

April Morning Study Guide

April Morning

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Plot Summary

“April Morning” is a young adult historical novel by Howard Fast occurring in the very early days of the American Revolution April of 1775. Adam Cooper is a 15-year-old resident of Lexington, Massachusetts, where he lives with his father, mother, grandmother, and younger brother, Levi. The residents of Massachusetts are angry against British rule, for the British are taking away the rights of the colonists one by one. Each town across the colony has drawn up a charter of rights, extolling the idea that rights come from God, and not from King George III. Adam himself has a difficult relationship with his father, who has high expectations of Adam that Adam never seems to fulfill.

The locals in Lexington determine how best to handle the situation should violence break out. It is agreed that a militia should continue to be kept in the event that the British become violent, but few suspect that the British will turn against their own colonial subjects. War seems a dream for most of the residents of Lexington. Among them are Adam and Ruth Simmons, a girl of fifteen who is in love with Adam. She longs to marry him and begin a family with him, and worries about the penchant for war with Great Britain.

When word comes that the British have moved out of Boston, Adam, his father, and the town’s militia assembles in the hopes that the British will leave them alone and pass on to their goal, Concord. Adam and his father make peace with one another as they head out to assemble. However, the British advance guard that arrives does not march past the militia.

Instead, they form battle lines and attack the militia, scattering them and moving on to Concord. Adam’s father is killed, and Adam meets up with other locals – men pouring in from every direction – to fight the British. Adam becomes part of a running battle between Concord and Boston, battling the British while women and children bring the colonials water, food, and other supplies. The British are eventually driven back into Boston, where thousands more militiamen converge to besiege the city.

At home later, Ruth is thrilled that Adam is still alive, and vows that she will wait for Adam in order to marry him, imagining that Adam will go off to fight again soon. Adam himself is torn about going off to fight, or remaining in Lexington. Ruth’s father encourages Adam to consider not leaving right away, insisting that his family will need him in the coming days now that his father is gone. Adam agrees. He then helps to tend to his family, and determines that, though he will eventually go off to fight, it will not be the next day. He reminds his grandmother that although she has lost her son, she still has Adam in her life. Nevertheless, she worries about Adam knowing that he will not stay out of the war forever. As he goes to sleep that night, Adam thanks God the day is over.



The Afternoon – The Evening

Summary

The Afternoon – It is April 18, 1775. 15-year-old Adam Cooper and his father, Moses, have finished a long day's work in the fields near the village of Lexington, but before Adam can return home, his father instructs him to fetch water for his mother, Sarah, reminding him sternly that wasted steps are like wasted thoughts – empty and ignorant. Adam dislikes how strict his father is. Adam's younger brother, Levi, appears at the well and takes a drink of water with Adam. Adam's mother is kinder, but just as strict, believing Adam wastes too much time, and should be studying the Bible.

Adam goes upstairs to see Granny, and the two discuss God and religion. Adam is something of an agnostic, but Granny passionately believes in God. Adam wonders how a rich, mean person like Isaiah Peterkin, a deacon, can get away with anything even though he professes the faith. Granny says it is not for Adam to judge others. She reminds Adam that Coopers are free, industrious, and good people. At dinner, Moses reminds Adam that they are simple farmers and People of the Book who get along well.

Granny interrupts Moses's coming lecture, and is then in turn interrupted by Joseph Simmons, a neighbor and very distant cousin, who joins them for dinner. Simmons is a member of the Church Committee, which is meeting that night to discuss a statement of the rights of man. Simmons reads his draft, which maintains that human rights come from God. Adam and Joseph then leave for the Committee. Adam wants to go, but Moses reminds him he is not old enough. Adam is angry at his father, but Granny explains that no men are perfect, and Moses is one to find fault with everything. Adam then heads out to the meeting.

The Evening – At the Committee meeting, accounts are taken of funds and weapons in the village. The various members discuss drilling a militia, but given it is planting season, the matter is put off for two weeks. The Committee discusses whether or not to take down minutes. Most oppose this, believing it would be like a noose around their necks. Moses Cooper contends that they are not cowards, and minutes should be kept.

Adam goes to see Ruth Simmons. They walk, hold hands, and kiss. Adam is considering taking on a job on one of his Uncle Ishmael's ships, but Ruth opposes this idea completely.

Back at home, Levi and Adam talk about Adam's hunting musket. Levi wants a real gun, to kill British soldiers. Granny and Sarah are upset by this, and send the boys to bed.

Later, when Moses gets home, Sarah and Granny explain that Adam thinks Moses hates him. Moses says nothing could be further from the truth. Moses is horrified that Adam thinks this, and says he must find a way to get Adam to see otherwise.



Analysis

“April Morning” is a young adult historical novel by Howard Fast occurring in the very early days of the American Revolution. When the novel begins, 15-year-old Adam’s life is not uncommon among many other American continentals. His family is very ordinary, living in a small, rural village (Lexington, Massachusetts) and surviving as farmers. Interestingly enough, Adam’s relationship with his father, Moses, resembles the paternal relationship between Great Britain and the American colonies. Adam’s father is strict and has high expectations of his son, and does not hesitate to continue to correct Adam to keep him on the right path. Adam misconstrues this as hatred – and Moses vows to find a way to make his son truly understand that he is loved. Great Britain, meanwhile, is likewise stern and strict with its American colonies, enforcing its rule with the presence of British troops in Boston. But whereas Moses seeks to make sure his son knows he is loved, King George III and much of British Parliament have no such plans for reconciliation with the Americans. The very fact of an armed presence in Boston is enough to demonstrate that it will be London’s way, or no way. Here, the themes of family and war can be seen clearly.

Like all other American colonials at the time, the Cooper family is deeply religious, specifically, deeply Christian. Their faith informs their lives, and underscores their desire to be productive people who have been able to afford things like books. Indeed, Adam’s father greatly values a mix of faith and reason in his arguments – which is also reflected in the statement of rights the Committee drafts, declaring that rights come from God, not from other men. Interestingly to modern Americans, historically, local churches were hotbeds not only of religious worship, charity, and faith-based initiatives, but political activity as well – a blending of church and state. This is certainly the truth of things in Lexington.

Apart from the theme of religion, the theme of war also hovers at the periphery of events transpiring in the novel. The presence of British troops in Boston is not an indication of peace. War is something unknown to nearly everyone, especially to the children and young men of Lexington. Levi, for example, boasts about wanting to kill British soldiers – though he has absolutely no idea what war is truly like.

This also feeds into the theme of change. Change is coming, and like war, change is merely peripheral at this point in time. Change can be seen most readily in Adam’s striving to become recognized as a man, and not a child – but also in the fact that the American colonists feel the need to reassert their rights in the British Empire, when just a generation before, they were comfortable in their place as British subjects.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Adam feel his father hates him? Why does Moses express surprise that his son believes this?



Discussion Question 2

Explain the similarities between Adam and his father, and Great Britain and the American colonies. How do the responses of Moses, and of Great Britain, differ? Why?

Discussion Question 3

In what ways does the Christian faith of the Coopers influence their daily lives? In what ways does Christianity influence the community?

Vocabulary

lamentations, abundant, heathen, pretense, yeoman, manifesto, inordinately, dignified, doggerel, cantankerous, enamored, conciliative, presumptuous, egalitarians, belligerent, disabuse



The Night - The Morning

Summary

The Night – Adam and Levi are awakened very late by the sound of horse hoof beats. Their parents join them at the window, followed by Granny. Moses dresses and heads over to the village common. Adam follows. There, a rider warns that British troops, 1,000-2,000 of them, have crossed the river from Boston, and are proceeding up Menotomy Road, toward Concord. The rider then continues on to Concord to shout the warning.

Jonas Parker calls for the militia to be mustered at once. Moses contends a Committee meeting should be called to decide how to proceed. The Reverend believes that facts should be checked before anyone does anything else. Sam Hodley believes the British have not left Boston. The local militia adds up to 79 men, none of whom have ever shot another man in anger or in battle. The British are among the very best troops in the world. Moses contends that it doesn't matter how many British troops are coming up the road, but that the citizens of the village defend their freedom and their homes. This wins over the crowd. The militia is called, and will assemble on the common at four in the morning.

With the reluctant permission of Moses, Adam joins, and then seeks out Ruth. Ruth is frightened of what is coming, thinking it is more like a dream than reality, and she is worried Adam could be killed. They kiss, and Adam walks her home. Back at his own home, Adam's mother is incensed that Adam is going to be in the militia, but Moses says that sometimes, there is no time between childhood and manhood. Moses reminds Adam, however, to be respectful with Ruth, and to only approach her with good intentions. They then prepare their guns and say their goodbyes. Adam cries, but Granny wipes away his tears.

The Morning – It is now Wednesday morning, April 19, 1775. As Moses and Adam leave their front gate, he half-hugs his son, the closest affection ever given to Adam by Moses. They then assemble on the common with the militia, about 70 in all. Word comes that British troops are indeed approaching, and may number close to 1,000. Moses believes that when the British arrive, they should attempt to talk things out first. The Reverend explains that Sam Adams and John Hancock came through earlier. The men know they have gathered out of necessity, not intention to start a war. They are there merely to defend if needed, not provoke a conflict.

The militia assembles across the common, with men in front, facing east. They sing a hymn. As dawn breaks, the British arrive. They form across the common, led by Major Pitcairn. The Reverend and Moses go to speak to Pitcairn. Pitcairn orders them to disperse. Pitcairn kicks the Reverend, and orders his men to fire. Moses is shot in the chest, and the militia breaks. The British swarm after them. Adam runs and hides in the Harrington Smokehouse, throwing up in the process. He knows his father is dead, as



are many of his neighbors and friends. Levi later comes looking for Adam, and they hug. The bodies of the dead and wounded have been collected. Adam will remain hiding in the smokehouse until it is safe to come out.

Analysis

Overnight, rumors of war manifest themselves in the form of an unidentified rider – but certainly one of the men riding with Paul Revere’s group – who reveals that perhaps as many as 2,000 British infantrymen have moved out from Boston, with a target of Concord. Through the rest of the night, and into the early morning, the Lexington militiamen assemble, prepared to attempt to talk through things with the British, and to defend themselves if all else should fail. Here, the themes of family, war, and change all intersect. Many of the individuals assembled on Lexington Common are fathers and brothers, united in loyalty not only to their homes and their town, but to each other as family. The peace of the past has gone, changed into coming war. None of these men have ever shot another man, or even been in a war themselves – yet war arrives, essentially on their doorsteps. British troops stream into town – some of the most elite troops on the face of the Earth, and glue of the British Empire. A family argument between the parent country and the colony has now come to this. Yet, whereas Moses more or less hugs his son, convincing Adam that he is truly loved, and mending the disharmony between father and son, the British show no such concerns for the men arrayed before them. Rather, the British open fire – and ignite a war.

The changes that have come are unbelievable. Ruth likens the change of things to like being in a dream rather than living in real life. For many of the villagers, that British troops should be marching in to take away their rights, rather than protecting them as in the past, is something unimaginable. Indeed, some, like Sam Hodley, cannot even accept that British troops have marched out of Boston at all. As the British troops pour into town, and spread out across the common in formation, everything still seems strangely surreal. Changes do not stop with the arrival of the British, but their unprovoked firing on the American colonials leads to a number of dead and wounded – including Moses himself. The loss of Adam’s father is a devastating change for Adam, and will serve to be devastating for the family as well. The encounter at Lexington – less a battle and more butchery on the part of the British – serves as a baptism of fire for Adam, who sees death and destruction firsthand for the first time. Indeed, this is a firsthand, first-time experience of war for all of the men and boys gathered on Lexington common, and it demonstrates that things, one way or another, have changed, and will never be the same again.

Discussion Question 1

Why does so much of the morning of April 19, 1775 seem like a dream to the men and women of Lexington village? Would you feel the same way if you were in their place? Why or why not?



Discussion Question 2

How does Moses repair his relationship with his son moments before heading off to the common green in Lexington? What is the reaction of Adam to this action? How does this differ from the arrival of the British in Lexington?

Discussion Question 3

How does Adam react to the death of his father? Do you believe that, if Moses had not shown his son any affection earlier in the morning, that Adam's reaction to his death would have been any different? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

impertinent, materialist, hallooing, catarrh, disdain, provokingly, mollified, belligerence, quarreled



The Forenoon - The Midday

Summary

The Forenoon – The British troops search houses and outbuildings for rebels. Just as they are about to find Adam, they are recalled to the common. As Adam leaves, he is nearly caught by two redcoats on their way to the common, but runs into a meadow. There, he meets Solomon Chandler, from Lincoln Town, armed for battle. He tells Adam it is okay to cry over the death of his father, and Adam does indeed cry. Adam explains everything that has happened. Solomon explains that men are rallying to defend the North Bridge and Concord. Adam and Solomon run into a group of men they know, among them being Adam's cousin Dover, and Adam recounts what has happened at Lexington. The group picks up more men along the way. They run into survivors of Lexington, including Simmons and the Reverend. By then, they are 21 in number.

The Midday – Adam reconsiders God and how different people, from Boston to the villages to the farms, approach Him differently. Gunfire comes from the direction of Concord, and word comes that the British have indeed arrived in the village. Nearly 100 men have now gathered, and they intend to attack the British as they move from Concord back to Lexington, down the road in the woods. As the British march through the woods, the American rebels open fire. The British troops return fire, and many must break column to charge into the woods. Adam receives a small wound where a British bullet nicks him. The militia break into small groups of twos and threes, and take up new positions down the road. Men from all over are flocking to the area, and are fed and given water by women and children along the way. It is hoped the British can be delayed long enough for more American militia to arrive to ultimately trap the British in Boston.

Analysis

Everything has completely changed for Adam Cooper as the novel moves from the morning into the forenoon and midday of April 19, 1775. The peace is gone, replaced by war. War becomes the singular, dominant theme at this moment. British troops have not stopped at Lexington, but have gone on to Concord and the North Bridge, where they are finally stopped by American rebels who are now flocking to the area. No village is isolated anymore. The British attacks on Lexington, Concord, and North Bridge are seen as an attack on all of New England, and beyond. As word spreads about the British atrocities, including burning houses and looting possessions, American rebels begin streaming in from every single direction. The day's fighting is just beginning as the rebel militia forms up along the road back to Boston, firing at the British every step of the way.

The reader should note two important pieces of military history, here. First, the British, marching in columns down a road surrounded often by woods, are unable to achieve



battle formations to fight the rebel militia as they did in Lexington and Concord. Secondly, the British have a difficult time facing down the American rebels at all, for the militia does not attempt to confront the British column in a pitched battle, preferring tactics of small hit-and-run fighting. It is a tactic developed on the run. Likewise, the British are well-aware they are deep in enemy country, and cannot risk being cut off from Boston. As such, they do not have time to stop and fully engage the American rebels, but must essentially fight on the run. As the day draws on, their situation worsens, for they become increasingly outnumbered. By the end of the day, what has begun as a tragedy for the American rebels has become more akin to a military victory.

Meanwhile, Adam must deal with the loss of his father. War always has its dark side. On his way to the fighting along the road, he ends up crying – a natural and acceptable thing to do, according to Solomon. Adam comes to realize just how momentous what had happened that morning has become. It is a rallying cry, bringing together farmers and tradesmen from all over, from hamlets and towns and other villages, all to stamp out the British presence. It is something quite unlike anything else that has ever happened in most of their lifetimes (a handful of the older men can recall the French-and-Indian War some 20 years before, but these men are few and far between). However, the darkness of war has only just begun for Adam.

Discussion Question 1

How are the American rebels ultimately able to best the British column as it returns toward Lexington and Boston? Why are the British unable to handle the Americans?

Discussion Question 2

Solomon Chandler tells Adam that it is okay for him to cry over the death of his father. For a boy becoming a man, this may be seen as unmanly – but for Solomon, this is a very manly thing to do. Do you agree or disagree with this assertion? Can you blame Adam for crying? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

What is the ultimate goal of the American militia that pours in from across the countryside? Why have so many come from so far to fight the British?

Vocabulary

trifle, betrothal, imploring, elegant, iffish, innermost



The Afternoon

Summary

Joseph Simmons vows to Adam that the fighting will not end until the British pack up and go home. 150 or so men have gathered, and see smoke rising from Lexington, where three buildings burn. Word comes that 1,500 British troops are organizing in Lexington to return to Boston. However, as many as 5,000 American militiamen are also converging on Boston to trap the British there.

With the departure of the British from Lexington, Adam and the others return home. Sarah, Granny, and Levi are thrilled to see Adam home. Ruth is likewise relieved that her father, and Adam, are alive and safe. Adam goes in to see his father's body, and then closes the door behind him on the way out. Sarah does her best to hold herself together. She reminds her sons not to gloat on the death of other men, for no matter the cause, theirs is still a Christian household.

Adam tells Levi about his experiences. Levi admits he would have also run. Levi then explains the British have looted Lexington, taking everything from silver to horses. Burials are arranged for the local dead, and the bodies are brought to lay in wake in the church. Joseph Simmons observes that a real war has begun.

Analysis

The theme of war remains strong in the afternoon chapter. By now, the Massachusetts countryside is covered with American militiamen, pouring out of their farms and towns to fight the British. The British are met in Lexington by a relief column, and then both move out to return to Boston – with the rebel militia continuing to pressure them every step of the way. Their atrocities continue, however, as three buildings in Lexington are burned before the British leave. The theme of change is also incredibly strong, as the village to which Adam returns is greatly changed. There are a number of dead and wounded, buildings have been lost, and possessions have been stolen. War has literally visited their homes. The theme of family can also once again be clearly glimpsed in this section of the novel, as Granny, Sarah, and Levi are thrilled to have Adam home. It is a bittersweet reunion, however, for Moses's body has been laid out upstairs in the house in accord with the Christian sensibilities of the household. Indeed, Adam's mother forbids not only talk of war, but gloating over the deaths of British soldiers, saying very clearly that theirs is still a Christian household – one of the very few things unchanged by the British (the others being the love between the surviving family members, and the sense of community across Massachusetts colony).



Discussion Question 1

Compare and contrast Lexington in the afternoon of April 18, and Lexington the following day. What has changed? What has remained the same? Why?

Discussion Question 2

Despite the atrocities the British have committed, Adam's mother will not allow any gloating or enjoyment of their deaths. Why? Do you agree or disagree with her position? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

The evening before the battles of Lexington, Concord, and North Bridge, Levi brags that he would love to fight and kill the British. How is Levi changed after the battles? Why?

Vocabulary

gibberish, vestige, responsibility, charity, modesty, flattery



The Evening

Summary

Adam's home is full of neighbors tending to the family and bringing food after the death of Moses. Ruth stays close to Adam throughout. Adam knows his childhood is now very much over. Adam agrees to deliver some candles to the church, so that his father's body will not have to lie in darkness. Ruth kisses him on his way, and tells him she loves him – though neither one of them are ready just yet for marriage.

The Reverend gladly accepts the candles to help keep the church lighted all night. The Reverend reminds Adam that his mother, and his family, need him desperately right now, and they are his first duty – even though other men are headed to Boston. Ruth is relieved that, for the time being, Adam will not go to Boston. They kiss, and she tells him she loves him, again.

At home, Adam sits up with Granny. She is heartbroken to have lost her son, but Adam reminds her that she still has him, and Levi. Granny knows that sooner or later, Adam will head off to fight. Adam then goes and gets in bed. He prays as he goes to sleep, thanking God the day is over.

Analysis

Adam's family, despite the losses it has suffered, rallies together, and grows even closer. Adam is still heartbroken over the death of his father, but this is very normal, and understandable. Here, the theme of family is incredibly important as Adam comforts Granny with the idea that, while Moses is gone, Adam and Levi remain to love her. The Reverend is likewise quick to point out that Adam should reconsider traveling to Boston with the 5,000 American militiamen organizing there to trap the British, because his family needs him now more than ever. Granny knows that sooner or later, Adam will leave to go to war, but for the time being, he is home.

Interestingly, when the novel begins, and Adam seems to have everything going for him in life, he is skeptical of God. By that night, after seeing both the horrors of war, and the blessings of home and community, any doubts he has about God are put to rest. As Adam himself goes to bed, he prays to God, and thanks God that the day is finally over.

Discussion Question 1

Why does the Reverend argue that Adam should not go to Boston? What does Adam decide to do? Why?



Discussion Question 2

If you were in Adam's situation, would you go to Boston to besiege the British? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Adam take so much time to comfort Granny about both his father, and himself?

Vocabulary

substantial, consolation, triumphant, tragedy, mobilization



Characters

Adam Cooper

Adam Cooper is the main character of the novel “April Morning” by Howard Fast. At 15 years old, Adam Cooper is a resident of Lexington, Massachusetts, is the son of Moses and Sarah Cooper, is the grandson of Granny, and is the older brother of Levi Cooper. He is also the love interest of Ruth Simmons.

Adam is constantly at odds with his father, believing his father hates him, for Moses has never uttered a kind word to Adam. Adam is constantly seeking to be a man, but the opportunity to demonstrate his manhood has never presented itself until British troops move out from Boston to seize control of weapons and munitions in Concord. To do so, they must travel through Lexington. Adam decides to join the Lexington militia with his father, and the two make peace with each other as the British arrive in town. The British open fire on the militia, killing many, including Moses, and scattering the others, including Adam. Adam joins militia that is converging on the area from all over the countryside, and joins the battle against the British as the British retreat from Concord to Boston.

Returning home, Adam must truly confront the death of his father, and the impact it has had on his family. Rather than going off to war immediately, Adam decides to remain home for the time being to care for his grieving family.

Moses Cooper

Moses Cooper is the father of Adam Cooper and Levi Cooper, the husband of Sarah Cooper, and the son of Granny Cooper. Moses is a deeply Christian man who values a combination of faith and reason in life. He is stern, strict, hardworking man who deeply loves his children – but doesn’t quite know how to show it. Moses is killed while attempting to talk to the British as they arrive in Lexington.

Sarah Cooper

Sarah Cooper is the mother of Adam Cooper and Levi Cooper, is the wife of Moses Cooper, and is the daughter-in-law of Granny Cooper. Sarah is a devoutly Christian woman who is as kind as she is morally just. She encourages Moses to get closer to Adam, and does her best to help care for her family following the death of her husband, even though she is devastated by what has happened.



Levi Cooper

Levi Cooper is the younger brother of Adam Cooper, is the son of Moses and Sarah Cooper, and is the grandson of Granny Cooper. Levi dreams of going off to battle against the British army, but the attack at Lexington chastens him, and awakens him to the terrible cost of war. Levi admits that, had he been in the battle, he would have run.

Granny Cooper

Granny Cooper is the grandmother of Adam Cooper and Levi Cooper, the mother of Moses Cooper, and the mother-in-law of Sarah Cooper. Granny is deeply Christian and deeply patient, and is an integral and productive part of the family. She is deeply saddened by the loss of Moses, but is comforted to some degree by Adam's insistence that she still has him and Levi.

Ruth Simmons

Ruth Simmons is the 15-year-old daughter of Joseph Simmons, and is younger than Adam by three months. She is deeply in love with Adam, having been in love with him for years. She believes it is only a matter of time before she and Adam will get married. She is terrified by the approach of the British, and is terrified to think that Adam will one day march off to war. She is temporarily relieved, however, to hear that Adam will be remaining around, at least for a while.

Joseph Simmons

Joseph Simmons is the father of Ruth Simmons, and a very distantly-related non-blood cousin to the Coopers. Joseph is a large, strong man who is deeply Christian, fiercely patriotic, and utterly kind. He very much approves of the relationship between Ruth and Adam, and becomes something of a father-figure to Adam following the death of Moses. Joseph ominously says that a real war has begun, and it will not end until the British go home.

Solomon Chandler

Solomon Chandler is an older resident of Lincoln Town, near Lexington and Concord. He, like many other men and boys in the area, have responded to arms against the British presence out of Boston. It is Solomon who first comes across Adam following the attack at Lexington, and it is Solomon who tells Adam he is allowed to grieve for the death of Moses.



The Reverend

The Reverend is the local pastor of the Lexington church meetinghouse. Deeply Christian, incredibly wise, and unfailingly kind, the Reverend is the spiritual guide and moral conscience of the village of Lexington. He is greatly admired and respected, and is one of the people who decide to attempt to talk things about with the British. For this, the Reverend is kicked by Major Pitcairn, and knocked the ground. He survives the attack, and later counsels Adam against going off to join the militia at Boston.

Major Pitcairn

Major Pitcairn is the commander of the British detachment that organizes on Lexington Common. Pitcairn is cruel and ruthless, and shouts profanities at the local militia as he orders them to disperse. When the Reverend attempts to speak to him, Pitcairn kicks the Reverend to the ground, and then orders his troops to open fire on the militia.

Symbols and Symbolism

Rifles

Rifles are utilized by the local militia for self-defense and hunting, and by the British military for war. They are seen as a measure of man's independence and ability to defend his rights, and are seen as an instrument of war as well. Rifles are important commodities, as the British attack on Lexington leads to the outpouring of armed men and support against the British troops.

Message

A message is carried by a network of riders – among them Paul Revere – across the Massachusetts countryside when the British troops leave Boston for Concord. This message of warning is carried to Lexington by one such rider, and is heard by Adam, Moses, the Reverend, Joseph Simmons, and the other villagers in the early morning hours of the darkness.

Red sky

A red sky is seen by Levi in a dream the night before the battle. This is an omen of coming bloodshed and war, and portends the coming battle with the British.

Silver

Silver is a kind of metal used for cutlery, dishes, jewelry, and other household items. It is looted and stolen by the British in Concord and in Lexington as they retreat to Boston.

Horses

Horses are stolen by the British troops as they retreat from Boston. This is done for two reasons. First, it allows the British the ability to transport their wounded back to Boston. Second, it prevents the local residents from being able to plow and sow their fields with crops – a punishment for their act of rebellion against the King.

Regimental colors

Regimental colors are flags carried by the units of the British military. Each regiment carries at least a Union Jack flag – the colors of Great Britain – and a flag specific to that regiment. They are a symbol of pride to the regiments, and a demonstration of



power to opponents. They are clearly seen when the advance British units under Major Pitcairn array themselves across Lexington Common.

Red uniforms

Red uniforms are the trademark distinguishing characteristic of the British army. They are easily seen and identified, and symbolize British power and pride. British troops in the novel are often referred to as Redcoats, in reference to their uniforms.

Bayonets

Bayonets are a dagger-like blade affixed to the firing end of a rifle. They are used in charges and in hand-to-hand combat against enemy combatants. After Lexington, however, they are used to slaughter many of the local militia who attempt to flee, or who are too seriously injured to flee.

Water

Water is desperately needed throughout the battles on April 19, 1775, and demonstrates the part that women, girls, and children play throughout the day. These noncombatants scramble and work hard to provide passing militiamen with water so that they may go on to fight the British. It is a dangerous thing to do, for if the British were to catch them, they would be targeted for aiding the enemy.

Taper candles

Taper candles are slow, long-burning candles hand-made by the Cooper family for use in their home. A bundle of these candles are given to Adam by Sarah to light the church meetinghouse through the night so that the bodies of the dead – including Moses's body – will not have to lie in darkness. The Reverend humbly and gratefully accepts these candles to add to those already burning.

Settings

Lexington

Lexington is a rural farming village in Massachusetts, located not far from Boston, and is on the Menotomy Road to Concord. Lexington is a small, quaint town full of deeply Christian, hardworking people, who want better for their children than they had for themselves. The town is home to diverse political opinion as well, though the majority of it opposes the heavy-handedness of the British presence in Boston. Lexington is home to a common, park-like area (also referred to as a “green”), which serves as a meeting place for various purposes. Lexington is also home to a church meetinghouse, which is central to the town’s activities and people. Among those who live in Lexington are Adam Cooper and his family, Joseph Simmons and his family, the Reverend, and numerous others. The town, when assembled, boasts of a militia of some 70 men and boys to defend it. The town becomes the site of British atrocities, as the British fire, unprovoked, into the militia assembled there, killing many. The British later loot the houses of valuable possessions, and burn down three buildings.

Church Meetinghouse

The Lexington Church Meetinghouse is located in Lexington, Massachusetts, and is central to village activity and village life. It is where the Committee meets, which determines town policies and actions related to things like resistance against the British, and militia coordination. It is also where the Reverend gathers the people of town together to perform Christian worship services, and other Christian ceremonies, such as marriages. After the attack on Lexington, the bodies of the dead locals, including Moses Cooper, are laid out in wake. Candles are kept burning in the church overnight so the bodies do not have to lay in darkness.

Concord

Concord is a town along the Menotomy Road past Lexington, and is the objective of the British column that leaves Boston. They intend to seize weapons and supplies being stored there, but arrive too late. Far from their base in Boston, and pressed in on all sides by American rebels who are flocking to defeat them after word of the Lexington atrocities have spread, the British must retreat from Concord, back to Lexington, and back to Boston.

Menotomy Road

Menotomy Road is a long road that stretches from Boston, travels through Lexington, and passes onto Concord. It is a road the British troops use heading to and from

Concord. It is also along this road that the British column is constantly assaulted and harassed by local militia, making it a harrowing experience for the British troops.

Boston

Boston is the capital city of Massachusetts colony, is the hotbed of American revolutionary activity, and is the British base of operations in New England as such. It is from Boston that a British column of troops, the advance elements commanded by Major Pitcairn, heads to Concord to seize weapons and munitions being stored by opponents to the British Crown. A network of riders likewise fans out from Boston as the British depart, to warn the surrounding towns and countryside of the British advance on Concord.



Themes and Motifs

Change

Change is an important theme in the novel “April Morning” by Howard Fast. Change is essentially transition from one phase, place, or even stage of life, to the next. Many changes occur during the course of the novel, and all of them directly affect main character, Adam, who himself undergoes numerous changes (indeed, he comes of age) as a result.

When the novel begins, Massachusetts is at peace. Towns like Lexington and Kentucky are quiet and staid, and the people who live in the towns and villages and farms pray, work hard, and endeavor to give their children a better life than they had. For Adam, his biggest challenge is attempting to transition between boyhood and manhood, and getting his father to see that he is trying to do so. Adam’s relationship with his father is not good, for Moses is strict and has high expectations of Adam. At the same time, the relationship of the American colonies with their mother country, Great Britain, is not good – but like Adam’s relationship with his father, it struggles on. The night of April 18-19, 1775, changes everything.

The British pour out from Boston to seize weapons and munitions from Concord, along a route which will bring them directly through Lexington. The Lexington militia rallies, and Adam joins up. As they head off to form up, Moses essentially hugs his son, healing the rift that has grown between them. However, the rift that has grown between mother country and colony is not healed, as the British soldiers, unprovoked, open fire on the Lexington militia, killing many, and driving the others away. It is war. The peaceful Massachusetts countryside has become a battlefield in a war between the American rebellion and the greatest superpower on Earth. The dynamics of the world have changed as a result. The battle throws men who have never fired weapons at another in anger into the midst of war, and is a baptism of fire, and journey into manhood, for Adam.

Indeed, everything for Adam has changed. His home colony is now at war. His father is dead, and he is the man of the family. He must now balance his duties as a man to the colony, and his duties to his family at home – and strive for some sort of ground in between. Things will never be the way they were before, and after Adam views the body of his father in wake at home, he closes the door behind him – a symbolic act of shutting the door on the past, and looking to the future.

Family

Family is an important theme in the novel “April Morning” by Howard Fast. Family, thematically, involves love, compassion, loyalty, encouragement, and support of others who may or may not be blood-related, but who still function and behave in the way of



the traditional family unit. In “April Morning”, family means everything, and has tremendously important and positive influence on the plot, and on the character of Adam himself.

Adam, though unhappy with his father’s strictness, is glad to be a part of his family. They are close-knit, stable, and secure. Deeply Christian, they are loving people who have happily brought in Granny to care for her after the death of her husband. Granny, in turn, is grateful for their love and support, and actively participates in daily family activities. This sort of love and loyalty strongly impacts Adam, who recognizes just how important family, in general, is. This will be incredibly important later on when Adam becomes the man of the family, and decides not to go off to war immediately in order to take care of his family. Moses, too, recognizes the importance of family almost too late, and explains just how much he truly does love Adam, and the rift between father and son is healed not long before the death of Moses.

Adam is stunned by the death of his father. Though he did not always get along with Moses, he did indeed love Moses. Moses’s hard work ethic, as well as his faith and reason, have all rubbed off in Moses in small ways. For example, during the running battle with the British as they withdraw to Boston, Adam summons up hardworking courage again and again to go back into the fight with the British –a clear example of his father’s influence, and Adam’s own burgeoning manhood. He will bring this more mature experience of the world to bear in his decision about remaining with his family for the time being, rather than immediately going off to fight.

When the novel ends, Sarah and Granny are beside themselves with worry about the future, and beside themselves with sadness at the death of Moses. Adam gently tends to them both, understanding not only his loyalty for them, but his absolute love for them as well. He sees Sarah off to bed, and then sits up a while with Granny that night. Adam tells Granny that she still has him and Levi, even though Moses is gone. This comforts her to some degree, but she worries that sooner or later, Adam will head off to war. It is a sacrifice that many families are making.

Faith

Faith is an important theme in the novel “April Morning” by Howard Fast. Faith principally concerns Christianity in general, as it is by far the dominant religion in the American colonies at that time, and is the religion of the entire population of Lexington at the time.

In colonial America, faith was central to the daily lives and culture of people and their communities. The church meeting house is the center of the village, and all functions and events – even political activities – occur at the church. There, the Committee meets, which debates town policies and actions related to the militia in regards to potential British action. Here, reason and religion, church and state all blend together perfectly for the people in Lexington. Only Adam at first seems skeptical of all things religious, doubting the importance of Christianity, and the goodness of God.



At the Cooper household, with the exception of Adam who is going through doubts as many teenagers do, and with the exception of Levi, because he is too young to truly understand things, Christianity is essential for Moses, Sarah, and Granny. Moses sees his Christian faith as a blend of faith and reason, and a defining way to practice his life through the examples of the hard work of Christ. Likewise, Granny is devoutly Christian, attempting to sow faith in Adam, which doesn't take hold until Adam has his own real world experiences that bring him back to God. Sarah, likewise, is deeply Christian, maintaining that the Cooper household is itself a Christian household, and will not tolerate revelry in the face of the death of British soldiers.

Through the day of April 19, 1775, Christianity becomes a bulwark of strength for Adam, whose entire world is rocked, beginning with the death of his father early in the morning with the arrival of the British. Adam then spends much of the day meeting up with other survivors, and rallying with arriving militiamen from all across the countryside, and going into battle with them against the British. At home at the end of the day, Adam brings candles to church on behalf of his mother, and consents to the good advice of the Reverend, who counsels Adam against immediately going off to war in Boston. Here, Adam can be seen in deference to Christian wisdom and common sense. By the time he goes to bed that night, Adam prays to God, thanking Him that the day is over – for all of Adam's doubts about God have been erased.

War

War is an important theme in the novel “April Morning” by Howard Fast. War is open combat and bloodshed between two or more opposing sides, occurring when peaceful resolution of differences is either not possible, or no longer possible. The war begun in “April Morning” is that of the American Revolution (also known as the Revolutionary War and the American Revolutionary War) in which years of British antagonism, and violation of the rights of American colonists are capped up by the unprovoked British assault on the citizens of Lexington, touching off a war that will last eight years and end in American victory and independence.

War is something that Adam, and nearly all of the other residents of Lexington, Massachusetts, have no desire for. None of them have ever fired a weapon in anger at another man. Even when the British column moves out from Boston to secure a cache of weapons and supplies in Concord, and moves through Lexington, Adam and most of the other men assembled hope that a peaceful resolution can be reached. The British response to efforts by the locals to talk things out – even at so late a stage – are met with rifle fire and slaughter. The survivors scatter, but word of the British atrocity spreads. By noon, American rebel militiamen are pouring in from all corners of the countryside, from Lincoln Town and beyond, growing by the hundreds. The British act at Lexington is a declaration of war, and while most American colonials hoped that war could be avoided, there is no option now but to fight for rights, family, and home.

Following Lexington, a skirmish is had near Concord, followed by a larger battle at North Bridge, at which point the British army breaks and decides to return to Boston. They are



now outnumbered in enemy territory, and will must flee to the safety of Boston. As they march back down the road, militia open fire, forcing the British to make a fighting retreat. The British are unable to take battle formations, for the wooded landscape is unsuitable to battle lines, and time is running out. Only a British relief column arriving in Lexington saves the first British column, and even then, both columns are harassed on the return to Boston.

While the morning is a tragedy for the American colonials, the day ends in military victory, as the colonials drive the British back into Boston. The evening brings news that some 5,000 militiamen are now amassing and heading toward Boston to besiege the British – a true rallying of the countryside, and unlike anything ever seen before. The greatest superpower on earth has been chastened by farmers, laborers, family men, and boys. As Joseph Simmons remarks toward the end of the novel, war is not something that they wanted, but was something thrust upon them – and now will not end until the British are driven from the continent. With the day's battles done, the true loss of war is counted and observed in the number of dead, and in the way that the world has changed forever, for each of the families who have lost loved ones, and for the world at large that peasant colonies could dare to challenge their masters.

Rights

Rights are an important theme in the novel “April Morning” by Howard Fast. Rights are fundamental guarantees and principles of freedoms afforded to human individuals in conjunction with their lives. In the novel, rights form a core component of the American continental case against the British Crown, for the rights of individuals in the American colonies have been infringed and denied by the British.

Early in the novel, Adam learns from Joseph Simmons that the Lexington Committee is drafting a statement of the rights of citizens – rights which have been denied by the British government. Simmons argues that rights are not created by governments, but are natural to men as gifts from God, and therefore cannot be denied by other men. Because these God-given rights are natural, all men have the right – and responsibility – to stand up for them, and to defend them in war if need be. The unprovoked attack of the British is a declaration of war against not only the American colonies, but is a direct affront to the idea that human rights come from God.

Among the many rights the British deny the American colonists are the right to peacefully assemble, and the right to have a say (representation in Parliament) in the laws passed and policies made which concern them. Other rights the British have denied include imprisoning people without just cause or due process, and allowing soldiers to run the streets and behave as bullies. The Reverend explains that the British have wiped away every vestige of freedom as the British have seen fit to do. As many of the colonials argue, a man's land and home are his own, and no one else's – and he has a right to live freely there, and to defend them when that freedom and that right is challenged or denied. The British troops who shoot down the men peacefully assembled at Lexington common, and who loot and burn homes, deny the rights of the people –and

the people respond accordingly by setting out after the British, and laying siege to Boston. The defense of their God-given rights becomes known as a cause for which men are willing to die through the novel, and ultimately becomes "The Cause".

Styles

Point of View

Howard Fast tell his novel “April Morning” in the first-person limited-omniscient perspective, from the point of view of main character, Adam Cooper. This is done for several reasons. First, the first-person perspective allows the reader a firsthand look at the events leading up to, and during, the battles of Lexington, Concord, North Bridge, and the road back to Boston. The firsthand narrative mode also allows the reader to experience and feel things directly as Adam himself experiences and feels things. This is especially important given the tragedy, triumph, and traumas of the day – from the loss of Adam’s father to the eventual rebel victory to the bittersweet return home. The limited-omniscient aspect of the novel also adds a level of reality to the narration – for no man knows everything. It also adds a level of suspense and drama, as Adam has no idea if the British are truly coming, and if they are, when they will arrive and what they will do. He likewise has little knowledge about the events of the battles as they unfold around him – and even his participation in the battle is fraught with suspense, as he is only aware later of the overall goal of the colonial militia.

Language and Meaning

Howard Fast tells his novel “April Morning” in language that is simple and straightforward. This is done for a few reasons. First, the narrator of the novel is a 15-year-old boy who has not had the experience of higher education. Thus, his language will reflect his life circumstances as well. Adam and his family are humble farmers who all have the ability to read, and so their vocabulary is better than some (for example, Solomon Chandler’s), though not better than others. Their humility, both in their faith and work, is reflected in their simple language, and straightforward way of talking. This also adds a tremendous amount of realism to the novel, making the characters and the events much more believable – and this is crucial, given the historical reality of the battles of Lexington, Concord, North Bridge, and the running fight back to Boston.

Structure

Howard Fast divides his novel “April Morning” into eight chronological, unnumbered, titled chapters that span the time period between the afternoon of April 18, 1775, and the evening of April 19, 1775. Each chapter is titled with a general time of day (The Evening, The Night, The Morning, etc.). The events of each chapter coincide with that specific time of day. For example, the chapter “The Morning”, taking place on the morning of April 19, 1775, deals with the British attack at Lexington, and its immediate aftermath as Adam, and other members of the Lexington Committee militia, flee for their lives.



Quotes

Wasted steps are like wasted thoughts, just as empty and just as ignorant.

-- Moses Cooper (The Evening (1) paragraph 8)

Importance: Moses Cooper hands his son some heavy-handed and strict advice on handling chores and errands. Moses's advice to his son is well-intended, but comes out wrongly – helping Adam to believe that his father hates him.

Do you know other ways of being big?

-- Moses Cooper (The Evening (1) paragraph 115)

Importance: Moses discusses manhood with his son. Adam insists that since he is big in both size and stature, he is more or less a man. Moses contends that there are things other than physique which dictate manhood.

The whole sky is red.

-- Levi Cooper (The Night paragraph 8)

Importance: Levi dreams of a red sky the night before the British attack the militia in Lexington. Here, the red sky is ominous of a coming storm of war, and of the deaths of numerous men and boys that will follow.

I get to feeling that we're all asleep still, and this is just a dream.

-- Ruth Simmons (The Night paragraph 154)

Importance: With things changing so fast, everything happening seems surreal. This is certainly the case for Ruth, who explains that everything seems dreamlike, as if it can't be real. Only the day before, the British military was meant to provide protection to the colonies; now, they are meant to take away the rights of the citizens of the colony.

Sometimes we don't have time.

-- Moses Cooper (The Night paragraph 166)

Importance: With the approach of the British, Adam is thrust into manhood. What he has wanted more than anything he now wonders if he is truly ready for. His mother echoes these sentiments, distraught that Adam will now leave behind childhood in an instant. Moses patiently explains that, sometimes, there isn't time to grow, and it must happen all at once.

Grief should not be denied.

-- Solomon Chandler (The Forenoon paragraph 32)

Importance: Adam, who cries after the death of his father, is comforted by Solomon Chandler. Grief is a manly thing, and should not be denied, Solomon contends. Losing one's father is a terrible thing to experience, and Adam cannot be faulted for crying.



It's the finishing, now.

-- Unidentified American rebel (The Forenoon paragraph 108)

Importance: As American militiamen stream into the area around Concord, Lexington, and Boston, their words and conversations are overheard by Adam. They are all agreed that they did not choose this fight, and did not want the fight – but now that the British have started things, the American rebels will finish them, and that is what truly matters now.

It was my initiation to war and the insane symphony war plays.

-- Adam Cooper (The Midday paragraph 74)

Importance: Adam, preparing for the British advance down the road, sees a British officer shot from his horse and dragged along by the stirrup. It is a terrifying sight, one which initiates Adam into the horrors of actual combat.

I'll tell you when it will end – when we drive them back into their ships, and when their ships sail away from here and leave us in peace in our own lands. Not until then.

-- Joseph Simmons (The Afternoon (2) paragraph 10)

Importance: Here, Joseph Simmons explains to Adam that a war has truly begun. It is not a war which they wanted, but a war which they must now see through to victory. It is a war that will end only when the British return home and leave the American colonies in peace.

It isn't the same anymore. We aren't the same. This morning, we knew that we wouldn't fight. But now we know that was must fight, and we're learning how.

-- Adam Cooper (The Evening (2) paragraph 64)

Importance: Speaking to the theme of change, Adam explains that everything has changed since the morning. The American colonials are now at war with Great Britain. Prepared to avoid conflict in the morning, conflict has been thrust upon them. Yet now they must actually carry on a war, a war they had long hoped to avoid – but their cause is just.