

Kathleen Ernst
WRITING AT THE INTERSECTION OF PEOPLE, PLACES, AND THE PAST



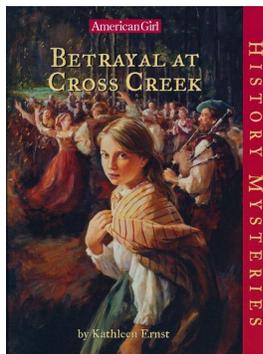
Teacher's Guide For *Betrayal At Cross Creek*

An American Girl History Mystery

Written by Kathleen Ernst

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It's 1775. Elspeth Monro, newly come from Scotland, is just beginning to feel at home in North Carolina, with a new friend and a weaving apprenticeship she loves. To Elspeth, the brewing Revolution feels very far away, until someone starts to threaten her own family, trying to force them to join the rebels. When her grandfather marches off to fight with the British, Elspeth is left alone to protect her grandmother, and to figure out who is putting her family in danger!

This story was first published as a 178-page book in softcover and hardcover, with a richly illustrated "Peak Into The Past" essay, glossaries of Scots-English and Gaelic words, and an author's note. It is currently available as a beautifully spoken 4-hour 13-minute audiobook.

Activity Suggestions

1. Ask students to map the journey Elspeth and her grandparents made from the Isle of Skye to Cross Creek, North Carolina Colony.

If immigrants were arriving in your community in the 1770s, have students map and compare Elspeth's journey to locals.

2. Guide students through a comparison of the geography on the Isle of Skye, off the west coast of Scotland, to the historical longleaf pine savannah of Elspeth's home near Cross Creek. How did geography affect Elspeth's feelings about her new home in North Carolina? How did the author of *Betrayal At Cross Creek* use the longleaf pine landscape to help convey the story's mood and tone?



Ask students to write a poem about a landscape that makes them feel happy; and one about a landscape that makes them unhappy or anxious.

Have students compare these landscapes with the physical environment found in their own community. How did Elspeth's feelings about her new surroundings compare with the experience of immigrants to their area?

3. Although Elspeth's fictional family (and many real-life Scottish immigrants) left North Carolina and moved on to Canada, thousands of Scottish immigrants stayed and made enormous contributions to North Carolina's, and the country's, cultural heritage and identity. Ask students to investigate Scottish influences on state or national culture, and share their findings in a manner of their choosing (poster, poem, performance, diorama, computerized presentation, etc.)

Help students compare the contributions of Scottish settlers in North Carolina with cultural contributions made by immigrants to their community or state.

4. Ask students to create a Venn Diagram comparing and contrasting Elspeth and Mercy. How were they alike? How were their lives different?

5. During the American Revolution both Loyalists and Patriots wanted the Scottish immigrants near Cross Creek to join their cause; Elspeth's grandmother chose one side while her grandfather chose the other.

Divide students into small groups, and ask them to review the reasons why some Scots chose to become Loyalists and others chose to become Patriots. Ask them to write a paper explaining which choice they would have made had they lived in colonial North Carolina. Or, let some students participate in a debate, trying to convince the rest of the class of their views.

6. Guide students through a discussion about the role of the Battle of Moore's Creek Bridge in the American Revolution, in North Carolina, and in the lives of the Scottish immigrants. How much impact did the battle have on each?

Ask students to write an imaginary account of the battle from the perspective of both a Scottish-born Loyalist and a North Carolina-born Patriot. (Information about the battle can be found on the Moore's Creek National Battlefield website.)



7. Ask students to map the longleaf pine forest ecosystem with other ecosystems found in North Carolina; and to create maps comparing the extent of the longleaf pine forest ecosystem in Elspeth's time with the remnants that exist today. What aspects of North Carolina's economy created this change? Compare these changes with changes which have taken place in your own region.

8. Lead a discussion about Elspeth's weaving apprenticeship. Why was it important to her? Guide students to other books and media that help them understand how few options for income and artistic expression were available to uneducated girls during the colonial period. Ask them to write a paragraph comparing the past with options for girls today. Follow by asking the school art teacher to help develop simple weaving projects for the students, or inviting a local weaver to visit the class to demonstrate the art.

9. Oats played a prominent role in the diet of Scottish people in the 1700s, although their diet changed in the New World. In chapter 1, Elspeth enjoyed oatcakes because they reminded her of Skye, while Mercy found them unappetizing. Lead a discussion: What other aspects of cultural differences did Elspeth and Mercy experience in their friendship? Why do students think the Scottish immigrants' foodways changed in their new home? Do any of your students have special memories related to a particular food? Are any foods enjoyed only on holidays or certain special occasions? If any students have moved from another state or country, do they enjoy any dishes that are not commonly found in their new home? What role do food traditions play in a person's cultural identity?

To give the students a taste of the oatcakes Elspeth enjoyed in Scotland, try the following recipe.

Oatcakes

2/3 c. oatmeal

1/4 t. cream of tartar

1/4 - 1/3 c. milk

1/4 t. baking soda

1/8 t. salt

oil for frying

Mix dry ingredients together. Add 1/4 c. of milk and stir to blend well. If the mixture is too crumbly, add a bit more milk. Shape into small cakes and place on a hot griddle. If you are not using a non-stick pan, be sure to add a bit of cooking oil first. Fry on one side over medium heat until the bottom is golden brown. Flip cakes and fry on the other side until done. Makes 4 small cakes.

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For Further Exploration

North Carolina Museum of History
Raleigh, NC (919) 807-7850 <http://www.ncdcr.gov/ncmoh/Home.aspx>

The museum offers a variety of resources for educators and students, including information on 18th century North Carolina, field trip details, lesson plans, and an online searchable collections database.

Scottish Tartans Museum
Franklin, NC (828) 524-7472 <http://www.scottishtartans.org/>

This museum is the American extension of the Scottish Tartans Society in Scotland, which was formed in 1963 to study the history and development of tartans. The small Franklin Museum displays Scottish tartans, and exhibits touch on other aspects of the Scottish experience. The website includes a number of helpful articles and photographs.

Author Presentations

Author Kathleen Ernst offers a number of programs and presentations for students. Information can be found at <http://www.kathleernerst.com/programs.php>

Agatha Award Nominee for Best Children's/Young Adult Mystery
— **Malice Domestic**

Flora MacDonald Award for Outstanding Contribution to Scottish Affairs
— **St. Andrews Presbyterian College**

Children's Literature Award Winner
— **Council for Wisconsin Writers**

Betrayal At Cross Creek is available as a downloadable audiobook from audible.com. New, first-edition, softcover and hardcover copies can be acquired directly from the author, Kathleen Ernst, who will be happy to sign and personalize them to your specification. For more about the story, click on http://www.kathleernerst.com/book_betrayal_cross.php