference with the main idea of the selection by writing the number of the reference in the appropriate blank.

- |   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| a. _____ Choose to do right. Don't let sin rule you.      | 1. Isaiah 1:17           |
| b. _____ Think about what is true, right, pure and godly. | 2. 1 Corinthians 2:11–12 |
| c. _____ Rely on the Holy Spirit for guidance.            | 3. Genesis 4:7           |
| d. _____ Consider your motives; honor God in your plans.  | 4. Philippians 4:8–9     |
| e. _____ Seek justice and help the oppressed.             | 5. Proverbs 16:2–3       |

Summarize what these verses teach about making a difficult decision.

11. Several times in these chapters, but particularly when John runs away, Nathaniel is fearful of being punished by Edan Maguire. Why does he question why he should stand up for anyone else? What does he remember about his mother and what she taught him?

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and gives him some wise and motherly advice, but she is also now aware that he has helped a slave escape, an action that could send him to the gallows.

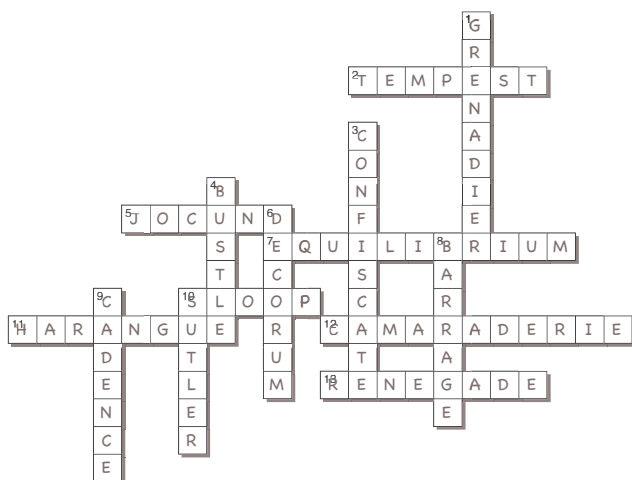
14. a. 2; b. 5; c. 6; d. 3; e. 1; f. 4. Answers concerning one of the characters will vary, but should be similar to the following examples: Mrs. Maguire exemplifies Romans 12:14–18. She tries to keep harmony and peace in her household as much as she can, helping Edam even though he can be thoughtless and mean, and she encourages Nathaniel to put past troubles behind him and do what is right. —or— Basil is a good example of Romans 12:9–10. He is very angry at the injustice of the British setting a trap that injures the boys, hating evil, and he is devoted to helping and doing right by Nathaniel. Students may have other characters and other scriptures, accept reasonable answers similar to the examples given.

15. The verses teach that if we see a need and can help, then we must do so. Our actions must support our words. If we know good we should do, it is sinful to avoid it. Our words must be true, clear, and final; a “yes” is “yes,” a “no” is “no.” Personal answers will vary.

### Parts Eight, Nine, and Ten: Chapters 31–39

#### Vocabulary:

1. foot soldier; 2. bombardment of artillery; 3. drumbeat; 4. violent storm; 5. traitor; 6. sailing vessel; 7. to seize, take; 8. balance; 9. cheerful; 10. quick, energetic motion; 11. traveling army merchant; 12. fellowship; 13. appropriate behavior; 14. verbal attack.



#### Questions:

- Dunmore has well-trained and well-equipped British troops on his side. He is also building a powerful fleet by confiscating merchant ships and harassing fishing vessels. He begins using escaped slaves and indentured servants as navigators and guides in the marshes and streams of the Tidewater by proclaiming he will grant freedom to any slaves or indentured servants belonging to the “rebels,” if they join His Majesty’s troops.
- Basil lends Ben his treasured copy of Locke’s *Two Treatises of Government*. He advises Ben to learn some philosophy to support his enthusiasm, so he can eventually help to devise a new framework of government following the war.
- Hardships: The soldiers cook their food over an open fire, which often scorches the food. Their meager provisions consist of raw meat, flour, dried beans, and vinegar. There are fewer provisions as the war goes on, so soldiers often exist on flour-and-water biscuits. When they move around, some men carry the iron cooking kettles, which are heavy and bang their legs as they march. Most camps are infested with lice. Soldiers have to do chores such as fatigue duty, where they gather firewood, clean the camp, and dig “necessaries” (holes in the ground instead of outhouses), and they learn the different fife calls. The tents are cold and crowded, and often the men have no coverings underneath them as they sleep, so they lie in the mud. Pleasurable experiences include the camaraderie and musical experiences, in which the men listen to Basil and Nathaniel playing and join in singing and making up words to the songs to poke fun at the British. There is often a sense of patriotic excitement about the camp.