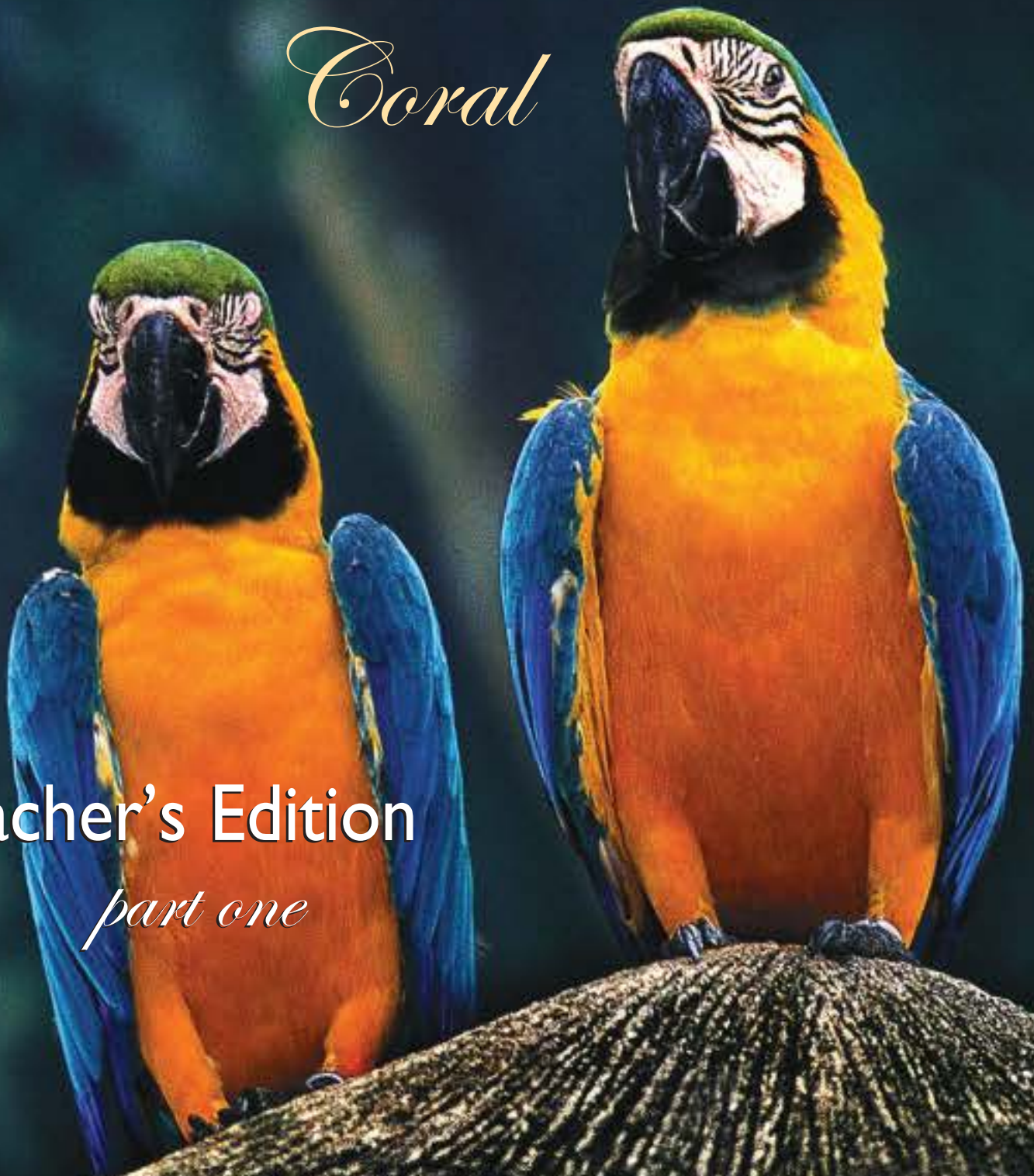


Mosdos Press *Literature*

Coral

Teacher's Edition

part one



MOSDOS PRESS *Literature*

CORAL

Part One
Workbook Answer Guide



Mosdos Press
CLEVELAND, OHIO

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MOSDOS PRESS
Literature

ANTHOLOGY SERIES

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unit 1

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SAMUEL'S CHOICE (P. 16)

A good way to start this unit—and the semester in literature—is to have a class discussion about stories.

Ask your students the questions below, and any others that you feel will be helpful to get them talking and thinking. Remember that storytelling is common to all human cultures, whatever their level of “sophistication.”

- What *is* a story? (After all, if a series of events is described, it is not necessarily a story!) What does a narrative have to have in order to *be* a story?
- What makes a story a *good* story?
- Does anyone read them stories now?
- Did anyone read to them, when they were younger?
- Has anyone ever told them a story, without reading it from a book?
- Do they, themselves, ever read stories to younger children?
- What is their favorite story? Why do they especially like it?

You can finish this **Getting Started** discussion by talking, just briefly, about the elements of a story. The definitions in quotation marks below are included to be helpful to the teacher, and are not intended for most students at the fifth grade level.

A story starts with a **beginning**, or **exposition**, “a setting forth of the meaning or purpose in a piece of writing,” when we are introduced to

- the **characters** (the people in the story)
- the **setting** (the time and the place)
- the **situation** (“a combination of circumstances at a particular moment; a critical, trying, or unusual state of affairs; the problem in the action of a narrative or drama”).

(You can talk with your students about any story using these terms or more familiar synonyms. It may be useful and funny for you to apply them—or ask your students to apply them—to the popular children’s stories with which they are familiar.)

Then there is **rising action**, as events unfold, and we see what sort of **conflict** or problem the main character has. Is the main character having a problem with another person? With a set of circumstances? Within himself or herself, as in a personal struggle over what is the right thing to do?

At some point, the **main character** has to make a decision, or take action, in order to deal with the conflict. When the main character does this—or decides to do it—is the **turning point** in the story.

The turning point may or may not be the **climax** or highest moment of the story. In the story that follows, the turning point is *not* the climax. This is because the emotional climax for the main character is not the situational climax of the story.

(Specifically, on page 24, the **turning point** comes when Samuel says, “I looked at my hands, grown strong from pulling ropes and oars and sacks. Then I knew my choice. Those hands now were going to pull people, pull them to freedom.”)

A **not-quite-the-climax** comes on page 26, when Major Mordecai Gist (who actually commanded the Maryland 400 at the Battle of Long Island) says to Samuel, “out in that creek you did more than many a free man for your country. I’d take it as a privilege if you’d consent to be my orderly and march beside me.” The **situation climax** occurs on page 29, when Samuel tells us, “We stumbled ashore on Manhattan Island, where kind people wrapped us in blankets. They were smiling—the rope was across!”)

After the climax of a story—and you may want to tell your students that people will not always agree regarding the moment at which the climax comes—there is **falling action**, as the story unwinds, and events come to a **resolution**, or **conclusion**. It is this cycle of opening, rising, peaking, falling, and resolving that makes stories so satisfying.

In the **Literary Components** that are given page for page, the elements of the story are indicated in the appropriate places.

SLOWER THAN THE REST (P. 34)

You can begin this selection by asking students, what is a turtle? Then have students write down three facts about turtles. At the end of the discussion below, they can see if they got the facts right.

Here are some words you may want to write on the board with their definitions.

chelonian: resembling, having the characteristics of, or being a tortoise or turtle

cold-blooded: having a body temperature that is not regulated by the body, but by the temperature of the environment (captive turtles need to live in glass boxes, so that sunlight reaches them)

herpetology: a branch of zoology that deals with reptiles and amphibians

reptile: air-breathing vertebrates that are cold-blooded and have scales. Most have short legs (or no legs), and lay eggs.

vertebrate: a class of animals that includes fishes, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals. Vertebrates have an internal skeleton formed of cartilage, bone, or both. The skeleton consists of a backbone, which partly encloses a spinal cord; a skull, which encloses the brain; and usually two pairs of limbs.

Turtles are four-legged reptiles. The special feature of the turtle is its shell, which has a different shape and different markings depending on the species. The shell consists of an arched upper shell grown fast to the backbone and a flat lower shell grown fast to the breastbone. The upper and lower shells are connected by a bony bridge on either side. Box turtles have a hinged lower shell. This allows them to close the two shells together and completely hide head, tail, and limbs.

Turtles live in water all or some of the time, but all breathe air, which means they can drown. All turtles lay their eggs on land in nests that vary with each species. Although the eggs are covered, they hatch from the heat of the sun. Many animals like to eat turtle eggs, and the young are very vulnerable before their shells harden. Freshwater and marine turtles always return to the same shoreline to lay their eggs, which enables humans to kill large numbers of them.

Turtles live on every continent except Antarctica in ponds, rivers, oceans, forests, grasslands, and deserts. Turtles really like tropical and subtropical climates, because they are cold-blooded.

Turtles come in many sizes. The great leatherback sea turtle has a shell length up to eight feet, and can weigh as much as 2000 lbs. The Galapagos Islands near South America and the Island of Aldabra off the coast of East Africa are known for their giant tortoises. These reach up to four feet in length. The Galapagos tortoises were captured and killed by whalers. They were an easy kill, because they move so slowly. In 1900, only a few remained. Strenuous efforts by conservationists to breed them in protected places saved them from extinction.

Turtles have no housing problem. Their greatest enemy is man. Their next greatest enemy is fire.

Turtles are fascinating and there is a great deal of interesting material to teach you about them.

KATE SHELLEY (P. 44)

It is important for children to develop the ability to listen to literature, and to be able to understand what they are hearing. This is a skill that we can start to develop in the early grades.

These aural comprehension exercises will make up 25% of the **Getting Started** activities. These are not graded, nor are student answers passed in. This is a chance for students to see how well they do, and to make progress with this skill over the school year. Please read the first three paragraphs of *Kate Shelley: Bound for Legend* aloud to your class. Read them aloud a second time, and ask students to pick the best multiple-choice answer to each of ten

Most pages are omitted from this preview.

This content is included with purchase of the book.

MOSDOS PRESS

LESSON IN LITERATURE . . .

WHAT IS A STORY?

- A story has four elements: plot, character, setting, and theme.
- The **plot** is the action of the story. It is what happens to the characters from the beginning to the end of the story.
- The **characters** are the people, animals, or even objects (for example, robots) that the story is about. The action happens to, or is caused by, the characters in the story.
- The **setting** is the time and place in which the story's events occur. The setting may be described in great detail or hardly at all. When you remember a story, you almost always remember its setting.
- The **theme** is the main idea presented in the story. It is the idea that the author wishes to present through the plot, characters, and setting.

THINK ABOUT IT!

1. Can you summarize the story's plot in one sentence? Try it!
2. The story is really about three characters. Who are they?
3. Where does the main character live? What time of day is it? What is the weather like? Does the action take place indoors or outside? Together, these details make up the setting of the story.
4. In your opinion, who is the most important person in this story? What is his connection to the main idea, or theme, of the story?

To Know Freedom

Robert stood on what looked like a narrow stone path, only the path didn't go anywhere. Instead, it made a hexagon on the ground.

Robert reread the directions Grandpa had scrawled from memory.

Follow picket fence out back to white gazebo with wrought iron trim.

"Gazebo." That was a word he'd had to look up. "A free-standing, roofed, usually open-sided structure providing a shady resting place."*

Where was that gazebo? Except for the abandoned farmhouse and the rickety picket fence, Robert didn't see any structure of any sort.

Not being certain where he was made Robert uneasy. How much more frightening his great-great grandfather's journey must have been to this same spot, heading north from Virginia to this Pennsylvania town.

Frustrated and hot from the late afternoon sun, Robert plopped down on the grass in the center of the hexagon. No shade here.

Shade! That was it!

Suddenly Robert realized that he was in the exact right spot. He had found the gazebo—or where it used to be. Someone must've torn down the gazebo's structure. The stone hexagon was the foundation.

He leaped to his feet.

From the center of the gazebo, head due north 150 paces.

Grandpa had told him countless times the way his own grandfather had used the moss on the trees, the wind, and the North Star to keep his course on his journey to freedom.

Robert looked up at the sun. At 4 p.m. the sun would be to the west. Robert turned north and started counting steps.

At 120 Robert noticed a small cluster of simple stone grave markers peeking out amid tall weeds up ahead. He broke into a trot.

Pushing aside the weeds, Robert found the headstone he was looking for.

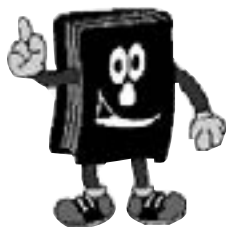
Tearing a sheet of paper from his notebook, he held the paper up to the stone and began rubbing with the edge of his pencil. Slowly, the inscription came into view:

"Here lies Nathan R. Smith,
Who by the Grace of the Almighty
Lived to Know Freedom."

Grandpa was going to be very proud!

* Definition from *The American Heritage Dictionary*. Second College Edition. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1982.

LESSON IN LITERATURE



1. A young boy searches for, and finds, the grave of his great-great grandfather, who was an escaped slave.
2. Robert, his grandfather, and his great-great grandfather.
3. Robert lives in a Pennsylvania town. It is late afternoon. It is hot. The action takes place out of doors.
4. The great-great grandfather is the main character. The theme of the story is freedom and how some must struggle to achieve it.

seLeCtIOn vOCaBULaRY

barges: flat-bottomed vessels, usually pushed or towed through the water, for carrying freight or passengers

bayonet: a long-pointed steel weapon attached to the open end of a gun

buoys: a floating object, fastened or anchored so that it remains in one place

gale: a strong wind

glimpsed: saw for a brief moment

musket: an old-fashioned gun used by foot soldiers

recruits: new members of the army

retreat: move back, away from the enemy

wharf: a pier; a wooden walkway built next to or jutting into the water so that boats can come alongside it to load or unload

wounded: injured

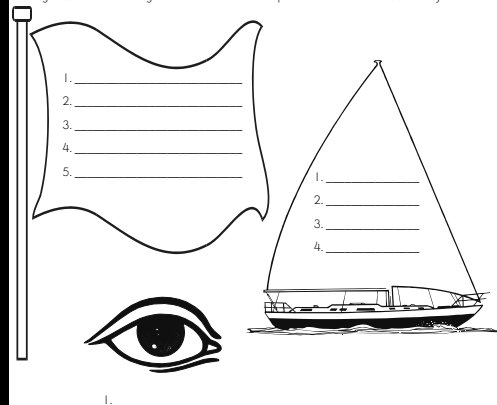
barges	buoys	glimpse	recruits	wharf
bayonet	gale	muskets	retreat	wounded

1. The war raged. Everywhere, men in uniform could be seen marching, their rifles and _____ (old-fashioned guns) slung over their shoulders.
2. Some of the men carried guns with long, polished barrels and gleaming _____ (pointed steel weapon on barrel of guns).
3. These were the new _____ (new members of the army). They had an eager, youthful look.
4. Some of the older soldiers had weary, careworn expressions. These men had seen their fellow soldiers lying _____ (injured) or dying on the battlefield, with no one to help them.
5. Today, all the soldiers, young and old, were headed to the _____ (pier) at the beach, to meet the ship that would bring them weapons and ammunition.
6. Papers and dust swirled in the wind as a fierce _____ (wind) from the ocean made its way inland.
7. The red and white _____ (floating markers) in the water bobbed up and down furiously as the waves grew choppy.
8. Little boys ran to the edge of the water, hoping to get a _____ (look) of the big ship from across the ocean.
9. Although the soldiers kept shooting them away, they refused to _____ (go back).
10. Finally, a loud ship's horn was heard. The tugboats slowly pulled the _____ (flat-bottomed boats) out to sea to meet the ship.

The sailors would load them with the precious cargo they had brought, and the war would be won.

One if by Land Two if by Sea And Three if by Neither One!

A good way to learn new words is to group them by idea. Your list of vocabulary words includes five words that could be used in a story about a battle. Four of the words could be used in a story about boats and sailing. One of the words could be used for a variety of subjects. Place the five "battle" words inside the flag. Place the four "sailing" words inside the sail. And put the one word left under the "eye."



BACKGROUND BYTES

Samuel's Choice affords rich possibilities for discussion. Literature offers us broad possibilities for educating our children. Moreover, it is important that students learn that we do not just pass over clues and data that we do not understand. In order for students to be steeped in what they read, and in order for them to learn how to create their own literature, they must understand the need to familiarize themselves with the “current events” of historical fiction. Moreover, they need to see that writers of any kind of fiction ought to be sticklers for the truth—historical fact, contemporary culture, and emotional truth.

Among other things, the events of *Samuel's Choice* commemorate the Battle of the Maryland 400, the first major battle of the American Revolution. In fact, there is today a monument in Prospect Park, Brooklyn, that commemorates the Maryland 400, their contribution and sacrifice.

As *Samuel's Choice* repeatedly attests, Washington's Continental Army was “outnumbered, outgunned, and outsupplied.” On August 27, 1776, four hundred Maryland troops “led a rear-guard action to check the British advance and allow the retreat of Washington's greatly outnumbered army.” The American Army was surrounded by the British, when Mordechai Gist led “a desperate movement to cover the retreating American troops.” The men from Maryland launched six counter attacks to meet the British in and around the two-story Cortelyou House, which commanded the only escape route for the Americans.

History tells us that the lands surrounding the stone house were soaked with blood. The sixth attack of Gist and his Marylanders was shattered by British reinforcements. With the British in control of the Cortelyou House, the surviving Marylanders were unable to cross the creek at Dam Road. They stumbled across the marsh into the swamp. When the fight was over, only ten of the 250 heroic Marylanders had returned. Major Mordecai Gist was one of the ten survivors.

Another subject for discussion—given the thematic importance of freedom and liberty in the piece—is the circumstances of slaves during the Revolutionary War period.

In *Samuel's Choice*, the character Sana identifies wholeheartedly with the war effort. She believes that freedom for America will mean freedom for her, personally. As the story unfolds, the author portrays an environment in which the norms and restraints of the old order are shattered, where liberty and freedom are the bywords. In this environment, Sana believes, even a former slave will find freedom.

At the outset of the story, Samuel attributes his slavery to “the laws of the Crown Colony.” The implication seems to be that, once free of those laws, the Americans will choose freedom for all. Historically, this may or may not be an accurate picture of the environment in which an escaped slave found himself when he joined Washington's army. As the Revolutionary War progressed and moved into every region of the colonies, slaves, in fact, sided with whichever army promised them their personal freedom. Since the British actively attempted to recruit slaves, more African

Americans fought for the Crown of England. At the same time, other African Americans fought side by side with white soldiers during the battles of Lexington, Concord, and Bunker Hill, and the first man to die in the war was Crispus Attucks, a black man. At one point, George Washington barred recruitment of black soldiers. However, towards the end of the war, a black regiment was established.

Although the hero and heroine of the story are slaves under *British* law, the author makes no reference to the complex issue of racial prejudice in colonial America. Nor is the status of escaped or freed slaves under the Revolution made clear. It is obvious that the author does not wish to enter these murky waters. He limits himself to inspiring his young reader with a tale of courage and patriotism.

Language alert

What explains the repeated mention of **buttermilk** in the story? Have any of your students ever drunk buttermilk? In times gone by (and this is probably still true in countries where people have less money and fewer refrigerators) nothing was wasted in the kitchen—even the liquid that remained after butter was churned. A *churn* was a vessel for making butter in which milk or cream was agitated in order to separate the oily globules from the watery medium. The liquid was set aside and allowed to combine with airborne bacteria. It became thicker and developed a delicious, tangy flavor. Buttermilk is not only good to drink, but also is a useful ingredient in waffles, pancakes, cakes, and biscuits.

INTO "SAMUEL'S CHOICE"

For many people, both children and adults, theme is (a) a difficult concept to grasp in the abstract, and (b) difficult to articulate in words for specific works. Tell your students that the theme is usually what we react to most powerfully when we read a story. It is the source of the feelings we are left with when we are done reading. But feelings can be very hard to put in words. Looking for the theme, trying to find the words to express it, is a delicate undertaking. Students should know that you, yourself, may have difficulty with theme at times—and that not only is there often more than one theme, people sometimes do not even agree about the theme.

So, what is theme, after all?

The theme is the meaning of a story.

The theme is the message of a story.

The theme stands above the facts and setting of the story. It is what the author wants to tell us about what it is like to be human, or what it is like to be a creature with feelings. The theme is what gives us the feelings we are left with when the story ends. The theme of the story is what the author believes to be true not just for *that* story or poem, but for human beings in every time and in every land. Themes speak to such issues of the human condition as struggle for freedom, bravery, courage, personal responsibility, fairness, the individual versus government, the occasional need to put principles over laws, and a host of other truths and conflicts.

What does it mean to be free?

How does a person change his or her life, and thereby gain greater freedom?

How can one group of people be kept slaves, when they live among another group fighting for self-government and liberty?

How does a person make a decision, when they have no experience making decisions or choices?

Can a person be sympathetic, when no one has ever sympathized with him or her?

Why may it be important to be alone at times?

EYES ON...HISTORICAL FICTION

Historical fiction is based on, or set within, actual historical events. Historical fiction is peopled by important historical figures, whose behavior within the story should make sense given what evidence exists in the historical record. Most writers of historical fiction do meticulous research. An error would make their story absurd.

The great pleasure and puzzle of historical fiction always comes from the clever mixing of fact with fiction—that *could have been fact*. After reading historical fiction, it is fun to do research to determine what the historical records show and what is the author's invention. History does not occur without people: people being good, people being bad, and people trying to figure out how to gain the advantage or avoid suffering. Remind your students that dialogue in historical fiction is virtually always invented—unless the author has quoted from actual letters, diary entries, newspaper articles, and speeches written at the time.

The **elements of a story** are discussed above in **Getting started**. As this is just the beginning of the

Blueprint for Reading

INTO . . . *Samuel's Choice*

Samuel is 14 years old. He is a slave in Brooklyn, New York, at the time of the American Revolution. He sees American soldiers losing in a battle with the British. Samuel has his master's boat; he could help rescue wounded soldiers. But Americans have made his people slaves. Freedom from the British will not mean freedom for slaves. Samuel must decide whether to risk his life to save George Washington's soldiers, or simply stand and watch the fight.

When you have finished the story, think about whether Samuel has made the right choice. What would have become of him had he remained loyal to Isaac van Ditmas? What would he have thought of himself if he had remained "neutral," refusing or afraid to help either side?



. . . *Historical Fiction*

This is a story that *might* have occurred in Brooklyn, New York in 1776. The background and some of the details are true. The Revolutionary War, fought between the American colonies and England did, of course, take place. It is a fact, too, that in 1776, one-third of the people in Brooklyn were slaves. However, the characters and the plot of *Samuel's Choice* are **fictional**, that is to say, made up by the author. Stories whose backgrounds are true but whose plot and characters are made up, are called **historical fiction**. *Samuel's Choice* is a good story with interesting characters. The time and place are clearly described. Samuel makes a difficult choice. This is a story of hope.

16 ~ Unit I

book, work with your students to understand and find the **exposition**, and to express it in words.

Have your students name the **characters**, and help them determine which of the characters are most important and which are secondary. Samuel is both the main character and the narrator. The story is told through his eyes. Calling all of the rest of the characters **secondary characters** hardly seems fair or accurate, since they are of varying importance. In historical fiction, it is often the secondary characters that were famous in history. They may or may

not directly participate in the action of the story. Here, George Washington is only mentioned, but Major Mordecai Gist talks with Samuel and engages him.

In historical fiction, **setting** must be very specific, and true to the time.

As you move with your students through the story, point out the **rising action**, the **turning point** for Samuel, and the **situational climax**. As the story winds down, point to the **falling action**, and the **resolution** or **conclusion**.

SUMMING UP THE PLOT

- A young slave writes that when he was 14, Isaac van Ditmas, a rich farmer, bought him.
- The slave was taken from his parents to work in the Ditmas flour mill in Brooklyn.
- Van Ditmas bought other slaves at the same time, including Sana and Toby, to care for the kitchen and gardens of his big house on New York Harbor.
- The Heights of Brooklyn overlook the East River and Manhattan Island; in those days the town of Brooklyn was small.

- The flour mill stands on Gowanus Creek, and winds out of the harbor into green fields, ponds, and marshes.

LITERARY COMPONENTS

- **1. exposition; Characters; source of Modern name:** The first two sentences establish the master/slave relationship between Isaac van Ditmas and the unnamed narrator. We see the Dutch name *van Ditmas* today in Brooklyn's *Ditmas Avenue*.
- **2. Geographical reference:** Flushing, New York is an actual city. The English called the town Flushing, because they were anglicizing the Dutch city name *Vlissingen*. In Vlissingen, the Dutch had harbored English refugees before they embarked for the New World.
- **3. Geographical reference:** The Gowanus Creek is likely today's polluted Gowanus Canal. The name is also used in the Gowanus Expressway, a 6.1 mile elevated highway built in 1941 that connects Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens, and Long Island. The highway is one of the most congested in the nation.
- **4. Origin of City name; History in Historical Fiction:** The name *Brooklyn* is an adaptation of the Dutch name *Breukelen*, which means broken land. The Dutch established the village with the help of the Dutch West India Company in 1646, and named it after a town in the Netherlands. During the 1770s, one-third of the population of Brooklyn was slave.
- **5. Origin of City name:** Manhattan Island was originally named *Man-a-hat-a* by the Algonquin Indians.
- **6. setting; Geographical reference:** Setting is gently and clearly established in paragraphs 2 and 3. *The Narrows* refers to a strait (a narrow passage of water connecting to larger bodies of water) between Staten Island and Long Island in New York Bay.

GUIDING THE READING

Literal

Q: Who is telling the story?

A: The young slave.

Q: How old is the slave, when Isaac van Ditmas purchases him?

A: He is fourteen years old.

Q: Where does the slave work?

A: The slave works in a flour mill on Gowanus Creek in Brooklyn.

Q: Where does the slave live?

A: The slave lives in Brooklyn.

Q: What connects Brooklyn town with the narrows?

A: The long South Road that runs across Long Island's hills, through fields of wheat and rye.

anaLYtICaL

Q: Why doesn't the slave who narrates the story live with his parents?

A: When Isaac van Ditmas buys the slave from Ditmas's aunt, he does not buy his parents. So the slave can no longer live with his mother and father.

Q: What kind of land does Gowanus Creek wind out into?

A: Green fields, ponds, and marshes.

- Farmer Isaac is strict: The slaves work from sunrise to sunset.
- The stone wheel of the mill is driven by the water flowing in and out of the creek. They grind wheat to make bread.
- Van Ditmas is stingy, and the slave goes to sleep hungry.
- When van Ditmas sees that the slave has grown strong, he teaches him about the currents between Brooklyn and Manhattan, so that he can row

► **7. Characterization:** We learn about Farmer Isaac when the slave writes, “Our day began at sunrise and ended when the light faded.”

► **8. Characterization of Farmer Isaac and of the narrator; Onomatopoeia:** The farmer does not feed his slaves. The boy is so hungry that when he goes to bed, his stomach is *growling*.

► **9. Idioms:** *Setting a sail* means putting the sail in position to catch the wind; *holding a course* means not veering from the right path or direction the boat or ship is traveling.

► **10. Understanding the Character and the nature of the Conflict; theme:** *I was his property . . . and he could do what he wanted with me.* What the slave says here goes to the heart of his difficulty making a decision further along in the story. Here is a person who experiences himself as having no rights and no autonomy. He is not a person. He is owned, like a thing.

► **11. Historical reference:** *According to the laws of the Crown Colony.* Crown colonies were part of the British system of colonial administration. Crown colonies were governed internally by a British-appointed governor and a locally elected assembly. A modern example of a crown colony was Hong Kong until 1997. The motto of the British Commonwealth of Nations was, “May the sun never set on the British Empire.”

► **12. Powerful Characterization:** *Work you do not choose to do is always tiring.*

Literal

Q: Which two words does the narrator use to describe Farmer Isaac?

A: The narrator uses the words strict and stingy.

Q: Is the bread made at the mill?

A: No. The flour is brought to bakers in Manhattan.

Q: What does Farmer Isaac do when he sees that his young slave has grown strong and can row a boat?

A: He teaches him about the currents that flow between Brooklyn and Manhattan, about how to set a sail, and how to hold a course. In other words, he teaches him how to sail the boat.

Q: Why does Farmer Isaac want the slave to know how to use the boat?

A: He wants the slave to row Mrs. van Ditmas and her daughters over to Manhattan or down the Brooklyn shore to Staten Island.

Q: after Isaac van Ditmas teaches the slave how to use the boat, what does he do to him?

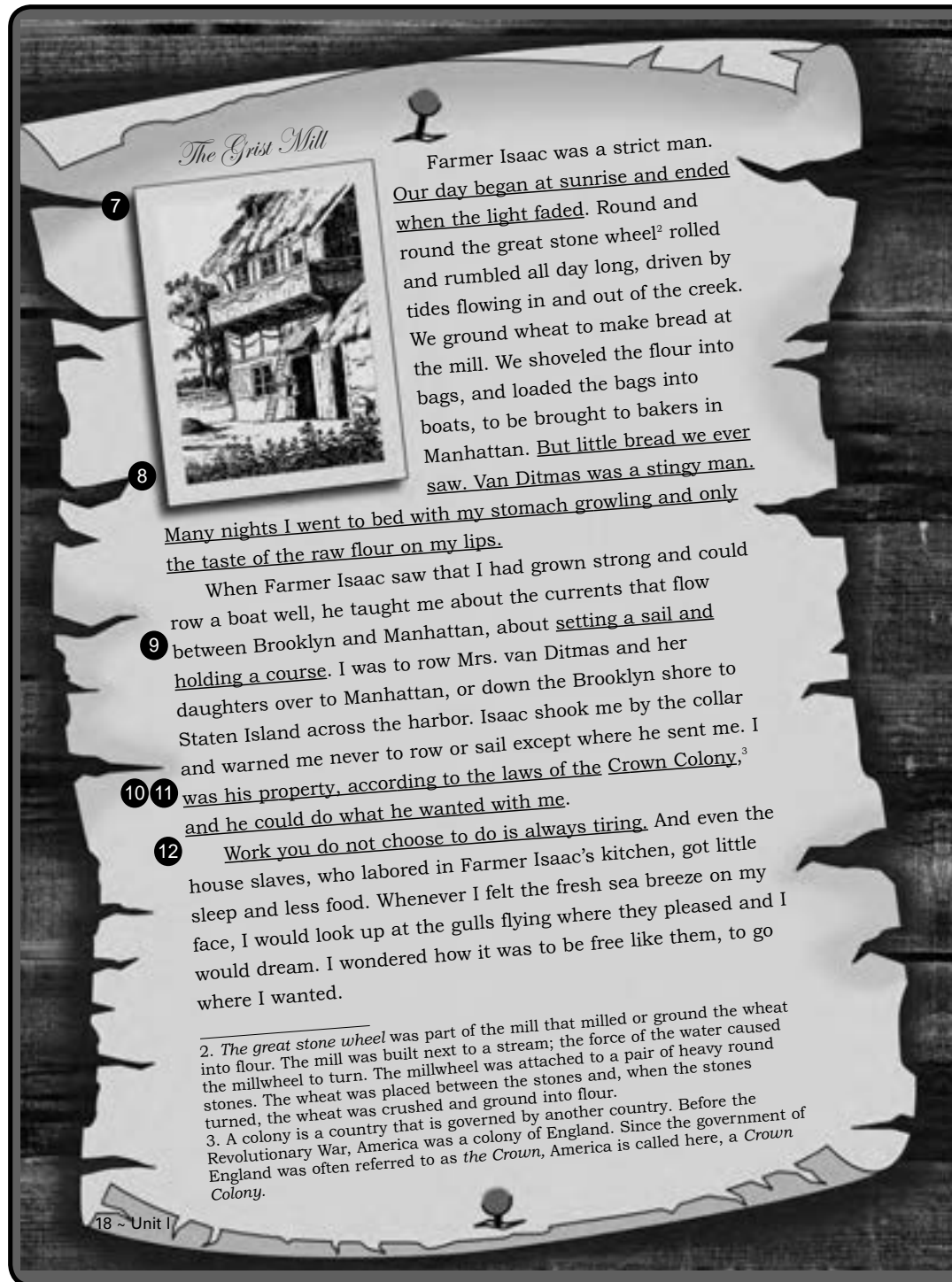
A: Van Dittmas shakes him by the collar and warns him never to use the boat unless he is told to do so.

Mrs. van Ditmas and her daughters over to Manhattan and Staten Island.

- After teaching him to use the boat, Isaac shakes Samuel and warns him never to row anywhere except where his master sends him.
- Samuel says that he is Isaac's property, to

do with as he pleased.

- Work you do not choose to do is always tiring, he says.
- Whenever Samuel feels the breeze on his face, he looks up at the gulls and imagines what it would be like to be free.



Q: Which kind of grain is ground at the mill to make flour for bread?

A: Wheat is ground into flour to be made into bread.

Q: according to which laws does Isaac say the slave is his property?

A: According to the laws of the Crown Colony.

Q: What does samuel do, whenever he feels a fresh sea breeze on his face?

A: He looks up at the gulls flying and dreams, wondering what it would be like to be as free as they are.

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Q: the slave describes Farmer Isaac as strict. strict usually means that a person insists that others follow the rules exactly. How is Farmer Isaac worse than strict?

A: Farmer Isaac makes his slaves work from morning to night. He does not feed them. This has nothing to do with rules. Rather, Isaac is inhumane, irresponsible, and cruel.

Q: When samuel looks at the gulls, what does freedom mean to him?

A: When he looks at the gulls, being free means to go wherever he would want.

SUMMING UP THE PLOT

- America is ruled by the King of England, and these are troubled times.
- A night comes when Manhattan Island is lit up with a hundred bonfires.
- The slaves gather and hear cheers and shouts from Manhattan Island.
- There is the sound of drums and fifes, songs, and cannon firing.
- Old Toby says that that is the sound of people going free.

- The narrator wonders, What is it, that makes people think they can change their lives?
- When the Sons of Liberty come by, van Ditmas locks the slaves in the house.
- The slaves argue. Liberty has nothing to do with Africans.
- Sana maintains that none of them will be free unless they take the risk.

LITERARY COMPONENTS

► **13. setting expanded; rising action:** *America, being ruled by the king of England, was not a separate country. And these were troubled times in all the colonies.*

► **14. Characters; Characterization; rising action; theme:** The reader is introduced to Sana and old Toby through their dialogue. Toby compares King George III with van Ditmas. Sana asks Toby how people become free. We see from their discussion that Toby is aware of events occurring in the colonies, and that the slaves think seriously about their lives. What is not discussed is the possibility of the slaves joining up with the British. In fact, many more slaves joined the British than fought on the side of the colonists.

► **15. Historical reference:** When Toby says that the people became free by writing the words down on paper, he is referring to the writing and signing of the Declaration of Independence.

► **16. theme; Characterization; Inner Dialogue:** It is clear the events and the discussion lead the yet-unnamed narrator to think about personal freedom—and the notion that some people feel they can change their lives. Stated as the question, *What was it...that made people think they could change their lives?*, underscores the novelty of such an idea and its poignancy.

► **17. Historical reference:** The first Sons of Liberty organizations were in New York City and Boston. They corresponded and communicated with other Sons of Liberty groups that grew up in New England, the Carolinas, Virginia, and Georgia. Sons of Liberty were members of the upper and middle classes.

► **18. Characterization:** We learn more about Sana and that she can write her name and she can read.

► **19. Foreshadowing; Theme; Samuel's Fundamental Conflict:** Sana says that, "Nobody here's gonna be free unless they take the risk."

GUIDING THE READING

Literal

Q: Who rules america at the time of this story?

A: The King of England rules America (which is why it is a Crown Colony).

Q: What do the slaves hear from across the water?

A: They hear the echo of cheers and shouts, and the sound of drums and fifes, songs, and cannon firing.

Q: according to old toby, what is making all that racket?

A: He says that it is the sound of people going free.

Q: What does toby answer, when sana asks how the people could become free?

A: Toby says that they just said they were free, and wrote the words down on paper.

Q: What is Sana's response to this?

A: She laughs and says that to be free you've got to do more than say so—such people as the King of England and Isaac van Ditmas don't care what people say.

Q: What does Isaac van Ditmas do when the sons of Liberty come waving flags?

A: He locks the slaves in the house.

Q: What does sana claim it takes to be free?

A: She says that none of them will be free unless they take a risk.

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Q: Why does samuel say that "these . . . [are] troubled times"?

A: Answers will depend on students' knowledge of American history. But this is the time when the colonies are trying to break from British rule.

Q: Do you know what the paper is called, on which the colonists wrote down the words saying they were free?

A: The very famous paper is called the Declaration of Independence.

Q: Why does the narrator wonder what makes people think they can change their lives?

A: He wonders, because he is a slave and he would like to know what it is to be free.

Q: Isaac, however, does not want his slaves to see the sons of Liberty or the Proclamation. Why?

A: Perhaps Isaac realizes that words about freedom will fire the imaginations of his slaves.

SUMMING UP THE PLOT

- The talk among the slaves makes the narrator's head spin.
- When the Declaration of Independence is nailed to a tree, Isaac van Ditmas tears it down and stamps on it.
- Sana promises she will teach Samuel, the narrator, to read.
- Sana brings Samuel jars of buttermilk for him to drink and then fill with flour.
- She says the flour will be bread for their freedom day.

- One morning they awake in the slave quarters to the thunder of great guns in the harbor.
- Sana grins and says Washington's come to New York. The Americans are practicing with their guns on Governors Island, to scare off the British.
- Isaac van Ditmas sends his wife and daughters to live with an old uncle in Staten Island.
- Samuel sees the British army in Staten Island, where they have pitched their tents by the thousands.

LITERARY COMPONENTS

► **20. Characterization; Idiom:** The narrator is not used to standing firm on one side of an issue or the other. He just doesn't know what to make of things. The talk among the slaves just *makes his head spin*.

► **21. Characterization:** The narrator is finally identified by name, as *Samuel*. He is no longer just a generic slave.

► **22. setting; History in Historical Fiction; rising action:** *So the summer of 1776 ...passed on.* This will be an important summer. The final draft of the Declaration of Independence will be ratified on July 9, 1776. On August 22, the British will land 20,000 troops on Long Island. On August 27, the Continental Army will fight its first battle of the Revolutionary War. Defending Gowanus road will be a major element—and a major disaster—for the Americans.

► **23. sensory Image, appeal to sense of taste:** *...a cool jar of buttermilk...*

► **24. symbolism; theme:** A loaf of bread and the flour used to make it are going to be a symbol of freedom. This harkens back to earlier in the story, when Samuel goes to bed hungry with just the taste of raw flour on his lips. As a slave, he is not given bread to eat.

► **25. rising action:** The war is moving towards Brooklyn. The slaves awaken one morning in the slave quarters to the sound of thunder from great guns.

► **26. Historical (and Contemporary) reference:** Governors Island is a 172-acre island located a half-mile from the southern tip of Manhattan in New York harbor. Its name comes from the time when New York was a British colony and the colonial assembly reserved the island for the exclusive use of New York's royal governors.

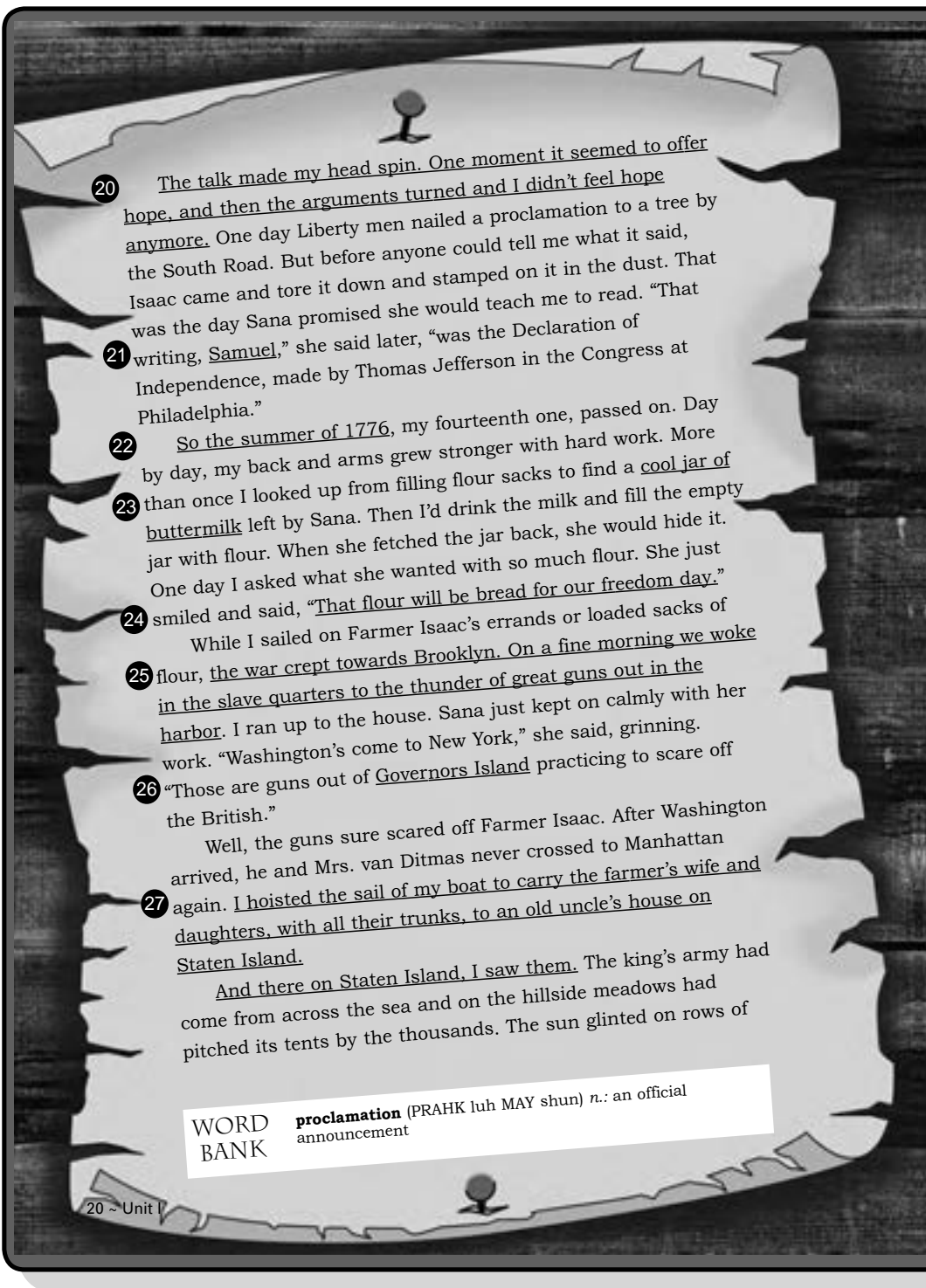
► **27. rising action:** Samuel hoists sail and carries Mrs. van Ditmas and their daughters to Staten Island. On Staten Island, Samuel sees the king's army.

GUIDING THE READING

Literal

Q: samuel sends back the buttermilk jar filled with flour. What is the flour for?

A: Sana is going to use the flour to make bread for their freedom day.



Q: What does Isaac van Ditmas do when he is frightened by the gunfire on Governors Island?

A: He sends his wife and daughters off to Staten Island, with all of their trunks, to live with an old uncle.

Q: How do we know from Samuel's account that the king's army has many soldiers?

A: He says that they had pitched their tents on the hillside meadows by the thousands.

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Q: Why does the talk among the slaves make Samuel's head spin?

A: At one moment the talk makes him hope to be free, and then the talk turns and he feels discouraged. He doesn't know how to think about this by himself—he is just a boy and has never been allowed to think for himself—and so his hopes and fears ride on the words of the others.

SUMMING UP THE PLOT

- Back at the big house, Samuel tells what he's seen. The slaves predict that the thousands of Redcoats will whip the Liberty Boys but good.
- Sana insists that General Washington will find a way.
- Joseph Martin comments that it is no business for them, black slaves.
- Samuel thinks the slaves are right. How can American farmers and merchants defeat an army of real soldiers?

LITERARY COMPONENTS

- **28. Historical referent:** The term *Redcoat* comes from their uniform, and denotes a member of the British armed forces in America during the Revolutionary War.
- **29. simile; Foreshadowing:** They spread over the green grass *like streams of blood*. Samuel's vision is appropriate for the fate of the Continental Army, which suffered a devastating loss at the Battle of Brooklyn.
- **30. Characterization; Question Historical accuracy:** Sana clearly identifies with the colonial cause. Did slaves always support the colonists? Would they have been better off siding with the British? Or would it make no difference to them, personally, either way?
- **31. echoic of nursery rhyme:** When Toby says "that means all the king's ships, and men...", it echoes the line from Humpty Dumpty: "All the king's horses and all the king's men..."

brass cannon and bayonets. Redcoats came down from the hills. They spread over the green grass like streams of blood, and they sat in barges and were rowed across to the Brooklyn shore. A barge passed nearby. We saw the smiling, sunburned faces of the soldiers. "Hurrah!" they cheered, and the van Ditmas girls waved and giggled. Back in the kitchen of the big house, I told what I had seen. "Those great ships have hundreds of cannon," Toby said. "There's got to be thousands of Redcoats," somebody else said, "and they gonna whip these Liberty Boys but good." "General Washington will find a way," Sana said, but her eyes held back tears. "It can't just end like this!" Old Toby put an arm around her. "Trouble is, dear, it can. These Americans are settin' up to fight their king, and that means all the king's ships, and men, and cannon." "No business for us black slaves, I'm tellin' you," said Joseph Martin. "Not with Isaac down so hard on the Liberty Boys," Loretta added. It seemed to me the slaves were right. I could not think how the ordinary Americans I had seen, fresh from their farms and shops, could ever drive away an army of real soldiers. The next day, while I loaded sacks into a wagon, I heard the sound of fifes and drums. Southwards, along the road past the

WORD BANK

bayonets (BAY uh NETS) *n.*: a long-pointed steel weapon attached to the open end of a gun
barges (BAR juz) *n.*: flat-bottomed vessels, usually pushed or towed through the water, for carrying freight or passengers

Samuel's Choice ~ 21

GUIDING THE READING

Literal

Q: With what does Samuel compare the redcoats coming down the hills?

A: He says that they spread over the green grass "like streams of blood."

Q: Why do the slaves think the British will defeat the "Liberty Boys"?

A: The British have thousands of men and hundreds of cannon.

Q: Samuel says that he agrees with the other slaves—that they are right. What does he think they are right about?

A: He also does not see how ordinary Americans, fresh from their farms and shops, can drive away an army of real soldiers.

analytical

Q: Why is Samuel's saying that the redcoats were spread over the green grass "like streams of blood" appropriate for this story?

A: This is a story that occurs at the beginning of the Revolutionary War, and during wars there is bloodshed.

Q: Why do you think Sana becomes so upset by the thought that Washington might be defeated?

A: There is no single answer to this question—nor is any answer clear from the text. This is a chance for students to try to empathize with Sana and what she may be feeling. One answer is that Sana identifies her own freedom with the freedom of the colonists from British rule. She may feel friendship towards the colonists' cause, because van Ditmas is clearly a royalist and sympathizes neither with the "Americans" nor with his own slaves.

Q: How does Samuel compare the Continental army and the redcoats?

A: If students are confused by the question, point them to the [last] paragraph. Samuel describes the Americans as having just come from their farms and their shops—as farmers and merchants. But the British are "an army of real soldiers."

SUMMING UP THE PLOT

- The next day, Samuel sees a hundred of Washington's "soldiers" shuffling past him in the dust.
- Sana cries out to their captain that thousands of British are landing on the shore.
- He tells her that George Washington himself is coming to Brooklyn.
- The men walking past Sana and Samuel look frightened, sick, and hungry. Some are barefoot.

- Farmer Isaac tells Sana to be quiet; if fools want to break the king's law, they can do it without the help of his slaves.
- Samuel knows Sana feels sorry for the men and boys marching past. They aren't fighting

for her freedom—but freedom has to start somewhere.

- Samuel offers his jug of buttermilk to a colonial soldier who has stopped and is staring at him.

LITERARY COMPONENTS

► **32. Metaphor:** British soldiers wore red uniforms in those days. In addition to calling them the literal "Redcoats," Americans also labeled them "lobster backs," because lobsters (especially when they are dead) are red.

► **33. Characterization; theme:** Samuel's observation of Sana shows us that he is growing up, relating more to the people around him. Also, his understanding of her reasons, and saying that "freedom had to start somewhere," shows that he has become more astute and wiser.

► **34. Characterization; theme:** Samuel gives freely of his buttermilk, when he himself has so little food.

mill, came a hundred of Washington's recruits, their feet shuffling in the dust. An American officer rode beside them on a gray farmhouse.

"Captain!" Sana called to him. "Thousands of them are landing down the shore!"

"We know that, girl," he called back. "Don't worry, we'll handle them lobster backs." ⁷ General Washington himself is coming over to Brooklyn." But the men marching past us didn't look so sure. Many seemed frightened. Some were barefoot. Some looked hungry and sick. Their flags drooped. As they passed, Sana read the names of the colonies embroidered on their banners: Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Rhode Island. They had come from far away to a strange place.

Farmer Isaac stood by the fence, puffing on his pipe. "You be quiet, girl. This isn't no fight of yours. If them fools want to break the king's law, they can get themselves killed with no help from my slaves."

Sana shook her head. I knew she felt sorry for the ragged men and boys marching past. Maybe they were not fighting for her

33 liberty. Not yet. But freedom had to start somewhere. That summer it was starting in Brooklyn.

When the officer was gone, and Isaac, too, one of his men stopped by the wagon. He just stood there and stared at me.

"You thirsty?" I asked him. He nodded and held his empty

34 canteen upside down. I snatched my jug of buttermilk out of the wagon and poured it into the canteen. The boy took a long drink.

7. The British soldiers were called "redcoats" because they wore red jackets with white breeches. Here, they are nicknamed *lobster backs* because a lobster's back is red.

WORD BANK recruits (rih KROOTS) *n.*: new members of the army

The Battlefield

22 ~ Unit 1

GUIDING THE READING

Literal

Q: What does samuel see as he is loading sacks onto a wagon?

A: He sees a hundred of Washington's recruits, with their feet shuffling in the dust.

Q: What does sana shout to their Captain?

A: She tells him that thousands of British soldiers are landing on the shore.

Q: How do the americans look?

A: Samuel says many seem frightened, some look sick and hungry, some are barefoot, and their flags droop.

anaLYtICaL

Q: Why do the americans call the British soldiers lobster backs?

A: The British soldiers wear red uniforms (as in Redcoat). When lobsters die they are red.

Q: Why do you think the american soldiers are in such poor condition?

A: Answers will vary. But it is clear that the American forces do not have money to feed or dress their soldiers. They do not have money for shoes, or adequate weapons. Remind students that armies are paid for with taxes levied on the population. But the Americans did not yet even have a government that could legislate taxes. Also, farmers and merchants aren't soldiers. They have not been trained

to fight and kill. The British force based on Staten Island had 27,000 men, including 7,000 Hessian mercenaries, and 400 ships of war manned by 10,000 seamen.

Q: What do you think samuel means when he says that freedom has to start somewhere?

A: Answers will vary.

Q: Why does samuel offer the recruit his own buttermilk?

A: Answers will vary.

SUMMING UP THE PLOT

- Samuel asks the young soldier, Nathaniel, if he's scared, and adds that he ought to be.
- All day long Samuel hears the crash and boom of guns in the Long Island hills.

- American soldiers rush down the South Road and suddenly one cries, "The British are coming!"
- Cannonballs whiz through the air and one crashes through the roof of the mill.
- Farmer Isaac has disappeared.

- Sana bandages the wounded soldier, Nathaniel, and orders Samuel to wrap him in empty sacks.
- Nathaniel has swum across Gowanus Creek to escape the British.
- The Continental Army is trapped without boats in the swamps around the creek.
- Washington's men need help badly.

LITERARY COMPONENTS

► 35. Introduction of secondary Character:

Nathaniel is the first American recruit we meet.

► 36. **Onomatopoeia:** *crashed, boomed, and tumbled* are all onomatopoeic words.

► 37. **rising action; suspense:** A soldiers shouts, "The British are coming!"

► 38. **simple Language Is Powerful:** Samuel sees the soldiers for what they are: *Tired, frightened people.*

► 39. **Onomatopoeia:** *Whizzing* and *crashed* are examples of onomatopoeia.

► 40. **Plot; Character; symbol:** Van Ditmas has disappeared. He will not appear in the story again. This makes it possible for these slaves—Sana, Samuel, old Toby, *et alia*—to consider themselves free. This makes the story an easier one to write, since most slaves were re-enslaved at the war's conclusion no matter how important their service had been to the winning of the war.

► 41. **rising action; Characters:** Nathaniel is injured; Sana is bandaging his wound.

► 42. **Historical authenticity:** Indeed, this is the only way soldiers were able to escape.

► 43. **simile:** The "soldiers were being *shot like ducks* in the marsh."

"Thanks," he said. "My name's Nathaniel. Joined up at Boston on my fourteenth birthday." 35

"You know how to shoot that thing?" I asked, pointing at his musket.

"Think so," he muttered. "Shot it yesterday in camp."

"You scared?" I asked him.

"No, I ain't," he said.

"Well, you oughta be," I told him.

All day long the guns crashed and boomed on the Long Island hills. While the mill wheel rumbled and ground, soldiers rushed down the South Road. 36

Suddenly there was shouting. A soldier appeared in the doorway. "The British are coming!" he cried. "The Americans are running!" 37

The road filled with crowds of American soldiers, now running north along the road, back toward Washington's lines. Tired, frightened people. Most were sopping wet. Where they stopped to rest, the dust turned to mud under their feet. 38

Cannonballs were whizzing through the air. One crashed through the roof of the mill. Farmer Isaac was nowhere to be seen. Sana knelt by someone who had fallen beside the road. She tied a strip of petticoat around a bloody gash in his leg. He was soaked and shaking. When I looked at his face, I saw that he was Nathaniel, the boy with the empty canteen. 39

"Stop staring," Sana shouted at me. "He's trembling. Wrap him in them empty sacks." Nathaniel told us how he swam across Gowanus Creek to escape from the British. But the tide was running fast. Dozens of Americans were wounded and many couldn't swim. The army was trapped without boats in the swamps around the creek. Some were still fighting, but lots of soldiers were being shot like ducks in the marshes. Washington's men needed help badly. 40

WORD BANK **musket** (MUSS kit) *n.*: an old-fashioned gun used by foot soldiers (later replaced by the rifle)
wounded (WOON ded) *adj.*: injured

Samuel's Choice ~ 23

GUIDING THE READING

Literal

Q: How old was nathaniel when he joined the Continental army?

A: Nathaniel was fourteen years old.

Q: In this scene, who disappears from the story?

A: Isaac van Ditmas is gone.

Q: Give two reasons why it is that the american soldiers cannot get across the creek.

A: The tide is rising, many of them cannot swim, many are wounded—and as we know from the discussion in Background Bytes, the

British have taken Cortelyou House, which commands Dam Road, the only escape route.

anaLYtIcaL

Q: samuel is now the age that nathaniel was when he joined the Continental army. they are both young for the burdens they bear. Who is in the worse position?

A: Answers will vary. Nathaniel may be killed. But Samuel is a slave for life. Ask students if they know anyone who is fourteen. Can they imagine that person a slave? Can they imagine that person fighting in a war?

Q: When Nathaniel says that he isn't scared, do you think he is telling the truth?

A: Answers will vary. Ask students to explain their answers.

Q: What do you think has happened to Farmer Isaac?

A: Again, answers will vary. See how imaginative your students are!

Q: sana shouts at samuel, "stop staring!" What does this tell us about Samuel's frame of mind?

A: It sounds like Samuel is immobilized, shocked, stunned—and who wouldn't be?

SUMMING UP THE PLOT

- Sana knows that Samuel always ties up “his” boat in the reeds along the creek. She tells him, “It’s up to you, Samuel.”
- Toby repeat Sana’s words. “You got the boat, Samuel. It’s your choice.”
- Sana and Toby leave the scene carrying the wounded Nathaniel up the road.
- Sana is carrying her freedom flour in a sack hanging from her shoulder.

- Samuel realizes that everyone is gone and that he is alone. He asks, Is this freedom?
- He looks at his hands that have grown strong from work, and he knows his choice.
- Samuel runs to the creek and pushes the boat out into the rushing tide.
- On the opposite bank, Americans are wading in the muddy water and shouting for help.
- Gun smoke rolls over those brave soldiers and when it clears, Samuel sees fewer of them.
- Samuel pulls wet and weary men into the boat.

LITERARY COMPONENTS

- **44. Pivotal Moment:** Sana tells Samuel that it is up to him.
- **45. source of title:** Toby says to Samuel, “You got the boat, Samuel. It’s your choice.”
- **46. symbol; theme:** Sana is taking her *freedom flour* to a place where she can bake her *freedom loaf*.
- **47. Moment Preceding turning Point:** *I was alone*. This may be the first time in his life Samuel is truly alone. His aloneness comes primarily from the disappearance of his master, his “owner,” and from an abrupt and complete change of circumstances.
- **48. theme; Internal Monologue:** Samuel asks, *Was this freedom?* Is fighting and dying freedom? Is freedom being in a position to save other people?
- **49. Characterization:** Indeed, many slaves decided to help the enemies of their masters.
- **50. turning Point/emotional Climax:** Samuel says, “Then I knew my choice. These hands now were going to pull people to freedom.”
- **51. Powerful visual Image:** It is like a magician’s act, when Samuel says, “Great clouds of gunsmoke rolled over these brave soldiers. When the air cleared, I could see fewer and fewer of them.”

GUIDING THE READING

Literal

Q: Why does sana tell samuel that it is up to him?

A: Samuel has been trained to use the boat. In some sense it is “his.” Presumably no one else knows how to row a boat.

Q: Why do toby and sana carry nathaniel?

A: Nathaniel is wounded and cannot walk.

Q: What is in the bag on Sana’s shoulder?

A: The flour that she has accumulated over time from Samuel.

Q: What can samuel hear in the distance as he stands alone on the road?

A: He hears the roar of muskets.

Q: What does samuel think about as he stands alone in the road?

A: He thinks about the boy Nathaniel from far away, about how a lot more people just like him are trapped in the marshes, and how Isaac sneered.

Q: How have Samuel’s hands grown strong?

A: His hands have grown strong from pulling ropes and oars and sacks.

Q: Where are the americans and what are they doing?

A: The Americans are on the opposite shore wading in muddy water up to their waists.

anaLYtCaL

Q: Why is the boat, which belongs to Isaac van Ditmas, considered Samuel’s?

A: Answers will vary. Presumably he is identified with the boat because he uses it. If no one else knows how to row a boat, that would surely contribute to the impression that Samuel owns the boat.

Q: What do you think it means that samuel is finally alone? Why is it such a powerful moment?

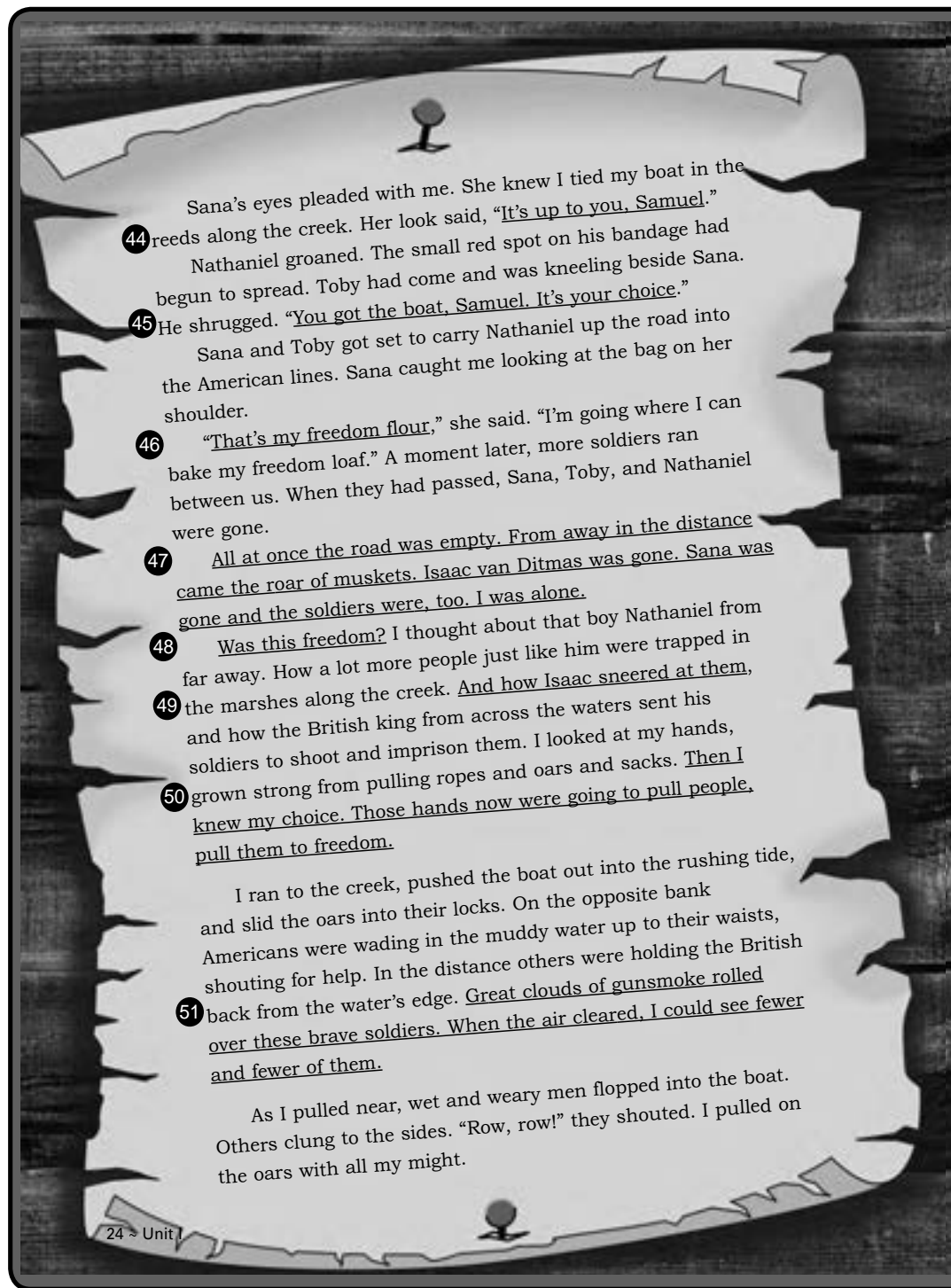
A: Samuel cannot fall back on anyone. He cannot get advice from anyone. He has no parents. He has no teachers. He has no siblings. Now Samuel has to grow up fast, without any assistance.

Q: Why is the american artillery in the distance trying to hold the British back from the water?

A: If the British get near or in the water, they will kill the Americans.

Q: When the gunsmoke clears, why are there fewer and fewer americans?

A: The Americans are drowning or being shot and killed.



SUMMING UP THE PLOT

- As Samuel rows into the current, bullets splash the water.
- He crosses the creek six times.
- A big man in a blue coat and a three-cornered hat

throws himself into the boat and orders Samuel to sail for Washington's camp.

- His passenger is Major Mordecai Gist, the commander of the Maryland soldiers who held the British back while the other Americans escaped.

LITERARY COMPONENTS

- **52. new Character:** A military man of obvious authority emerges from the bullreeds and gets into the boat. His name is withheld for two paragraphs.
- **53. Historical reference:** General Charles Cornwallis (1738-1805). History shows that he was politically opposed to Britain's policies toward the American colonies, but when the war began he volunteered to fight. He started as a major general under Generals Howe and Clinton. After the 1780 American surrender of Charles Town, South Carolina, Cornwallis was put in charge of the British soldiers in the South. Cornwallis was unable to adapt his strategies to the guerilla techniques Continental Army troops *had learned from Native Americans*. He eventually surrendered at Yorktown.
- **54. Internal Monologue:** Here, Samuel is thinking in terms of a reality that appears to no longer exist. It is an interesting juxtaposition of Samuel's slave self and his heroic actions in the boat.
- **55. Historical reference:** Major Mordecai Gist (1742-1792) was a merchant who joined the Maryland Line. During the Battle of Long Island, he led the Maryland regiment that became known as the Maryland 400. Gist was one of only ten men to survive the battle. Gist's force was the final stand of the devastated American line, allowing Washington and much of the remaining Continental Army to escape capture. Gist stayed the course during the war and was promoted to Brigadier General. He retired to his plantation near Charleston, South Carolina. The Mordecai Gist Papers at the Maryland Historical Society make Gist's personal life easily accessible and are a fascinating look at the man and the period. His family tree reveals that his first two wives died in childbirth and that two of his four children died in infancy.

Out we shot into the current.
Bullets splashed in the water near us. When we reached the far bank, the men cheered. I turned again into the creek and rowed back for more.

Six times I crossed the creek. Each time the battle grew closer, the fleeing Americans fewer. By now muddy water slopped around my ankles. My back ached from pulling on the oars.

Just as I was raising the sail to race out of the creek, I glimpsed a big man in a blue coat and three-cornered hat alone in the bullreeds. He threw himself into the boat and ordered me to sail for Washington's camp. The British were close behind him. As we fled down the creek into New York Harbor, they fired at us from the banks. When the big man had caught his breath, he pointed up at the sail. Black holes gaped in the canvas. "Musket balls," he said and winked. "Compliments of General Cornwallis."

As the boat carried us out into the harbor, I steered northward along the Brooklyn shore toward Brooklyn Heights and Washington's camp. I wondered what Farmer Isaac would say about his torn sail. But most of all, I wondered what had happened to Sana and Toby.

My passenger's name was Major Mordecai Gist. He commanded the Maryland soldiers who had held back the British while other Americans escaped. "Oh, what brave boys I lost

8. Charles Cornwallis was a major general in the British army. The expression "compliments of" is used to identify the giver of a gift or donation. For example, flowers donated by Mr. Smith might be accompanied by a card saying, "Flowers compliments of Mr. Smith." The speaker here is implying that the musket balls are "gifts" being sent to the Colonists, *compliments of General Cornwallis*.

WORD BANK
glimpsed (GLIMPST) *v.*: saw for a brief moment
gaped (GAYPT) *v.*: were open wide

Samuel's Choice ~ 25

GUIDING THE READING

Literal

Q: How many trips does samuel make back and forth to rescue the american soldiers?

A: He crosses the creek six times.

Q: Why is it so dangerous for him to be going back and forth?

A: The British are shooting at him and bullets are splashing in the water around him.

Q: What happens just as samuel is raising the sail to race out of the creek?

A: A big man in a blue coat and a three-cornered hat steps out of the bullreeds and throws himself into the boat.

Q: What does the man order samuel to do?

A: He orders Samuel to sail for Washington's camp.

Q: Who is this man?

A: His name is Mordecai Gist and he is a Major who has led those Maryland soldiers that held back the British while the other Americans escaped.

anaLYtCaL

Q: How is samuel able to bring out so many men?

A: The soldiers ride both in the boat and hanging from the sides.

Q: What suggests that the man in the bullreeds is a person of authority?

A: The author describes him as a "big man." He seems to be wearing a Patriot uniform with his "blue coat" and "three-cornered hat." This certainly is in contrast to the barefoot recruits. He orders Samuel to sail for Washington's camp—which makes it sound as though he has the rank to talk with Washington.

Q: When the stranger says that the musket balls are "compliments of General Cornwallis," what does he mean?

A: He means that the musket balls have been shot by the British, who are led by General Cornwallis.

SUMMING UP THE PLOT

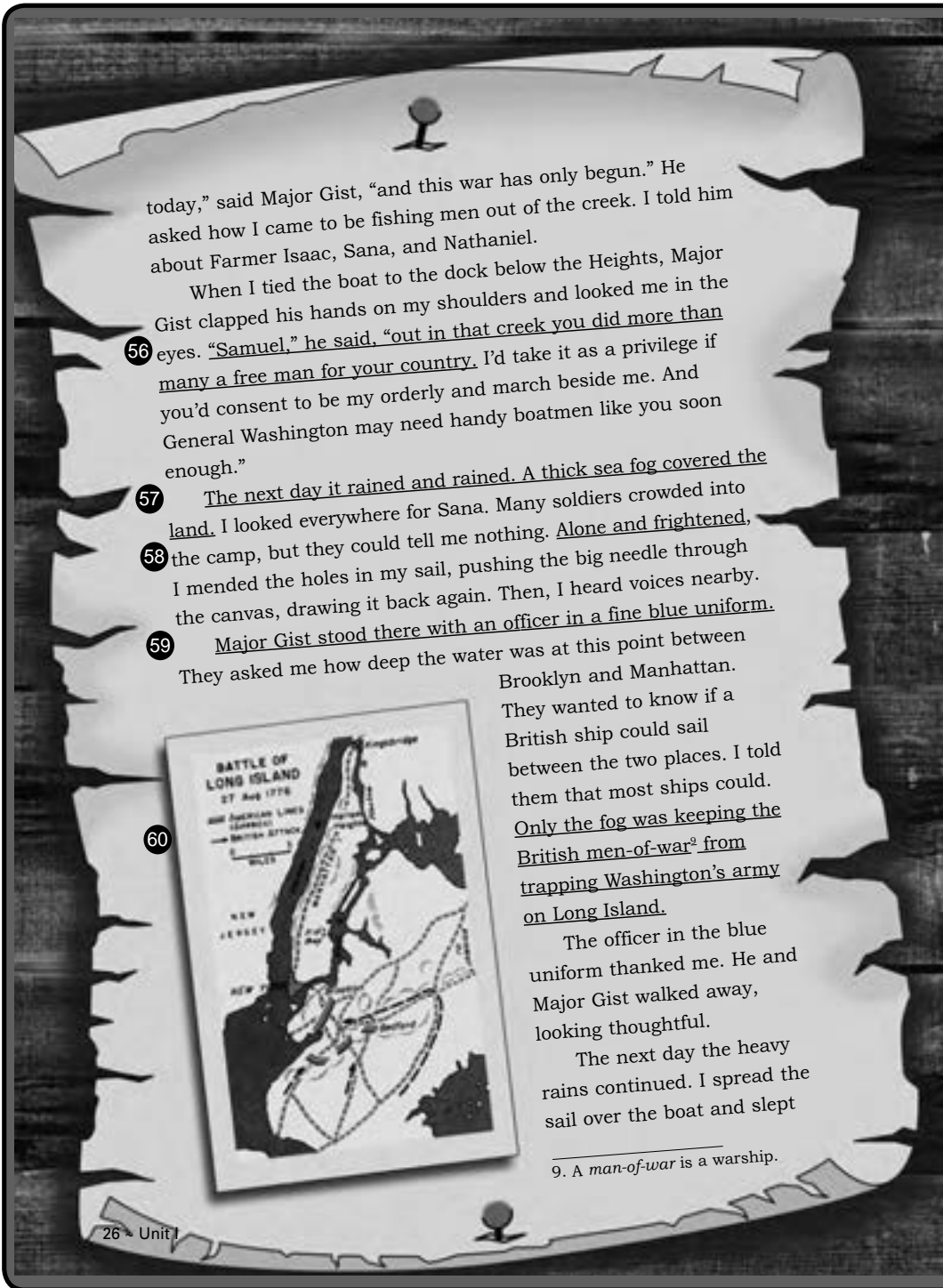
- Major Gist tells Samuel that out in the creek Samuel did more than many a free man has done for his country.
- Major Mordecai Gist asks Samuel to be his orderly and march beside him.

- Samuel says that the next day he looks everywhere for Sana.
- He is alone and frightened in Washington's camp, which is crowded with soldiers.
- Major Gist and an officer in a fine blue uniform ask Samuel how deep the water

- is between Brooklyn and Manhattan. Can British ships sail between the two points?
- Only the fog is keeping the British men-of-war from trapping Washington's army on Long Island.
- The next day the rains continue.

LITERARY COMPONENTS

- **56. theme; Characterization:** We learn about both Samuel and Gist, when Gist says he has done more for his country than many free men.
- **57. setting:** *The next day it rained and rained. A thick sea fog covered the land.* This is a good example of setting establishing mood.
- **58. Characterization:** Samuel's setting and role have changed radically. This is frightening for him. Where are his friends?
- **59. new Character:** Another character is introduced without a name. But he is wearing "a fine blue uniform." Students may guess that this is none other than George Washington.
- **60. rising action; suspense:** If only the fog is keeping the British from attacking, what will happen when the fog lifts?



today," said Major Gist, "and this war has only begun." He asked how I came to be fishing men out of the creek. I told him about Farmer Isaac, Sana, and Nathaniel.

When I tied the boat to the dock below the Heights, Major Gist clapped his hands on my shoulders and looked me in the eyes. "Samuel," he said, "out in that creek you did more than many a free man for your country. I'd take it as a privilege if you'd consent to be my orderly and march beside me. And General Washington may need handy boatmen like you soon enough."

57 The next day it rained and rained. A thick sea fog covered the land. I looked everywhere for Sana. Many soldiers crowded into

58 the camp, but they could tell me nothing. Alone and frightened, I mended the holes in my sail, pushing the big needle through the canvas, drawing it back again. Then, I heard voices nearby.

59 Major Gist stood there with an officer in a fine blue uniform. They asked me how deep the water was at this point between Brooklyn and Manhattan. They wanted to know if a British ship could sail between the two places. I told them that most ships could. Only the fog was keeping the British men-of-war⁹ from trapping Washington's army on Long Island.

The officer in the blue uniform thanked me. He and Major Gist walked away, looking thoughtful.

The next day the heavy rains continued. I spread the sail over the boat and slept

9. A man-of-war is a warship.

60

BATTLE OF LONG ISLAND
27 Aug 1776
NEW JERSEY
NEW YORK

26 ~ Unit 1

GUIDING THE READING

Literal

Q: What does Major Mordecai Gist want Samuel to do?

A: He asks him to be his orderly and to march by his side.

Q: How does Samuel feel in Washington's camp?

A: He feels alone and frightened.

Q: What do Major Gist and the other officer ask Samuel?

A: They ask him how deep the water is between Brooklyn and Manhattan.

analytical

Q: Why do you think Samuel feels alone and frightened?

A: Answers may vary.

Q: Why does the author say that only the fog is keeping the British from trapping Washington on Long Island?

A: Since the water is deep enough for the British men-of-war to navigate, the only explanation for their not having come is that the fog keeps them from sailing and from seeing Washington's camp.

SUMMING UP THE PLOT

- Samuel is awakened by Sana—the voice he misses more than anything in the world.
- Sana says he has made the right choice and shares her freedom bread with Samuel.
- Major Gist tells him that every boat is needed to carry Washington's army to Manhattan.
- That night the worst storm Samuel has ever seen blows up.
- The boats that are going to Manhattan need a rope to guide them against the wind and the current.

- Major Gist asks Samuel if he can get the boat across to Manhattan.
- Samuel tells Major Gist that he can take the rope across.

LITERARY COMPONENTS

- **61. rising action; Characters reunited; theme:** Sana finds Samuel and tells him he has made the right choice.
- **62. symbol; theme; Metaphor:** Sana shares her freedom bread with Samuel. It is the sweetest he has ever tasted. Of course, what could be sweeter than freedom?
- **63. rising action; suspense:** Every boat will be needed for Washington's retreat!
- **64. setting; Onomatopoeia:** The wind *howls*. The storm is vividly described so that the reader can *feel* it.
- **65. Historical reference:** Brooklyn Ferry (or as the actual ferry was later called, the Fulton Ferry) was a hamlet on the waterfront in early Brooklyn. It is now a small sector of musty, decaying buildings in the shadow of the Brooklyn Bridge. The settlement grew up around the ferry landing. Eventually, several boat lines fanned from both sides of the river. In 1839, all of the lines merged as the New York and Brooklyn Ferry Company. Before Robert Fulton presented a *steam* ferry in Nassau in 1814, all of the crossings were made by "row boats, flat scows with sprit sails, piraguas, and boats propelled by horses walking on treadmills." The last ferry stopped running in 1924.
- **66. rising action; suspense:** Can Samuel save the day?

snug and dry. Then I heard the voice I missed more than any in the world calling, "Samuel, Samuel Abraham!" Sana had found me! It was not a dream. "You chose, Samuel," she said. "You did it right." You chose our new country." From under her cloak she took a hot, steaming loaf wrapped in a napkin—her freedom bread, the sweetest I ever tasted. While we ate, she told me that Toby and Nathaniel were safe.

But this new country was in danger. Major Gist came to me again and explained that every boat was needed to carry Washington's army from Brooklyn to Manhattan. The army had to retreat that night. I was going to help save the army with Farmer Isaac's boat. Wouldn't he be surprised?

On the night that General Washington's army left Brooklyn, the worst storm I'd ever seen blew in from the Northeast. The wind howled. It drove the rain, stinging, into our eyes. It shook buildings and knocked down chimneys. And it whipped the water at Brooklyn Ferry into a sea of foam.

Down from the Heights in file marched Washington's army. The men entered the boats Major Gist and others had gathered at the ferry landing.

"What we need is a rope to cling to," someone said in the dark. "A rope stretching from here to Manhattan to guide us against the wind and current."

"There's rope here in the shipyard," a soldier remembered. "Buoys to float the rope across, too. But who can cross this flood in the dark?"

"Can you do it, Samuel?" Major Gist asked. "Can you get across with the rope?"

"I can do it, Major," I shouted, the wind tearing the words out of my mouth. But I wasn't sure. Even if the rope were fed out

WORD BANK

retreat (rih TREET) *v.*: move back, away from the enemy
buoys (BOYS) *n.*: a floating object, fastened or anchored so that it remains in one place, used as a marker for sailors

Samuel's Choice ~ 27

GUIDING THE READING

Literal

Q: Who awakens samuel from his dream?

A: Samuel awakens to Sana's voice.

Q: What does Samuel say about Sana's freedom bread?

A: He says it is the sweetest bread he has ever tasted.

Q: What is the weather like the night the boats are to take Washington's army to Manhattan?

A: The wind is howling, there is driving rain,

the water at Brooklyn Ferry is being whipped into a sea of foam. Students may add other details.

anaLYtiCaL

Q: How will the boats help Washington's army?

A: The boats are going to carry Washington's army across the river so that they can retreat to Manhattan instead of being trapped by the British.

Q: What are they going to do with the rope?

A: (This must be a very long and heavy rope.) The rope is going to run from Long Island to Manhattan over the water. It will apparently be secured at both ends, and the boats will use it as a guide—such as a banister is on a staircase—in the storm.

SUMMING UP THE PLOT

- Samuel ties the rope to the mast of his boat.
- Sana jumps into the boat as Samuel shoves off into the swirling current.
- Samuel struggles with the rudder. Water crashes over the side. Sana bails.

- They are halfway across and the rope pulls them backward.
- Samuel heaves at the sail, the boom swings around, and they shoot forward at last.
- Over the roar of the storm, Samuel and Sana can hear the people on the far shore cheering them on.
- The boat is sinking.
- The mast breaks and is carried over the side.

LITERARY COMPONENTS

► **67. rising action; suspense; Internal Dialogue:** Samuel is not sure he can make it. The rope may tear down the mast.

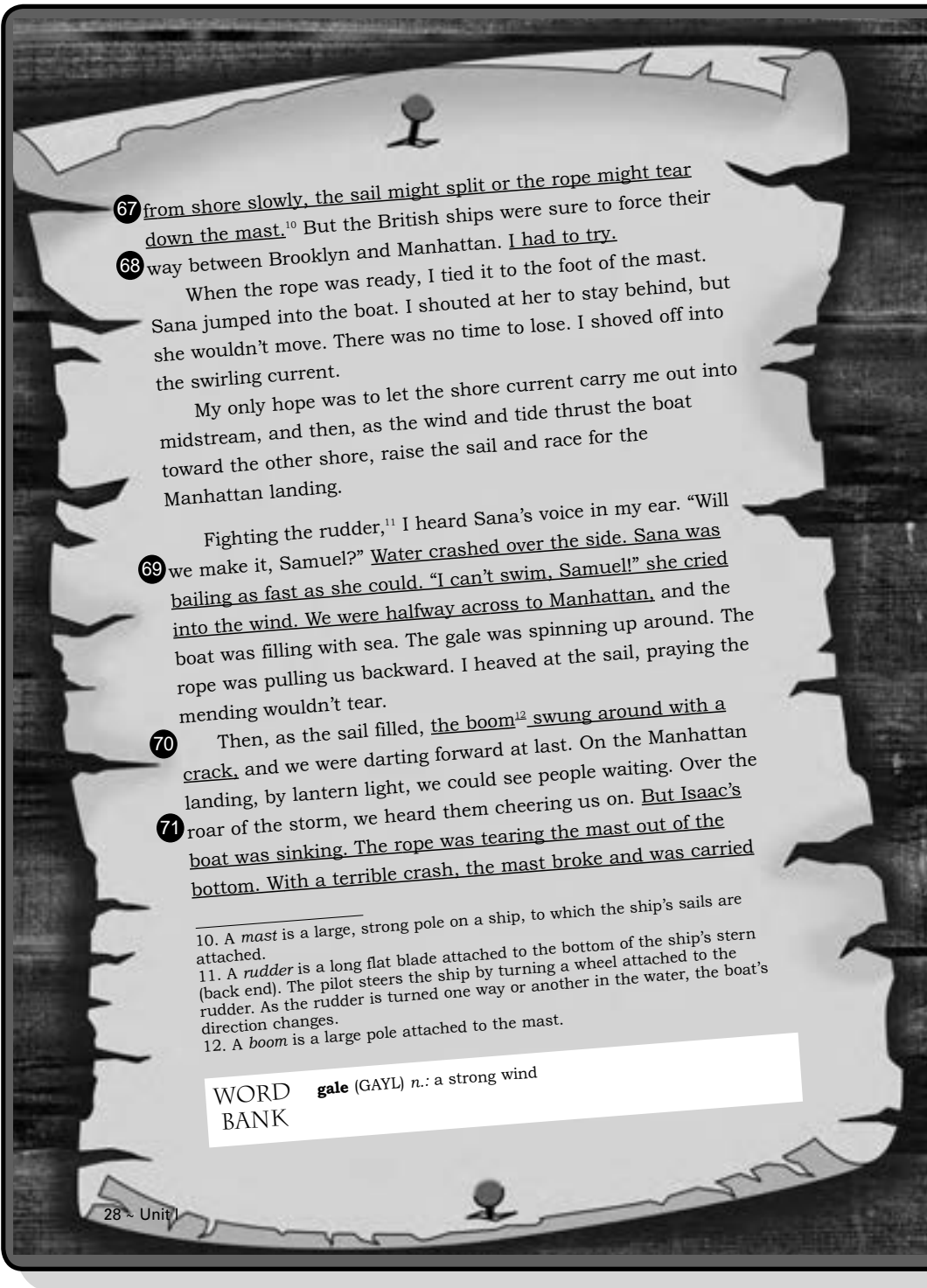
► **68. Characterization; transformation; theme:** Is this the same Samuel we met at the beginning of the story? Is this the Samuel who could not decide? This Samuel who is a free person is full of courage.

► **69. Conflict; rising suspense:** The storm and the struggle with the sea are good examples of an external conflict, one in which man struggles with forces of nature. Now they are halfway across to Manhattan and Sana cries out that she cannot swim.

► **70. Onomatopoeia:** The boom swings around with a *crack*.

► **71. Plot; tension Building to Climax;**

Onomatopoeia: This is the crisis that must lead up to a climax. The boat is sinking. The rope tears the mast out of the bottom, and breaks with a terrible *crash*. The bow *smashes*.



GUIDING THE READING

Literal

Q: Why does samuel think he may not make it across with the rope?

A: He worries that the sail may split or the rope may tear down the mast.

Q: to what part of the boat is the rope tied?

A: The rope is tied to the mast. The mast is a long pole rising vertically from the deck of a ship that supports the boom. The boom is a long, rounded, solid piece of wood that is used to extend the bottom of the sail.

Q: What does sana cry to samuel, as the boat starts filling with water?

A: She tells him she cannot swim.

anaLYtIcAl

Q: Why does samuel feel he must try to get the rope across, even though he may not succeed?

A: He knows that the British will come. Washington's army will be trapped. He has to at least see if he can do it. He is a brave young man who cares about what happens to others.

SUMMING UP THE PLOT

- The bow smashes into a wharf.
- Samuel swims with one arm and clings to Sana with the other.
- They stumble ashore on Manhattan Island.
- The rope is across!
- All through the night, Washington's men follow the rope in boat after boat.

- Samuel writes that it would take many long years before they would beat the British king, but never again would he wonder what freedom is.

LITERARY COMPONENTS

- ▶ **72. Characterization:** Samuel is swimming in the water with one arm and holding Sana with the other.
- ▶ **73. Climax:** Samuel and Sana stumble ashore on Manhattan Island. The rope is across!
- ▶ **74. Falling action:** All night long Washington's men follow the rope in boat after boat.
- ▶ **75. Conclusion; theme:** *It would take many long years before we would beat the British king, but never again did I wonder what freedom was, or what it cost.*
- ▶ **76. theme:** Samuel says that *freedom* is "people pulling together"; "strong hands helping"; "one person caring about another."
- ▶ **77. epilogue; revelatory ending:** This story has a revelatory ending—a surprise, like the punch line of a joke—that is appended as an epilogue. (An epilogue is the final part that rounds out or completes the design of a nondramatic literary work.)

over the side. A second later the bow¹² smashed into the side of a wharf, and I found myself in the water swimming with one arm, clinging to Sana with the other.

We stumbled ashore on Manhattan Island, where kind people wrapped us in blankets. They were smiling—the rope was across! The boats full of Washington's soldiers would follow. We had done it, together.

All through the night Washington's men followed that rope, boat after boat, across the water. In the stormy darkness, every soldier escaped from Long Island.

And so the fight for freedom would go on. It would take many long years before we would beat the British king, but never again did I wonder what freedom was, or what it cost. It was people pulling together. It was strong hands helping. It was one person caring about another.

And where was Washington? Many times that night Sana and I hoped to see him.

"Why, Samuel," Major Gist told us later, "he was that officer in the blue coat who asked you how deep the water was between Brooklyn and Manhattan. Last night the general arrested a farmer in Brooklyn for helping the British. That farmer, Isaac van Ditmas, turned all of his property over to the Army of the Continental Congress¹³ in exchange for his freedom. It seems now that you and Sana have no master."

From that day forward, we and Isaac's other slaves were to be citizens of a new nation.

12. The *bow* is the forward end of a ship.

13. Representatives of the Colonies met in 1774, 1775, and 1776. The group of representatives, who gathered to plan and discuss the American Revolution, was called *the Continental Congress*. The army formed to fight the British was called *the Army of the Continental Congress*.

WORD BANK

wharf (HWAREF) *n.*: a pier; a wooden walkway built next to or jutting into the water so that boats can come alongside it to load or unload

Samuel's Choice ~ 29

GUIDING THE READING

Literal

Q: What happens when they stumble ashore on Manhattan Island?

A: People wrap them in blankets.

Q: Did the war end that night?

A: The war would not end for many long years.

Q: Did George Washington ever appear in the story?

A: Washington was the officer in the fine blue uniform who asked about the depth of the water.

anaLYtIcAl

Q: When the boat finally smashes, how do they make it?

A: Samuel says that the bow smashed into the side of a wharf, which means they are almost there. (A wharf is any structure projecting from the shore that permits boats or ships to lie alongside for loading or unloading.) Samuel swims with one arm and holds Sana with the other.

5. Suggest that students reread the paragraphs below before trying to answer the question:

Cannonballs were whizzing through the air. One crashed through the roof of the mill. Farmer Isaac was nowhere to be seen. Sana knelt by someone who had fallen beside the road. She tied a strip of petticoat around a bloody gash in his leg. He was soaked and shaking. When I looked at his face, I saw that he was Nathaniel, the boy with the empty canteen.

"Stop staring," Sana shouted at me. "He's trembling. Wrap him in them empty sacks." Nathaniel told us how he swam across Gowanus Creek to escape from the British. But the tide was rising fast. Dozens of Americans were wounded and many couldn't swim. The army was trapped without boats in the swamps around the creek. Some were still fighting, but lots of soldiers were being shot like ducks in the marshes. Washington's men needed help badly.

Sana's eyes pleaded with me. She knew I tied my boat in the reeds along the creek. Her look said, "It's up to you, Samuel."

Nathaniel groaned. The small red spot on his bandage had begun to spread. Toby had come and was kneeling beside Sana. He shrugged. "You got the boat, Samuel. It's your choice."

Sana and Toby got set to carry Nathaniel up the road into the American lines. Sana caught me looking at the bag on her shoulder.

"That's my freedom flour," she said. "I'm going where I can bake my freedom loaf." A moment later, more soldiers ran between us. When they had passed, Sana, Toby, and Nathaniel were gone.

All at once the road was empty. From away in the distance came the roar of muskets. Isaac van Ditmas was gone. Sana was gone and the soldiers were, too. I was alone.

Was this freedom? I thought about that boy Nathaniel from far away. How a lot more people just like him were trapped in the marshes along the creek.

From these paragraphs, it seems reasonable to suggest that freedom to Samuel represents all of the following: the whizzing of cannonballs and people being injured, even young people that he knew; seeing soldiers being either injured or killed in battle; being asked to do things by friends; being asked to take risks; being asked to think for himself, instead of always taking orders; being in a position to make a decision; seeing oneself as a person who could make a difference; feeling trapped; being alone. Students' answers are sure to vary.

6. Students will likely write several different answers. The story is exciting. It's about someone's making a difficult decision. It's about someone's learning the meaning of liberty. It's about the Revolutionary War. It's about a young slave's becoming free. It shows that American blacks fought in the war on the side of America—even though there was no guarantee they would find themselves free at its conclusion.

Historical Note

The Battle of Long Island was George Washington's first battle in the American War for Independence. It was a defeat. From Brooklyn, General Washington retreated to Manhattan, then to New Jersey, and in the last month of 1776, he crossed the Delaware River into Pennsylvania. Thus ended one of the longer and more bitter retreats in American history. On December 26, Washington crossed the icy Delaware once more into New Jersey. There, at Trenton and again at Princeton, his soldiers (many of whom had escaped from Brooklyn) defeated their enemy. In 1781, General Cornwallis finally surrendered at Yorktown. The British troops who fired on Samuel at Gowanus Creek on August 27, 1776, were commanded by General Cornwallis.

Major Mordecai Gist led the Maryland state troops in the Battle of Long Island. He and Isaac van Ditmas are historical figures (although the arrest of van Ditmas did not actually occur). Samuel Abraham and Sana Williams are fictional, but modeled on the many nameless people of Brooklyn, slave and free, who made Washington's escape possible.

About the Author

Richard Berleth was born in Huntington, Long Island. He holds degrees from Colgate and Rutgers Universities, and is presently Chair of the Communications Department at St. Francis College in Brooklyn Heights, New York. He is the author of several children's books, and happens to live on the site of the Battle of Long Island that figures prominently in *Samuel's Choice*. Currently, he is at work on a history of the American Revolution in upstate New York.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Remind students that being free means being free to choose to act, to make a decision, to follow your own religious beliefs. Sometimes, we do what we believe is right

and are faced with the disapproval of our friends or neighbors.

Studying the Selection

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

In the story, Sana says that “Nobody here’s gonna be free unless they take the risk.” Why does being free require taking a risk? Do you think this is still true today?

QUICK REVIEW

1. Write down two words or phrases that describe Isaac van Ditmas.
2. Why was Samuel hungry all of the time?
3. Why did Isaac teach Samuel about “the currents that flow between Brooklyn and Manhattan” and “setting a sail and holding a course”?
4. What does Samuel say about doing work you “do not choose to do”?

FOCUS

5. On page 24, Samuel finds himself alone. Everyone has gone. He asks himself, Is this freedom? Reread several paragraphs before this line in the story, and the paragraph that follows it. What do you think Samuel’s question means?
6. In a short paragraph, explain why you think that *Samuel’s Choice* is a good story.

CREATING & WRITING

7. Imagine that you are Samuel. Why do you decide to help the wounded soldiers?
8. You are Samuel. You have just met a soldier who wants to give up. He is tired, hungry, and discouraged. He does not believe the Colonists can win against the mighty British. How do you persuade him to stay and fight?
9. You are a slave. You are going to join a group of slaves in the center of Brooklyn to protest being kept in slavery. Each of you has made a sign with a message on it. Make your sign for the gathering.

Samuel’s Choice ~ 31

QUICK REVIEW

1. We know from the story that Isaac van Ditmas is a slave holder. He believes that people can be purchased as property (*inhumane*). Isaac van Ditmas is also described as *strict* and *stingy* (page 18). Although he *does* teach Samuel how to use the boat (*willing to teach*), Samuel may only use it to transport Farmer Isaac’s wife and daughters (*willing to teach only if it serves his own interest*). We learn that in spite of his owning a flour mill, his slaves are not even given bread to eat (*selfish, unfeeling, irresponsible*). We learn that his slaves don’t get enough sleep (*thoughtless, uncaring*). On page 22, we see that van Ditmas does not agree with the revolution and is loyal to the King of England (some might say his is a *traitor*; a *royalist*; wanting things to stay the same). When the war comes closer to the farm, van Ditmas appears to have run away (page 23) (*cowardly*). On page 24, Samuel says that Isaac had *sneered* at soldiers who were trapped in the marshes (*arrogant; unfeeling*). At the end of the story, van Ditmas shows that he values his *own* freedom, by having turned all of his property over to the Army of the Continental Congress so that he does not become a prisoner of war (*smart; clever*; knows how to look out for his own interest).
2. Samuel was hungry all the time because his “owner” did not give him food. As a slave, he would have no access to food unless he stole it from the kitchen.
3. Farmer Isaac wanted Samuel to be able to take Mrs. van Ditmas and her daughters “over to Manhattan, or down the Brooklyn shore to Staten Island” (page 18)—and there were no bridges. He would not be able to navigate if he did not know about “the currents that flow between Brooklyn and Manhattan” or “setting a sail and holding a course.”
4. Samuel says that work you do not choose to do is always tiring (page 18).

CREATING & WRITING

7. Presumably students will say that Samuel was a good person. He knew what it was like to suffer. He sympathized with the soldier. And so forth.
8. The students may draw their answers from the story, from their general knowledge, and from their imaginations. Some possible answers are: the Colonists are fighting on and for their own land; freedom is worth fighting for; the British are not as invincible as they appear; we’ve learned a new way to fight from the Indians; when right is on your side you will win, etc.
9. Make certain students have poster board. After they have made their signs, allow them to hold “demonstrations” or protests for freedom in small groups (in the classroom).