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Soldier's Secret: The Story Of Deborah Sampson



Synopsis

In the 1700s, women's responsibilities were primarily child rearing and household duties. But Deborah Sampson wanted more from life. She wanted to read, to travel, and to fight for her country's independence. When the colonies went to war with the British in 1775, Deborah was intent on being part of the action. Seeing no other option, she disguised herself in a man's uniform and served in the Continental army for more than a year, her identity hidden from her fellow soldiers. Accomplished writer Sheila Solomon Klass creates a gripping firstperson account of an extraordinary woman who lived a life full of danger, adventure, and intrigue.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The real-life Deborah Sampson's experiences dressing as a man for two years to serve as a soldier during the Revolutionary War form the foundation of Klass's (*The Uncivil War*) provocative historical novel. The story starts with a terrific hook: hospitalized with yellow fever, the soldier/narrator known as Robert Shurtliff pretends to be dead to evade examination by the nurses: "Being buried alive [was] a terrible fate, but preferable to being discovered," claims the narrator, who has yet to disclose Shurtliff's real identity. As the grave diggers fight over Shurtliff's boots, a nurse realizes her patient is still alive, leading to a doctor's discovery that the patient is female. Bringing her to his home to recover in safety, he persuades her to write down her story. Readers then learn that Sampson was a "give-away child," passed into indentured servitude because her mother was unable to support her. Finally freed, she still feels hampered by the stringent restrictions placed on women and begins to disguise herself as a man. At times Sampson comes across as self-absorbed; it's Klass's telling

use of details that brings this story to life. Ages 12–16. (Mar.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Starred Review The author's note and chronology that close this novel give what little facts are known about the real Deborah Sampson: her penniless mother sold her into indentured servitude in 1768, during which time she educated herself, secretly learned to dress and act as a boy, and served in the Continental army for 17 months. Klass expertly fills in the gaps, drawing a portrait of a proud girl who, from her early fascination with Joan of Arc, becomes entranced with the idea of a real-life "heroine." Sampson, who fights under the pseudonym Robert Shurtliff, is strong, brave, and witty, yet as scared as any 22-year-old woman would be living among soldiers who might very well kill her for the offense of wearing britches. Klass doesn't shy away from the horrors of battle; she also is blunt regarding details young readers will wonder about, like how Sampson dealt with bathing, urination, and menstruation. What could have been a groan-worthy subplot of Sampson's romantic yearnings for a fellow soldier is given just the right notes of restraint and realism. An admirable accomplishment, and a strong candidate to ply alongside Anita Silvey's *I'll Pass for Your Comrade* (2008). Grades 6-9. --Daniel Kraus --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

It was a captivating read. I liked the book over all-- not the best I have ever read but I look forward to reading it several times for a novel unit!

We are studying the Revolutionary War and I wanted to find an interesting supplement to the basic facts. This is a fictional book but is based largely on letters from Deborah Sampson, a real soldier in the Revolutionary War. It is very well-detailed and factual. At the end of the book, the author tells you the parts that she added that were strictly fiction. We highly enjoyed it!

Amazing book! Great read. An easier way to learn about Deborah Sampson. Very interesting. Quite a page turner. Very factual great for a book report.

if you need a historical book at all this is the best one too read. its really interesting and it gets you hooked from the very first page its a page-turner

Very good

Social Studies the way it should be. This is a true story that you will not be able to put down. It is filled with wonder, suspense, hidden romance, all the makings of a great read!

I have not finished the book but my reason for reading it is not for the literary knowledge. Deborah is a distant ancestor to me so I read anything and everything about family

I enjoyed this book. It's well-written and entertaining. But I've read a generally good amount of information on Deborah Sampson's life and history, and it seems Klass either did not research her very well, or just chose to place fantasy into this book. The first fantasy is the romance with Roger Snow, the soldier who later dies with her. Second, Van Tassel, the Tory sympathizer, did have a daughter (whose name was not Katharina). She was a sympathizer to the colonists, not a childish, spoiled, petulant girl as this book portrays. Did Klass not know Van Tassel had a daughter? There is no evidence left to us that Deborah left Van Tassel's house and then returned commanding a force to take the house. She was a soldier, not an officer. Third, Deborah and her mother were on sad bad terms since she had been kicked out of the Baptist church, that even when Deborah returned to domestic life, she neither sought nor visited her mother. There is no evidence, and it is highly unlikely, that Deborah ever wrote her "do not worry about me" letter in which she tells her mother she has found work with "a large, respectable household". There are other items in this book that Klass most likely knows are highly unlikely or did not happen at all, but she has chosen to continue the confusing falsehoods about Sampson for some reason I can only guess to help craft a more entertaining story. This is a decent book for being introduced to Sampson, but should by no means be the only book one should read about her.

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