

# Joseph Warren An American Hero

by Sasha Griffin



HOUGHTON MIFFLIN

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BOSTON

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## An American Hero

The American **Revolution** was not only about battles and war. And it was not just the story of heroes like George Washington and Paul Revere. There are stories behind those battles. And there are heroes who are not as well known.

 Joseph Warren is one of those heroes. He did fight in some battles. But his work off the battlefield was even more important. Warren was a respected doctor. He became a political writer and speaker. He worked tirelessly as a Patriot leader.

 Warren's articles, speeches, and political work helped the American Revolution succeed.



 Joseph Warren

## Early Years

Joseph Warren was born in Roxbury, Massachusetts, in 1741. His parents were farmers. Joseph grew up climbing apple trees and playing in the fields. Sometimes Joseph went to Boston to sell milk from his family's cows. He was proud of the new kind of apple his father developed. The apple had the family name. It was called the "Warren russet."

 Then, one day, something terrible happened to the Warren family. Joseph's father was gathering apples in the orchard. Mr. Warren fell off a ladder and broke his neck. The fall killed him. Fourteen-year-old Joseph was now the man of the family. Whenever he was home from college, he did some of the harder work on the farm.



 Joseph Warren grew up in Roxbury, Massachusetts. Roxbury is now a neighborhood in Boston.



Joseph started at Harvard College the year his father died. A story from those days shows that Joseph did not fear anything. As a joke, some college friends locked Joseph out of the room where they lived. Joseph climbed up to the roof. Then he climbed down an old drain pipe. When he reached his window, he climbed through it. Just then, the drain pipe broke and fell to the ground. Joseph could have fallen, too! Afterward, he calmly said that the pipe had done its job.

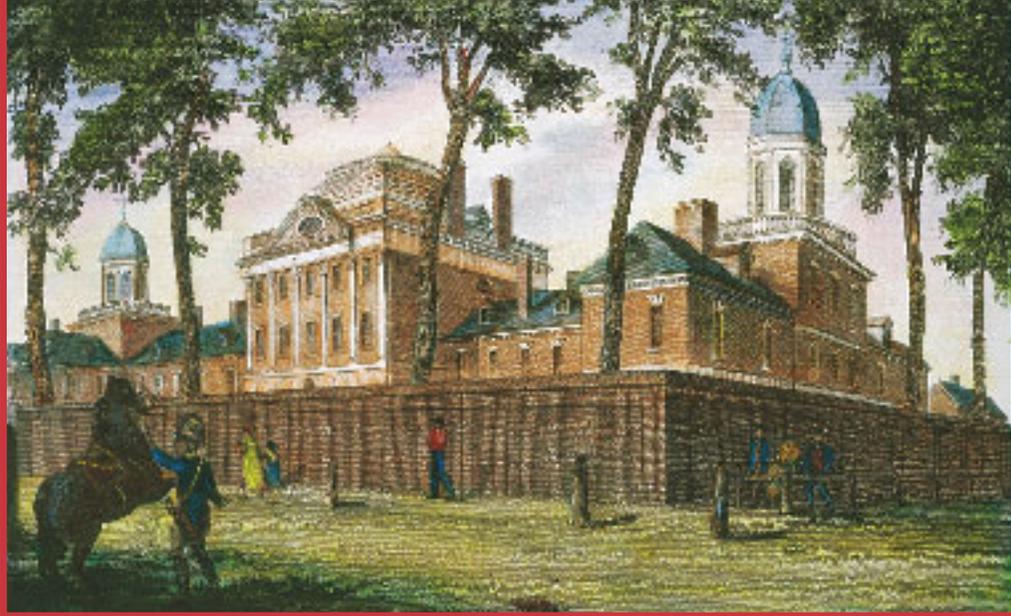
Joseph Warren's courage was also clear in other parts of his life.

## **A Colonial Doctor**

After graduating from college, Joseph Warren became a doctor. Around that time, an epidemic started in Boston. Many people became ill from smallpox. Dr. Warren worked hard caring for smallpox patients. He lived in the hospital for several months. During that time, Dr. Warren treated hundreds of patients.



When the epidemic ended, Dr. Warren was well known in Boston. People said he was gentle, charming, and sensitive. In 1764, he married Elizabeth Hooton. She was a wealthy and beautiful young woman.



Dr. Warren may have worked in a hospital like this one.

Many different kinds of people were patients of Dr. Warren. One patient was William Dawes. Years later, the British army was marching on Boston. Dr. Warren sent Dawes and Paul Revere to warn the colonists. Dr. Warren's other patients included John and Abigail Adams, John Hancock, and Governor Thomas Hutchinson.

Some patients paid Dr. Warren with money. But many patients had little money. Those patients paid him with flour, blankets, buckles, shoes, or other things. By 1769, Dr. Warren was a very successful doctor. Soon he started doing political work. He did not enter politics to make money. He did it because of his strong feelings about what was happening to the colonists.

## **Entering Politics**

In the 1760s, the British Parliament passed several new laws. The laws gave Britain more control over the colonies. One law was the Stamp Act. This act included new taxes on the colonists. The taxes helped pay for the British troops and officials in the colonies.

 Joseph Warren was angry about the Stamp Act. Colonial officials would be paid with some of the tax money. Warren thought the officials would not treat the colonists fairly. He wondered why the colonists could not elect their own officials. He also wondered why the colonists could not decide on their own taxes.

## **Colonial Government**

The American colonists were British subjects. But they became used to governing themselves. Voters elected representatives. These representatives made laws and passed taxes. But the governor of each colony was appointed by the British king. These governors could overturn colonial laws. They also enforced laws made by the British Parliament.

Warren had strong feelings about these problems. He wrote letters and newspaper articles about them. In his writing, he tried to get people to share his feelings. Many people agreed with him. Colonists began to say, “No taxation without representation.” Riots broke out. Shop owners would not buy British goods. Leaders from nine colonies met. The leaders thought that the colonies were being taxed unfairly. The colonies had no representatives in the British Parliament. So the colonial leaders said that Britain could not tax the colonies.

Finally, Parliament repealed the Stamp Act. But soon Britain passed new laws with new taxes. These laws angered the colonists even more.

In the next few years, Warren became an important Patriot leader. His articles and letters described British officials as **foes** of the colonists. He wrote to convince his readers to agree with him. He argued that they should work to end taxation without representation.

Warren worked with many political groups. He gained the respect of **legendary** leaders like Samuel Adams and Paul Revere.



Colonists had to pay for stamps like this one. The stamps were used to mark official documents, newspapers, playing cards, and paper.

## A “Horrid Massacre” in Boston

The colonists and British officials became more and more angry with each other. Street fights started between colonists and British soldiers. Joseph Warren helped plan some actions against the British.

 On March 5, 1770, in Boston, a crowd of angry colonists surrounded a British guard. Other British soldiers arrived to help the guard. The townspeople shouted insults. They threw snowballs and oyster shells at the soldiers. One soldier shot into the crowd. The fight grew. More shots were fired. British troops arrived on the street like water **gushing** from a pump. The colonists finally **retreated**. But three colonists lay dead in the snow. Two more colonists would soon die from their wounds.

 After that, the colonists had a town meeting. They chose Warren to join a new committee. This committee would talk with British officials. The British knew that Warren was an important colonial leader. They worried he might tell the colonists to become violent. The meeting was held. The committee convinced the British to remove their troops.



🔊 A week later, Warren and two other men wrote about what happened on March 5. They called the event a “horrid massacre.” Warren hoped that people would oppose the British even more. And in fact, the Boston Massacre made people think about the possibility of a revolution.

🔊 The Boston Massacre angered many American colonists.



## More Taxes and Tea

More people agreed with Joseph Warren's ideas. He did not have a position in the government. But he played a big part in Boston politics. He not only wrote speeches but made them, too. He and Paul Revere helped organize Boston's craftsmen and workers into a political group.

 Warren was also a member of the Committee of Correspondence. He wrote letters to other towns and colonies. In the letters, he warned people to protect their rights. And through all of this, he kept working as a

doctor. He was still the most popular doctor in Boston.

 In 1773, Parliament passed the Tea Act. This act made colonists pay taxes on tea.

Warren and other leaders wanted people to stop buying tea. In this way, the people of Boston would protest the tax. Tea was a very popular drink at the time. Patriot leaders worried that people would continue to buy and drink tea.



 Colonists strongly debated ideas during town meetings.



Warren led an angry crowd to a tea warehouse. The crowd did not want the tea sellers to sell their tea when it arrived. The sellers did not agree to Warren's plans. Instead, the sellers locked themselves in their warehouse. Then the crowd took the doors off their hinges. The people went inside. They told the sellers to stop selling tea. But, again, the sellers said no. The crowd kept the sellers in the warehouse for more than an hour. Warren's role in this event was considered high treason in England. The British saw him as a traitor. But he was a hero to the colonists.



Soon, a shipment of tea arrived in Boston. Warren tried to return the tea to England. British officials would not allow this. Warren worked with Samuel Adams to unite the colonists. Warren wrote letters to people in nearby towns. The letters invited people to a meeting in Boston. There, Warren and others spoke. They said that it was important to fight against British taxes. The speakers convinced the group to prevent the tea from being unloaded or sold. Everyone agreed to a plan of action. Everyone knew the plan was dangerous.

On December 16, 1773, a group of colonists disguised themselves as Indians. They boarded three tea ships in Boston Harbor. Then they dumped 342 chests of tea into the water. This became known as the Boston Tea Party.

Was Warren on the ships that night? No one knows for certain. Yet he was considered a leader of the Boston Tea Party. Some British officials wanted to arrest Warren. They wanted to try him for treason. If he were convicted, he would be hanged. But the British knew that no jury of colonists would convict their hero. Instead, the British passed new laws. The laws punished all of Massachusetts.

In 1773, colonists protested British laws by dumping boxes of tea into Boston Harbor.



## War!

Joseph Warren continued to fight against unjust British laws. After the Tea Party, the British closed the port of Boston. Warren helped to create new jobs for the port workers. He collected and gave out donations for the poor. His speeches inspired many people. Some of the documents Warren wrote were adopted by the Continental Congress. This was the first American government that was independent of Britain. Warren also organized a congress to govern Massachusetts. He became a member of this congress. It was his first official government job.

 The colonies moved closer to war with Britain. Warren made sure there were weapons and supplies for the colonists. He also told colonists they should hide their ammunition from the British.

 On April 18, 1775, Warren heard some important news. British troops would march toward Concord. Warren believed that the British wanted to capture two important Patriots, Samuel Adams and John Hancock. Warren also feared the British would capture colonists' supplies and ammunition.

Usually, the order to get ready to fight was made by a committee of colonists. Warren was a member of this committee. But he was the only member in Boston that night. A decision had to be made quickly. Warren made it.

He sent for Paul Revere and William Dawes. He told each man to ride to Concord by a different route. If one were captured, the other might still get through. The riders carried a message to Adams and Hancock. The message warned that the British were coming. Warren's decision was a signal of war.



Paul Revere warned colonists that British soldiers were coming.

## The Minutemen

The American militia, a group of armed citizens, was made up of common people. It included farmers, shopkeepers, and craftsmen. Often, these volunteer soldiers had no formal training. Yet they were willing to fight against the powerful British army. The militias were ready to fight at a minute's notice. That is why they were called "minutemen."



 At dawn the next day, the Charles River was shimmering. Warren crossed over the river. He went to the first battle of the Revolutionary War. The British and American troops were gathered at Lexington. Warren rode quickly in that direction. On the way, he saw two British soldiers trying to steal an old man's horse. Warren drove the soldiers away. He rode on, right into the rear of the British troops. He was almost captured. Luckily, the soldiers didn't recognize him. They let him go.

 Soon he reached Lexington. The American soldiers were frightened and not organized. The Battle of Lexington had ended. The British moved on to Concord. Warren helped the minutemen. He organized them so they would be ready to fight again. Then the British and Americans fought at Concord. This time, the British began to retreat. The Americans had the advantage.

🔊 The Americans followed the British back to Boston. There were more British troops than American troops. But the American troops didn't give up. They shot at British soldiers from inside houses and from behind trees and fences. In one town, the Americans fired at the enemy from both sides of the main street. The British fought back. Men from both sides were killed and wounded. But Warren led his men on. There was heavy gunfire. A musket ball barely missed Warren's ear. It came so close that it knocked a hairpin from his hair.

🔊 Many Americans saw Warren as a magnificent hero. He wasn't a politician starting a war for others to fight. Warren was willing to fight for his beliefs. He inspired others to fight as well. He continued to plan war strategy. Warren also wanted to be an officer in the army. The Massachusetts Provincial Congress made him a major general on June 14, 1775.

## 🔊 The Battle of Lexington



## At Bunker Hill

Three days later, on June 17, 1775, the British army attacked American forces in the Battle of Bunker Hill. Joseph Warren attended a meeting to discuss the battle. But he was not happy with planning from a distance. So, Warren walked through dangerous battlefields to join the American forces.

Colonel William Prescott was the American commander. He was desperate for more soldiers. Many soldiers had left the battlefield. Other soldiers

refused to fight. These men were afraid to cross an area the British were bombarding. It was the same area Warren had just crossed on foot.

Colonel Prescott thought it was too dangerous for Warren to stay. But Warren refused to leave. Prescott then asked Warren to lead the American forces. Warren said no because he thought that Prescott was a more experienced soldier. Warren had come as a volunteer, not as an officer.



Bunker Hill Monument

 The British were firing heavily at the Americans on Bunker Hill. Warren **plunged** into the battle. He fought alongside his countrymen. As a doctor, he also treated the wounded.

 Warren's bravery inspired the frightened men around him. The British soldiers advanced. The Americans were running low on ammunition. They couldn't waste a single bullet. So Colonel Prescott said, "Don't fire until you see the whites of their eyes."

 Finally, only 150 colonial soldiers were left. Warren was among them. They had no more ammunition. So they threw rocks and used their guns as clubs. But they could not win against British bayonets. It was time for a retreat. Warren was one of the last soldiers to leave. As he made his way down the back of the hill, Warren was shot and killed.

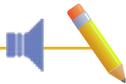
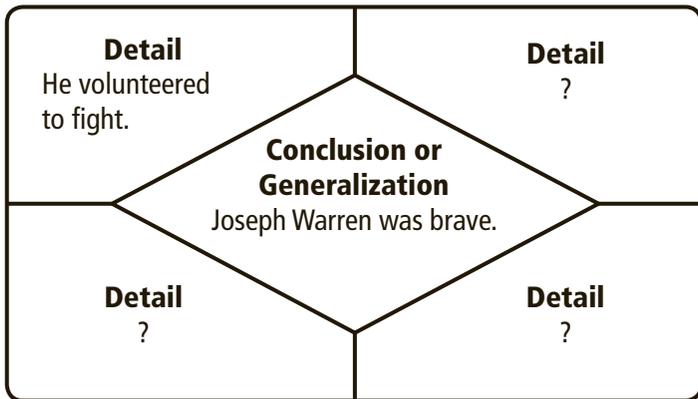
 Warren did not live to see America become an independent nation. Yet his words and actions inspired many others to fight for independence. Joseph Warren, like George Washington and Paul Revere, is an American hero. And he is not forgotten. Today, every state in New England has a town named in his honor.

# Responding



## TARGET SKILL **Conclusions and Generalizations**

Joseph Warren was a brave man. What story details would lead readers to think that? Copy and complete the chart below.



## Write About It

**Text to Text** Joseph Warren was a leader who led people through hard times. Think about someone you've read about who did the same. Write a few paragraphs telling how that person led others.

 **TARGET VOCABULARY**

foes  
formal  
gushed  
legendary  
magnificent

plunged  
retreat  
revolution  
shimmering  
strategy

 **TARGET SKILL** **Conclusions and Generalizations**

Use details to explain ideas that aren't stated or are generally true.

 **TARGET STRATEGY** **Analyze/Evaluate** Think carefully

about the text and form an opinion about it.

 **GENRE** **Narrative Nonfiction** gives factual information by telling a true story.

**Level:** U

**DRA:** 44

**Genre:**

Narrative Nonfiction

**Strategy:**

Analyze/Evaluate

**Skill:**

Conclusions and Generalizations

**Word Count:** 2,577

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