

# 1789

## Twelve Authors Explore a Year of Rebellion, Revolution, and Change

### About the Book

“The Rights of Man.” What does that mean? In 1789 that question rippled all around the world. Do all men have rights—not just nobles and kings? What then of women, enslaved people, and the original inhabitants of the Americas? In the new United States a bill of rights was passed; in France the nation tumbled toward revolution. In the Caribbean preachers brought word of equality; in the South Pacific sailors mutinied. New knowledge was exploding, with mathematicians and scientists rewriting the history of the planet and the digits of pi. Twelve award-winning authors explore a tumultuous year when rights and freedoms collided with enslavement and domination and the future of humanity seemed to be at stake. Every chapter brings fresh perspectives on the debates of the time, inviting readers to experience the passions of the past and ask new questions of today.



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Also available as an e-book

### Common Core Connections

This guide, which can be used with large or small groups, will help students meet several of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts. These include the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing and Speaking and Listening (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W and CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL); reading informational text standards for key ideas and details, craft and structure, and integration of knowledge and ideas (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI), as well as the speaking and listening standards for comprehension and collaboration and for presentation of knowledge and ideas (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL). Questions can also be used in writing prompts for independent work.



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## Discussion Questions

1. In the book, contemporaneous quotes are grouped under four different topics: exhilaration, abomination, inspiration, and conclusions. Discuss the quotes, how they reflect the topics, and how they relate to the other quotes in their group. Which quotes offer opposing viewpoints? Which do you agree with the most?
2. We think of our world today as globally connected, but that was also true in 1789, as the introduction explains: “Ideas, people, and money were shuttled across the world’s great oceans” (page 1). Find examples in the essays of people and ideas traveling from one country or continent to another. What connections between France and the American colonies or states are shown? What roles do Asia and Africa play in the essays?
3. While not all the changes were propelled by economics—the money shuttled across the oceans—many of them were. Identify the importance of financial gain and economic disparities in the essays. What are examples of expanding rights that came into conflict with financial goals of people or countries?
4. Two of the essays about Black individuals are “The Choice” and “All Men Are Created Equal.” Compare and contrast the situations of Sally Hemings and Olaudah Equiano, discussing the concept of humans as property and how it affected their lives. What key choices did each of them make? How do other essays in the book analyze slavery and its importance to this time in history?
5. Mary Jemison, who also had a life-changing choice to make, was taken captive as a child by the Seneca and adopted by them. Why did she choose to stay with them as an adult? What was her life with them like? How were the Seneca and the rest of the Six Nations treated by the white military and government? How did Mary Jemison serve “a key role in a chain of communications” (page 119)?
6. Summarize the essay “The Wesleyans in the West Indies” and explain the author’s observation that “the Christian education and religious care of Black people posed a grave threat to the social order that was already ripe for overthrow in 1789” (page 96). What was the threat? Why were enslaved people “thwarted on every side and atrociously persecuted” for adopting Methodism (page 101)? What did they lose culturally by becoming Christians?
7. The introduction refers to “revolutions in thought” (page 3). Explain how the essays “Pi, Vega, and the Battle at Belgrade” and “Challenging Time” speak to this topic. What was revolutionary about Vega’s calculations of pi and Hutton’s contributions to geology? What inspired each man in his pursuit of knowledge? What areas of thought might be considered revolutionary today?
8. In the essay “The Queen’s Chemise,” the author poses a series of questions about rights and equality, followed by questions about the role of art (pages 46–47). Re-read and discuss the questions, relating the ones about art to the work and views of Élisabeth Vigée Le Brun. What made it possible for her to pursue her art despite the widespread belief that “a woman’s place was in the private sphere” (page 47)?
9. What power struggles played out in the mutiny on the *Bounty*? Why was the ship going to Tahiti? What were conditions like for those who worked on the ship? How did Captain Bligh treat the crew? Why was Fletcher Christian so angry? Describe the mutiny and its aftermath. What was the fate of Christian and the other mutineers?
10. Discuss the questions that Joyce Hansen asks on page 87 at the end of her essay about Olaudah Equiano: “What does freedom of speech, religion, and the press mean to us in the twenty-first century? How do we interpret the right to bear arms in our generation? How do we confront and stop human trafficking and other forms of modern slavery?”



## Classroom Activities

### *Two Declarations*

Have students read the texts of the French Declaration of the Rights of Man, written in 1789, and the US Declaration of Independence, written in 1776. Ask students to take notes about the similarities and differences in the documents. Then convene a class discussion to share ideas about the two documents and their relationship to each other.

[https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/rightsof.asp](https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/rightsof.asp)

[https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/declare.asp](https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/declare.asp)

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.2

### *Changes Fast or Slow?*

#### Survey

As a class, discuss Thomas Paine and Mary Wollstonecraft's view that sometimes "society had to be restructured" and Edmund Burke's opposing view that "it was too dangerous to utterly disrupt the existing habits and structures of a society" (page 4). Consider the topic in light of slavery, women's rights, the civil rights movement, and other similar issues. Then have students survey at least five people of different ages to see which view they favor and how strongly they feel about it. Create a chart of the responses that includes the ages of those surveyed, and analyze the results.

#### Debate

Ask students to debate the topic in the survey activity: Which kind of change is better, incremental change or revolution? Does it depend on the circumstances? Have students divide into teams of two, assigning each team one side of the question. They should prepare to argue their case with examples from the book and from researching the topic, informed if applicable by the survey in the previous activity. The pairs should then debate a team arguing the other side of the question.

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### *Looking Back at Our Time*

Have students write an essay on this quote from page 2 in the introduction, relating it to the book and to today's world: "The idea of who or what has rights continues to evolve. Today some people believe that everyone has a right to economic security and that the earth—the environment—has rights, as do animals. Hundreds of years from now when someone writes about our time, what obvious violations of rights will they see?"

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### *Time Travel Interview*

While the collection of essays explores ideas, it also introduces fascinating people from the past. Have students each choose one of the individuals in the essays that they find interesting. The student should imagine that they will have a chance to interview that person and prepare at least ten questions concerning the individual's experiences, ideas, and feelings.

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### *Sing It*

The musical *Hamilton* made history more exciting for many of its fans by conveying it through rap and other musical forms. Among its songs is one titled "What'd I Miss?" about 1789. Invite students to work in groups to do the same by writing a rap or another kind of song about a person, event, or idea in this anthology, combining information with entertainment, with the option of performing for the class.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.3

## Also by MARC ARONSON and SUSAN CAMPBELL BARTOLETTI



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Jennifer Anthony  
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Omar Figueras  
Laban Carrick Hill  
Mark Kurlansky  
Lenore Look  
David Lubar

Kate MacMillan  
Kekla Magoon  
Jim Murphy  
Elizabeth Partridge

★ “Fourteen authors, including Omar Figueras, Lenore Look, and editors Aronson and Bartoletti, write about the tumultuous events of 1968. . . . The book’s strength lies in the way different voices and different angles come together into an integrated whole. Fascinating and accomplished.” —*Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)

“Authors explore the tumultuous global events of 1968 in this anthology. . . . The differences in their backgrounds make for a vivid, dynamic account of the complicated, intersecting politics behind brief accounts in history books. With an approach promoting critical thinking, this collection will likely help illuminate a deeply important year in world history and encourage fresh thinking about our current contentious moment.” —*Booklist*



## About MARC ARONSON and SUSAN CAMPBELL BARTOLETTI

**Marc Aronson** is the author and editor of many titles for young people, including *War Is . . . : Soldiers, Survivors, and Storytellers*; *Talk about War*, coedited by Patty Campbell; *Master of Deceit: J. Edgar Hoover and America in the Age of Lies*; and *Sir Walter Raleigh and the Quest for El Dorado*, winner of the Robert F. Sibert Medal. He and Susan Campbell Bartoletti coedited *1968: Today's Authors Explore a Year of Rebellion, Revolution, and Change*. Marc Aronson teaches at Rutgers University and lives in New Jersey.

**Susan Campbell Bartoletti** is the author of many titles for young people, including *How Women Won the Vote: Alice Paul, Lucy Burns, and Their Big Idea*; *Growing Up in Coal Country*; *Black Potatoes: The Story of the Great Irish Famine, 1845–1850*; *Hitler Youth: Growing Up in Hitler's Shadow*; and *They Called Themselves the K.K.K.: The Birth of an American Terrorist Group*. She is the recipient of a Newbery Honor, a Robert F. Sibert Medal and Honor, an Orbis Pictus Award and Honor, and the *Washington Post*–Children's Book Guild Nonfiction Award. Susan Campbell Bartoletti teaches in Penn State's World Campus Curriculum and Instruction graduate program.

This guide was prepared by Kathleen Odean, a school librarian for more than fifteen years who now gives professional development workshops for educators about new books for children and teens. She chaired the 2002 Newbery Award Committee and served on earlier Caldecott and Newbery Award committees.



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