

Teacher instructions: Read this passage aloud to your learner.

THE LITTLE FIFER

John Holden was lost. His mother's faith that God would take care of her boy was rewarded, however, when it was discovered that John with his little fife was helping to drill the soldiers in Washington's army.

More than a hundred years ago there lived, in the town of Shirley, Mass., a bright, well-grown lad named John Holden. His father was a farmer, and the little fellow trudged about the farm, clad in home-spun and home-made clothing, feeding calves, driving cows, and doing whatever his hands found to do "with all his might."

One Saturday night John was early at the gate waiting for his father's homecoming; for Saturday was the day when John Holden went to the village, and returned laden with packages and news from Boston—which to them was the centre of the world. A present was an unheard-of thing in little John's life. What was his surprise, then, as his father rode up to the gate, to see him hand out a long black case, saying:

"Here, my boy, see what I've brought you for a birthday present."

And imagine his greater astonishment, on opening the case, to see a beautiful fife of dark wood with silver trimmings!

The boy could hardly believe his own eyes; and as he was passionately fond of music he lost no time in beginning to learn the use of his newly acquired instrument. He carried the fife with him everywhere and practised on it in every spare moment, and before many months he was able to greatly astonish the villagers and won many a compliment by his skillful playing.

Just before the Revolutionary War the whole country, as every boy and girl ought to know, was in a state of ferment and dread. War seemed inevitable, and the oppressive rule of the English was the theme of conversation everywhere.

Little John heard much of it, and longed to be a man that he might join the "rebellious colonists." And one day he received a compliment which set him thinking of matters in a way the older members of his family never mistrusted.

A visitor from Boston was at the farmhouse, and the talk, as usual, ran on the prospect of war in the colonies. During a pause in the conversation, Mr. Holden asked John to play something on the fife. When he had played a stirring march or two, the stranger exclaimed, "Upon my word! But the boy has the soul of music in him! He will be ready for the British bulls and lions when it is necessary."

John sat quite still for some time. But before he went to bed he went to his father and said, "Father, if the British do come, shall I go to war with my fife?"

"To be sure," answered his father laughingly. "They could not get along without you."

Long after his father had forgotten this incident, John Holden took his dog Zip, and his darling fife, and went to a favorite hill on the place to practice. At night the dog came back alone and going straight up to the boy's chamber began to moan and cry, and would not leave

Listen.

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Teacher instructions: Read this passage aloud to your learner.

John's bed.

The family were greatly alarmed, and instantly divined that something had happened to John. Soon the whole town was in commotion; for the news that John Holden was lost flew like wildfire. Bands of men were organized and went searching the woods in every direction. Indians had been traveling through the town recently. Had they carried off the boy or had they stolen the valuable fife and thrown the boy into the river? The woods were hunted through and through; the river was dragged; notices of the lost boy were sent in every direction; but weeks lengthened into months and no clue was obtained that threw the faintest glimmer of light on the strange disappearance.

Everybody believed him to be dead, or with the cruel Indians. Everybody but one. The boy's mother never lost faith in his being safe somewhere.

"My boy is in God's hands," she would say. "In his good time John will come home."

And nothing could move her from this belief while two anxious years slipped by.

In the meantime war had broken out, and Shirley had sent her full quota of men to fight for the country's independence. It was through one of these that a rumor reached Mr. Holden that a boy of twelve was in General Washington's army as fifer.

Jonas Holden was impressed with the certainty that the boy in Washington's army and his lost son were the same. He went home and told his wife the story, and she was certain of it. Accordingly Mr. Holden started for New York, where General Washington and his army were then stationed. There were no railroads or telegraphs then, remember; nothing but horses and stagecoaches. Mr. Holden chose the former, and the best he could do, by traveling on horseback, was to reach General Washington's headquarters in seven days.

When he finally drew rein at the outposts of the Continental Army, he made known his desire to see General Knox, who was with Washington at that time.

General Knox received the Massachusetts farmer with a cordiality that put him at his ease in a moment; and Mr. Holden found no difficulty in stating his errand.

"There is your boy, sir!" exclaimed the interested General, pointing to a young fellow in a soldier's suit, gay with brass buttons, who was playing on a fife. "He is drilling some raw recruits. That boy is Captain-general of us all, sir. I have never known him to whimper or say, 'I can't,' although he is the youngest of us."

The fifer was sent for in the Colonel's name. As he drew near, and lifting his cap, asked, "Did you send for me, sir?" his eye fell on his father sitting in a corner of the tent.

In a moment the boy was in his father's arms and sobbing like a baby. The father's tears were mingled with the long-lost son's and the redoubtable General was obliged to resort to his handkerchief as he withdrew, leaving father and son alone, with the remark:

"I will see our Commander-in-chief."

"When did you come?" said John, when he could speak. "And how did you find me?"

Listen.



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Teacher instructions: Read this passage aloud to your learner.

“Old Captain brought me,” was the reply, “and he can take us both home.”

“And how is mother?” pursued the boy. “Oh! I have been so sorry for dear mother. I tell you, father, not a night have I camped down to sleep but I have thought of mother; and every time I thought of her the tears came. I thought perhaps she might die and I should never see her again.”

“Your mother is well,” was the father’s answer. “And she has never for one moment lost faith in your being well and happy, and finally restored to us.”

“Yes, I shall return, father,” said John. “But I want this war ended first.”

General Knox soon returned with orders from the Commander-in-chief to conduct Mr. Holden and John to his headquarters—a summons that must be obeyed at once. General Washington received Mr. Holden very kindly and said smilingly:

“I hear a story that sounds like a romance in the midst of war. Tell me, my little fifer, how you came to leave your parents without their knowledge, and to join my army at such a tender age?”

John was somewhat abashed by this direct question from so dignified and august a personage; but the General added kindly:

“You have the name of being one of my bravest boys. Tell me how it happened. You never ran away, did you?”

“No, sir, never,” answered John with spirit. “I was playing with my dog Zip, on Sorrel Hill, when a big wagon, full of men, came along. They stopped when they saw me, and one of them called out, ‘Halloo, my little fifer! We are looking for you. Jump in.’ I asked them if the British bulls and lions were here, and they said ‘Yes, hurry up!’ I jumped in, sir, and that was the way it happened.”

Mr. Holden then remembered, for the first time, what he had said long ago, when John asked him if he would be needed when the British bulls and lions appeared.

John’s story was met by a burst of laughter quite unusual with Washington. Then patting the boy’s rosy cheeks, the General said, “After this you must give us some music, my lad.”

And John, quite elated, rendered a stirring march.

“I don’t see how we can part with this brave boy of yours,” said General Washington to Mr. Holden when the boy had finished playing; “but parents have the first claim.”

John was just then ordered to go and dismiss the men he had been drilling, and he departed with a martial salute to his superiors, and “I will be back in five minutes,” to his father.

Mr. Holden, left alone, told the story of the mother’s deep faith, and added, “John seems to be in his element here.”

Then General Washington told the gratified parent an incident, showing the spirit of the lad. “When I, with a number of my suite, approached the vicinity of Monmouth Court House,” said he, “I was met by a little musician, who archly cried out, ‘They are all coming this way, your



Teacher instructions: Read this passage aloud to your learner.

Honor!”

“Who are coming this way?” said I.

“Why, our boys, your Honor! Our boys! and the British are right after them!”

“Impossible!” I cried; but spurring my horse, I found the boy’s words only too true.”

“He is a good boy,” added General Knox, “and invaluable in training raw recruits. If they are homesick he talks kindly with them and cheers them wonderfully with his ardent patriotism.”

The boy just then returned and General Knox added, “Well, what did your men say when you told them you were going home?”

John blushed and answered, “I could not tell them that, your Honor. Father, let me stay another year. Then I shall be thirteen and able to help you more on the farm. You know mother is well, and the war will soon be over.”

What father in Revolutionary times could resist such an appeal?

Washington smiled, and Mr. Holden consented. And after a kind farewell from the Father of his Country, and a loving one from the young fifer, Jonas Holden rode away, saying to himself: “My boy could not hold a more honored position. I leave him safe in the hands of General Washington—and of God.”

When, after seven more days of horseback riding, Jonas Holden arrived at his own door in Shirley, he was met by his maiden sister with the words:

“Disappointed again! So it wasn’t our John at all? I tell you, you’ll never see that boy again.”

But Mr. Holden held out his hand to the boy’s mother.

“My dear,” he said, “John is the happiest boy in the Continental Army.”

It took a long time to tell the story of the journey; of his reception at Washington’s headquarters; of his finding the boy; of his growth, improvement, and popularity; of his close adherence to the principles of right and truth which they had taught him; and of the great Commander’s praise of their son. But at last the father said:

“Have I done right in leaving him there?”

“Just right,” said the mother.

– Helen M. Winslow

Discuss.



Lesson 75



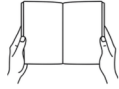
Teacher instructions: Discuss the illustration and the passage with your learner.



What do you see in the illustration?

What do you remember from the story you just listened to? Tell me the story using your own words.

Read.



Lesson 75



Read this silently and then out loud.



AMERICA

*My country, 'tis of thee,
Sweet land of Liberty,
Of thee I sing;
Land where my fathers died,
Land of the pilgrims' pride;
From every mountain side
Let Freedom ring.*

SAMUEL SMITH

Write.



Lesson 75



Copy the passage.

My country, 'tis of thee,
Sweet land of Liberty,
Of thee I sing

Handwriting practice lines consisting of solid top and bottom lines with a dashed midline.

Write.



Lesson 75

end



Use the illustration as inspiration to write a sentence.



Four sets of horizontal writing lines, each consisting of a solid top line, a dashed middle line, and a solid bottom line.