

## WORDS TO KNOW

As you read, look inside, around, and beyond these words to figure out what they mean.

- rebellion
- protested
- despired

# from Soldiers, Sleds, and Sam

by Elizabeth Weiss Vollstadt, *Highlights*

1 The snow squeaked beneath their boots as the three boys tramped toward Sherburn's Hill, their favorite coasting hill in all of Boston. The streets were quiet that snowy January morning in 1775, with only a tight group of British soldiers marching boldly past the silent houses.

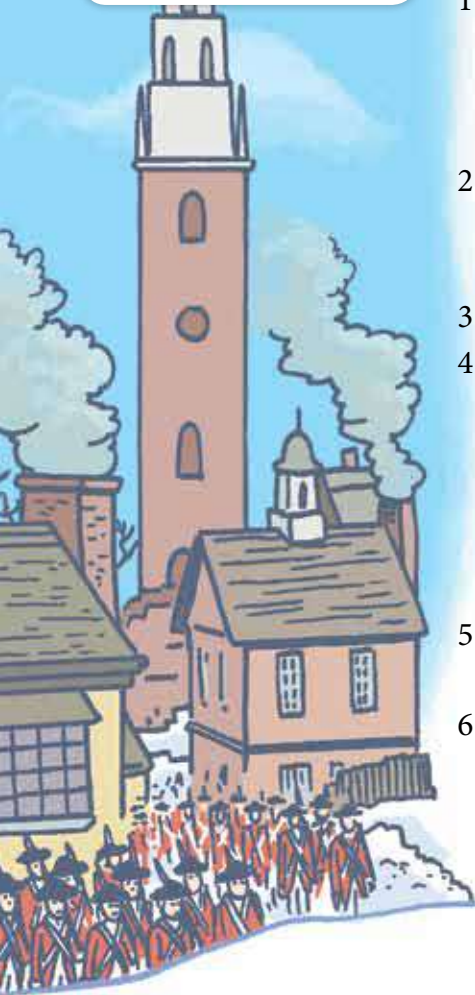
2 The boys ignored the soldiers, being used to them. A few thousand British troops were now in Boston, hoping to crush the colonists' growing rebellion against the king and his laws.

3 "Hurry, Sam," called Edward. "You're making us late again!"

4 Sam struggled to keep up with his brother and their friend Joshua, but his stiff right leg slowed him down. Every step reminded Sam of that awful day last spring when a British officer had come to his father's blacksmith shop. Sam was proud to hold the horse's leg for his father—but then the horse had kicked hard, a bone in Sam's leg cracked, and the break hadn't healed properly.

5 Now Sam's cheeks turned red when Joshua said, "I thought we were going to get there early today—before General Haldimand's servant came out."

6 Sam protested, "It's not my fault the servant sprinkles ashes on our coasting hill when he cleans the general's fireplace."



- 7 Joshua looked up and groaned, “Oh no, late again.” A man was standing in the middle of Sherburn’s Hill, trampling the snow and scattering ashes.
- 8 “Well, that’s it,” said Edward, kicking the sled. “If we’d gotten here sooner, we could have had a few good runs before he ruined our hill.”
- 9 “Sure could have,” said Joshua, looking at Sam. “Next time he stays home.”
- 10 Sam jammed his icy fingers into his pockets and lifted his chin. “I may be slow,” he finally said, “but I’m not afraid of the Redcoats. I’ll get the servant to stop.”
- 11 The two older boys hooted with laughter. “You?” said Joshua. “What can you do?”
- 12 “I’ll—” Sam hesitated. What could he do? Then he looked at the servant again and said, “I’ll tell him to scatter the ashes someplace else.”
- 13 He started to limp up the hill, Edward and Joshua following. The cold wind bit into Sam’s cheeks, but he kept going until he reached the servant.
- 14 “Please, sir,” Sam said, “I . . . I’d like to make a request.” Sam wanted to run, but he had come too far. “Could you scatter the ashes someplace else? They ruin the snow and we can’t coast.”
- 15 The servant laughed, but it wasn’t a happy sound. “It is not for colonist children to tell the British army what to do. Now run along before I—”
- 16 Sam didn’t hear the rest, as Edward grabbed his arm and pulled him away.
- 17 “Come on,” he said.
- 18 Sam followed Edward and Joshua. How he despised that servant! Coasting was the one time his bad leg didn’t matter. “Stop!” Sam called suddenly. “I’m going to see General Haldimand himself!”
- 19 “Then you’re going alone,” said Joshua. “He’ll never listen to us.”
- 20 Edward looked at Joshua. “We’d better stay with Sam,” he said. “Ma will blame me if anything happens to him.”





21 Sam headed for the general's house. He could feel his heart—thump . . . thump . . . thump—like the steady beat of a drum. He stopped at the heavy wooden door, his knees shaking. But he lifted his hand, made a fist, and pounded as hard as he could. A young soldier opened the door.

22 “Who is it, private?” a voice boomed from inside. “Let them in and close the door! The wind will blow my fire out!” The three boys crowded into the hall to find a big man in a red uniform standing in a doorway. “I’m General Haldimand,” the man said. He led them into his office. Flames leaped about in a huge stone fireplace.

23 Sam swallowed. “Well, sir . . .” he began. He told the general about the hill and the servant. “We are free citizens of Boston,” he said, “and you have no right to destroy our hill.”

24 General Haldimand frowned, and Edward tugged at Sam’s sleeve. “Let’s go,” he whispered, but this time Sam stood his ground. For ten long seconds, no one moved.

25 Then the general raised his hands. “You win, my lad,” he said, smiling. “There are already bad feelings between our army and the people of Boston. I shall not add to them, and I will give orders that my servant repair the damage and no longer scatter ashes on your hill.”

26 Back outside, Joshua and Edward whooped and shouted in the falling snow. Edward draped his arm around Sam’s shoulder, and Joshua patted Sam on the back. “You can have the first coast tomorrow,” he said.

27 Sam’s eyes shone. His sled would fly faster than anyone’s! The boys tramped home together through the snow, and no one told Sam to hurry up—not once.

