

# WHY DON'T YOU GET A HORSE, SAM ADAMS?

## WHY DON'T YOU GET A HORSE, SAM ADAMS?

by Jean Fritz, illustrated by Trina Schart Hyman

Narrated by David de Vries

Themes: American History, Biography, Democracy

Grade Level: 4-8 (ages 9-12)

Running Time: 22 minutes approximately

## SUMMARY

Sam Adams was an agitator for independence, a hero of the American Revolution and a founding father of the United States, but for much of his life he wouldn't ride a horse. This biography uses this quirk of Sam's personality not only to explain his importance but also to bring American history alive. Viewers walk with Sam Adams through the streets, docks and taverns of Boston as he stirs up resentment against the king. With Sam, they witness the Boston Massacre and take part in the Boston Tea Party. When Sam narrowly escapes capture at Lexington because he can't ride a horse, viewers share in the frustration of his friends. The true story of how Sam finally learns to ride comes from the diaries of his cousin John Adams. This is a humorous look at the human side of a hero from history.

## OBJECTIVES

- Children will watch and listen to a biography of an American founding father.
- Children will understand why and how the United States became independent.

## BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Introduce the title of the program and the cover art

and ask students to explain who Sam Adams was. If they don't know, discuss clues in the cover art. Lead students to reason from the costumes and from horseback riders that the story takes place back in history. Point out that the title is a question. Ask for suggestions about why someone back then might not ride a horse. Ask students to be alert for the answer to the title question as they view the program.

## AFTER VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Review the title question and students' previous suggestions as to the reasons for not riding. Discuss the clues in the story that Sam might have been too poor to afford a horse, such as his shabby clothes and his lack of attention to his business. Ask students to recall how not having a horse helped Sam (by keeping him at the level of the common people) and hurt him (by making it hard to escape in a hurry). Have them recall the argument that finally led Sam to get on the horse.

This program is especially good for working with "theme teams." After the entire class has viewed the program once, divide the class into small groups for second viewings. Ask each team to notice details about a theme: Transportation, Trade, Clothing, Everyday Life or Independence. Encourage teams to note visual as well as verbal details and to share their observations with the group.

Connect the story to history by having students prepare timelines of the events in the program and or the life of Sam Adams. Encourage students to do

further research and to make the timelines as detailed as possible.

Connect the program to science and technology by asking students to research the speed of transportation from the time of Sam Adams until now. Have them prepare charts and graphs that compare how fast people traveled on foot, by horseback, in carriages, by early railroads, on the earliest canals and roads, and so forth.

Connect the story to writing and communications by encouraging students to retell the story in the form of poems or songs. To inspire them, find and read Longfellow's poem "The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere" and sing "Yankee Doodle" with the class. Because almost all the action in the program is on foot, students will also find it easy to adapt the story to a play.

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