Title: Sam the Minuteman
Author: Nathaniel Benchley
Publisher: Harper & Row Publishers
Copyright Year: 1969
Reading Level: 1-2nd Grade
Genre: Historical Fiction

Synopsis of Story:
Sam lived in Lexington with his family. His father was a Minuteman during the American Revolution and this book depicts what it might have been like for an individual young boy during the Battle of Lexington. Sam’s best friend, John, gets shot in the leg and Sam becomes even more scared of the British Soldiers. Sam’s mother helps bandage John’s leg and orders Sam not to go back outside. He does not listen and runs out to meet the British. The Minutemen try a new strategy where they hide behind rocks and trees and shoot at the British. Sam spends the next few years fighting in the American Revolutionary War.

Theme: This book exemplifies what it would be like for a young boy to fight in the Revolutionary War.

Activity One: Feelings

Origination of Idea: This activity was adapted from a similar activity seen during Heather Schilling’s class

Objective:
• Students will describe and illustrate the way Sam is feeling.

Description of Activity:
• Read the book out loud to the students
• When you have finished brainstorm some of the ways Sam might have felt throughout the story. List these feelings on the board
• Give the students a piece of construction paper and instruct them to fold it in half and then fold it in half again
• This should give them 4 boxes. Have them write one way how Sam was feeling in each box
• After they have written the feeling they should write a sentence explaining how and why he might have felt the way he did
• After they write the sentence, they should illustrate their sentence

Activity Two: John’s Perspective

Origination of Idea: This is an original idea from the brain of Julie Hamm

Objective:
• Students will use a different point of view to retell the story
Description of Activity:

- Have the students read the book in pairs or small groups
- When everyone has finished, discuss the traits of the different characters, the setting, and plot of the book
- Ask the students to write down the name of their favorite character (besides Sam) on a piece of paper
- Explain that they will retell the story from that character’s point of view (example: John will talk about getting shot and how much his leg hurts, Father will talk about being concerned about Sam, etc)
- Give them plenty of time to write down their version of the story
- The next day, after they have had plenty of time to add or delete parts, they will share their version of the story with the class
Title: An American Army of Two
Author: Janet Greeson
Publisher: Carolrhoda Books, Inc. Copyright Year: 1992
Reading Level: 2nd Grade Genre: Historical Fiction

Synopsis of Story:
Rebecca and Abigail Bates live in Massachusetts during the War of 1812, and work at the town harbor with their father. One day they see British sails and are told that if the American troops do not come soon to defend the town, that the British will burn the ships in the harbor. Thankfully, as the ship draws nearer, they hear the song, Yankee Doodle, which lets everyone know that the troops are coming. The British turn away because they are not seeking a fight. Rebecca and Abigail learn to play Yankee Doodle and sound exactly like the drummer and fifer of the American troops do. The sisters play the song to make the British believe the American troops are coming, saving the town.

Theme: This book has a theme of what it takes to be a hero

Activity One: March and Sing

Origination of Idea: This is an original idea from the brain of Julie Hamm

Objective:
• Students will march to the song, Yankee Doodle, just like the American soldiers used to

Description of Activity:
• Read the book out loud to the students
• Discuss why the soldiers played Yankee Doodle when they marched
• Teach the students the song, Yankee Doodle
• Go outside and teach the students to march (practice keeping in stride together)
• Let them sing and march at the same time
• If a student knows how to play the song on an instrument, let them play while they march. Explain that their role would be similar to the drummer or the fifer in the book

Activity Two: Drawing Flags

Origination of Idea: This is an original idea from the brain of Julie Hamm

Objectives:
• Students will understand what an American and British flag looks like
• Students will understand the meaning of each symbol on the flags
Description of Activity:

- After reading the book out loud to the class, talk about why the British had their flag flying high on their ships
- Ask the students what the American flag looks like
- Ask the students what the British flag looks like
- Talk about the different symbols on the flags and look up what they mean together
- Have each student fold a piece of paper in half
- On one side they will draw an American flag and on one side they will draw a British flag
- Under each flag, the students should write a sentence or two that describes the colors, symbols, or markings on the flag and why they are important
**Title:** Sam Collier and the Founding of Jamestown  
**Author:** Candice Ransom  
**Publisher:** Millbrook Press  
**Copyright Year:** 2006  
**Reading Level:** 2nd-3rd Grade  
**Genre:** Historical Fiction

**Synopsis of Story:**  
This is a story about what could have happened in the life of twelve-year-old Sam Collier during the first few months of settling Jamestown. It discusses taking his interactions with the Native Americans, taking care of John Smith, how he helped build the fort, and how he took care of John Smith when he was sick. Although Sam is young, he finds courage and works harder than most of the grown men who were supposed to be helping John Smith form a colony. Sam did not think they would survive when the ships left and would not be back for five months. Many people died and it made him nervous, but he persevered and learned to hunt for food. Although this story contains real historical events, the specific events in Sam’s life are not known.

**Theme:** This book has a theme of survival

**Activity One:** Board Game

**Origination of Idea:** This idea was adapted from a similar activity seen on the website: [http://www.englishcompanion.com/assignments/reading/103readingactivities.htm](http://www.englishcompanion.com/assignments/reading/103readingactivities.htm)

**Objectives:**  
- Students will use information from the book to form a board game about settling Jamestown

**Description of Activity:**  
- Before the students read the book, provide them with a quick summary of what it is about  
- Explain that after they read, they will be assigned groups and will construct a board game using elements in the story  
- Have the students read the book independently over a few class periods  
- Go over the directions for constructing the board game  
- The game pieces will be characters in the book  
- Cards with unfortunate events or positive events must be made for participants to draw when they land on a certain space (examples are: “You caught no fish today. Move back 2 spaces.” “You caught the sickness move back 5 spaces.” “The seeds you planted started to grow. Move ahead 3 spaces.”)  
- The board should be covered with illustrations of scenes from the book  
- The number of spaces and what else is included in the game is determined by the students, however it must somehow relate to the book  
- Encourage creativity!
Activity Two: E-mail a Friend

Origination of Idea: This idea was adapted from a similar activity seen on the website: http://www.englishcompanion.com/assignments/reading/103readingactivities.htm

Objectives:
• Students will express their opinion about the book they read with a friend

Description of Activity:
• After reading the book independently, have the students find a partner
• Explain that they are going to write a brief review of Sam Collier and the Founding of Jamestown, but they are going to e-mail their review to a friend in class (you should have school e-mail accounts set up where the students can only e-mail each other and is used only for class purposes)
• In their review they need to include their opinion of whether they did or did not enjoy reading this book and provide at least 2 specific reasons why they did or did not enjoy it. Also, they will list 2 things they learned from reading this book
• Their reasons for liking or disliking the book should relate directly to the text and deal with the subject, rather than the length of the book
• Then, students will respond to their partner’s e-mail, either agreeing or disagreeing with their partner’s comments.
• Have one student from each pair print the e-mails. (make sure each student’s original post and their reply are included)
• This activity should be done in the computer lab where you can monitor what is happening
Title: Cabin in the Snow
Author: Deborah Hopkins
Publisher: Simon & Shuster          Copyright Year: 2002
Reading Level: 4th grade          Genre: Historical Fiction

Synopsis of Story:
Charlie and his father head to town to with their horse and wagon to run some errands. When they arrive, they see that the town is being threatened by what Papa had called, “border ruffians from pro-slave Missouri.” Papa decides to stay and help protect the anti-slave town, leaving Charlie responsible for driving the wagon home to take care of Momma and the family. When he arrives home, a winter storm begins and Charlie has to show he is grown up enough to help Momma do the chores to prepare for a storm. Charlie usually forgets his chores because he is too busy daydreaming. However, he proves he is grown up by helping Momma, his sisters, and the baby survive the storm.

Theme: This book has a theme of responsibility

Activity One: Write a script

Origination of Idea: This is an original idea from the brain of Julie Hamm

Objective:
• Students will write a short conversation that might have happened between an anti-slave person and a pro-slave person.

Description of Activity:
• Have the students read the book independently and then discuss it in a small group
• Have them focus on the parts that describe the pro-slave and anti-slave opinions
• In pairs, students will come up with a conversation that might have taken place between two people in a town such as Lawrence
• The conversation should have each person saying at least 5 lines
• The opinions should be expressed clearly and must include information the students learned in the book

Activity Two: Vocabulary Blizzard

Origination of Idea: This is an original idea from the brain of Julie Hamm

Objective:
• Students will learn new vocabulary words while reading

Description of Activity:
• Prior to reading the book, have the children make 5 snowflakes out of plain white paper. Make sure that they have enough room to write on the snowflakes
• Have the students read the book independently, using a post-it note to keep track of words they find difficult or that they do not know the definition of
• The students will look up the words they did not know in the dictionary and will write the word and definition on the snowflake. Students should write big enough and neat enough that their classmates can read it as well. A minimum of 5 is required, but students may make more
• The teacher will construct a small cabin on the wall made of brown paper that is titled, Cabin in the Snow vocabulary
• Students will tape their snowflakes around the cabin, making it look like the cabin was in a blizzard, like in the book.
Title: The Schoolchildren’s Blizzard
Author: Marty Rhodes Figley

Publisher: Carolrhoda Books, Inc  
Copyright year: 2004

Reading Level: 2nd Grade  
Genre: Historical Fiction

Synopsis of Story:
Sarah and Annie went to school, thinking it would be a normal day. The sun was shining and it was warm for January. When they got to school, Miss Freeman, their teacher, had already begun the lesson in the one-room schoolhouse. When they went outside for lunch, it began to snow! It snowed very hard and the snow was so deep that it trapped everyone in the schoolhouse. The heavy snow was making the roof cave in, so Miss Freeman and a few of the older boys broke a window and instructed everyone to go outside. They all held onto a rope and walked over two miles to Miss Freeman’s house where everyone remained safe.

Theme: The theme of this book deals with having courage

Activity One: One-room Schoolhouse

Origination of Idea: This was an original idea from the brain of Julie Hamm

Objective:
- Students will draw a picture of our school now and a picture of the one-room schoolhouse and describe the differences

Description of Activity:
- Read the book out loud to the students
- Have a brief discussion, focusing on the school the children attended.
- How was it different from our school? What was similar?
- Then have them take a piece of paper and fold it in half hamburger style
- On one side they should draw a picture of the school they attend now
- On the other side they should draw a picture of the school Sarah and Annie attended
- Under each picture they will list characteristics that makes them different
- On the back of their paper, they will write a paragraph about whether they would prefer to have school like we do now, or if they would prefer to have school in 1888.

Activity Two: Interview

Origination of Idea: This was an original idea from the brain of Julie Hamm

Objective:
- Students will gain a better understanding of what it is like to survive a real blizzard
Description of Activity:

- After you read the book out loud to the students, have them think of activities they do on snow days.
- Ask them what they would do if the snow was so high that they could not go outside?
- Then tell them about the blizzard of 1978 and show them pictures.
- Have the students do an interview with parents, grandparents, or friends of the family that were alive during the blizzard of 1978.
- If they do not know anyone, you can either provide someone for them and they can conduct a phone interview or they can choose to do a research project on the blizzard of 1978.
- Brainstorm as a class some questions they should ask (or research). Some examples might be “How did you feel? Were you able to go outside? What did you do all day? Etc
- They should write down answers to their questions and then they will share them with the class during a discussion.
This early reader features Sam, a boy who joins his father as a Minuteman, and takes place in Concord and Lexington on the day the American Revolution begins. At 62 pages, with simple vocabulary, this book does a nice job of capturing the uncertainty and excitement of these events for a young person, and would be a good selection for a young reader interested in history.