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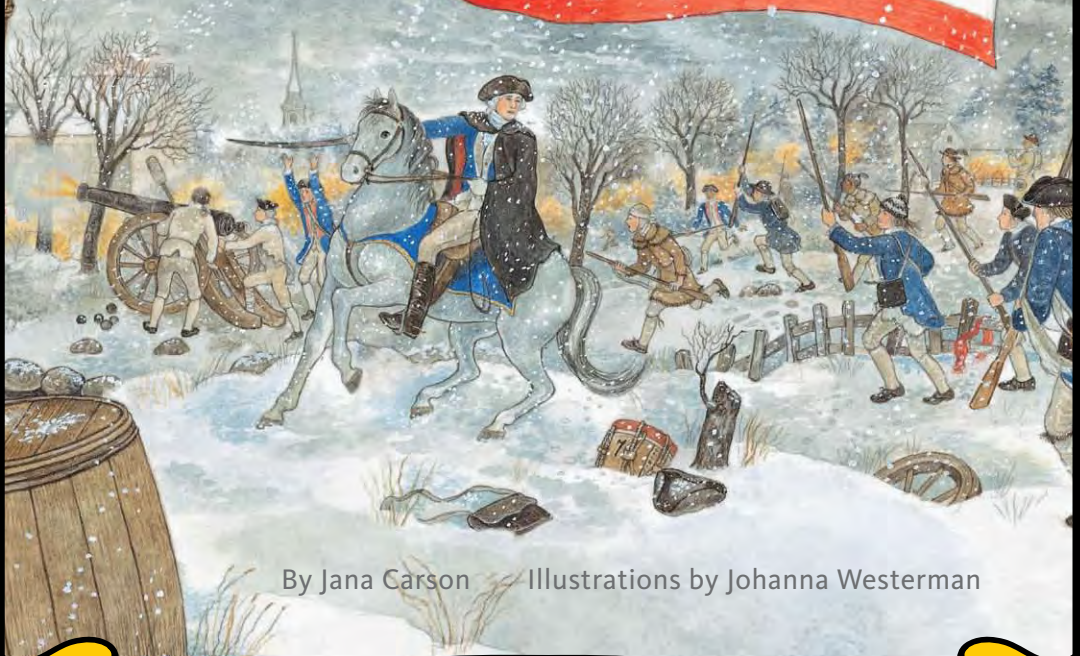
WE BOTH READ[®]

LEVEL

3

CHAPTER BOOK

The Boy Who Carried the Flag



By Jana Carson Illustrations by Johanna Westerman

Interactive Chapter Book

Introduction

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The Boy Who Carried the Flag

We Both Read® Chapter Book

HISTORICAL FICTION

*To my daughter, Kellie:
Remember there is nothing you can't achieve
if you have courage and faith.
— J. C.*

*For my children, Jack, Sam, Catherine, and Anna
— J. W.*

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WE BOTH READ®

The Boy Who Carried the Flag



BY JANA CARSON

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHANNA WESTERMAN

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TREASURE BAY



CHAPTER 1

Sun Up to Sun Down

★ “Run! Run!!” I heard a voice inside my head screaming. I knew I was dreaming, but I couldn’t wake up. I’d had this frightening dream before. It was always the same. I was all alone and it was very cold. I knew I should run, but I was too frightened to move.

“Get up, Ben!” yelled my little sister, Grace. I sat up quickly, my heart still pounding from my dream. “Ma’s got your breakfast in a pail, and Pa is waiting for you in the field.”

It didn’t take long for me to figure out that I had overslept.



★ I jumped into my clothes and flew down the ladder from the loft. I missed a step and almost fell on the way down.

“I’m sorry I woke up late, Ma,” I said, grabbing the pail as I ran for the door.

“If you’re not truly sorry now, you will be when your Pa gets a hold of you,” she called after me.

I raced from the farmhouse to meet Pa in the field. I could see the sun just beginning to climb up into the sky.



★ Our farmhouse sat in the valley next to the great White Mountains. Pa thought it was the most beautiful spot in the whole colony of New Hampshire, but living on the farm was hard. We worked from sun up to sun down. Ma cooked, cleaned, and washed our clothes. Grace fed the chickens and helped Ma with the cleaning. I milked the cow and helped Pa with the crops.

Pa was already tending the field when I came rushing towards him. “You’re late,” he scolded. Then he looked me in the eyes and quietly added, “These are **troubled** times, Ben, and a boy your age ought to know what’s expected of him.”

Pa was right. I wasn’t a baby anymore. There was talk of war all through the American colonies, and some boys not much older than me had already joined the army.

Without saying another word, Pa pointed to the horse. It was time to hitch up the plow and get to work.



★ “I’m sorry I was late again, Pa,” I said, not looking at him. “I’ve really let you down.”

“You could never let me down,” Pa said with a wink. Then he headed for the barn and I got to work.

Working alone in the field gave me time to think. I thought about my bad dreams and what Pa had said about the **troubled** times. I didn’t know yet just how much my life was about to change.





CHAPTER 2

Troubled Times

★ “There’s going to be a town meeting!” I hollered to Pa from across the yard as I hurried toward the barn to show him the notice. Pa took a quick look at it and said, “Hitch up the wagon, Ben.”

“Can I go too, Pa?” I asked. He thought about it for a few seconds and then nodded his head.

The town meeting was being held in a place called Hanover. It was a small town with a few lumber mills, a general store, and a big church right in the center. As we rode in, I saw a large group of men marching in the street with guns. “Are those men in the army, Pa?” I asked.

“No, son. Those men are part of the **militia**. A militia is a group of ordinary working men like me who get together in times of trouble to protect the town.”

“Is there going to be trouble, Pa?”

“I hope not,” he answered with a worried look on his face.

★ The meeting was held at the church. Many seats were filled with **militia** men who had come from other towns far away. Some of the men were shouting, and they seemed angry. A tall man stood up and walked to the front of the church. He held up his hands to quiet the crowd.

“The King of England is making us pay high taxes,” he said in a booming voice. “The King believes that our homes and our lives belong to him. I believe that we are Americans and our lives belong to us!” The men all cheered as he added, “It is time for all of us to stand up and fight!”



★ It was just turning dark when we finally got back home from the town meeting. I was very tired as I climbed up the ladder to the loft and crawled into my bed. Just as I was about to close my eyes, I heard a loud knock on the door.

“Who could be calling at this time of night?” I heard Ma ask.

Curious, I crawled to the edge of the loft and peeked down. I saw several big men standing on our porch. The man in front of the group was Ethan Allen, the man who had led the town meeting. I wondered what he was doing here. My heart sank when I heard his words:

“A small group of **British soldiers** are camped at Fort Ticonderoga. If we act now, we can stage a surprise attack and capture the fort.”



★ The men sat around the table speaking in hushed voices for a long time. They wanted Pa to lead them along the secret Indian hunting trails in the mountains. That way they could take the **British soldiers** by surprise. Pa was nodding his head. He seemed ready to do what they asked. I was scared. I didn't want Pa to get hurt.



★ I awoke early the next morning with a sick feeling in my stomach. I knew it was wrong, but I felt angry at Pa. How could he risk his life to go off and lead those men in a surprise attack?

I dressed quickly and climbed down the ladder. Ma was sitting by the fire in her rocking chair. “Your Pa is gone,” she said softly.

“I know. I heard the men talking last night,” I answered. “Why did Pa do it?”

“He believes that what he is doing is right, Ben. He has gone to help fight for our freedom.”

From that point on, time seemed to fly. Every day there was more news of fights breaking out between the British soldiers and the American militia. We prayed each night for Pa to come home safely.





CHAPTER 3

Unexpected Kindness

★ Several weeks later, I was out working in the field when I spotted something in the distance. Some men were marching down the path toward our farm. I knew they were British soldiers by the bright red coats they were wearing. I ran as fast as I could back to the house.

Ma was standing on the front porch. She had seen the soldiers too. “Should I get my hunting gun?” I asked, out of breath from running.

“No! I don’t want any shooting.” Ma tried to sound calm as she added, “They are men, Ben, not squirrels.”

“Then what should I do?” I cried.

“Hide!” she answered quickly.

★ “Let me stay with you,” I begged.

“Take your sister and run for the barn,” Ma insisted.

“GO!” I quickly grabbed Grace’s hand and we ran.

When we got to the barn, I helped Grace find a hiding place in the hay loft.

“You stay here, Grace,” I instructed my sister. “I’m going back to the house to help Ma. Those soldiers have no right to be here. It’s our farm!”

Just then, I understood why Pa had left us to go and fight. He was right. Our freedom was worth fighting for.





★ I ran back toward the barn door. Suddenly, I felt two big hands grab me from behind. I was lifted high into the air and thrown over someone's shoulder like a sack of potatoes. I was being carried by a big man wearing hawk feathers braided into his long, black hair. I saw a smaller man beside him. Indians!

I struggled to get free from my enemies, but the Indian who carried me held on tight.

★ “Let me go!” I yelled. And, to my surprise, the Indian gently placed me on the ground.

“We will not hurt you,” he said. “There are others here from my tribe who are watching out for your mother. I promise you that she will not be harmed.”

“Why are the soldiers here?” I asked.

“They are searching the house for your father,” he answered. “He has asked us to come and take your family away from this place.”

“Pa sent you?” I asked in **disbelief**.

“Yes,” he continued. “You are no longer safe here. Your father wants us to take you to your uncle’s house in **Philadelphia**.”

I realized now that these were my pa’s friends. Their names were Keeper and Spirit. It was Keeper who had taught my pa about the secret trails in the White Mountains.



★ We left the farm that night and headed for the city of **Philadelphia**. I could tell that Ma had been crying. She tried to put on a cheerful face as she told me, “You’re going to love the city.”

My sister Grace looked at Ma with **disbelief** and cried, “I’m going to hate it!”

No one spoke after that. All I could hear was the steady clip clop of the horses’ feet as they pulled the heavy wagon. Pa had always said, “Never judge a book by its cover.” These Indians turned out to be our friends, not our enemies. I felt safe with them riding beside our wagon.



★ We were exhausted from the long journey as our wagon pulled up to the big house in Philadelphia. My Uncle Will threw open the door and came to the wagon with open arms. “Your beds are all ready,” he said kindly. “Come inside now. We’ll unload the wagon in the morning.”

I followed Uncle Will up a winding staircase to the top floor. He led me to a room that had the biggest feather bed in it that I had ever seen. I crawled into bed and quickly drifted off to sleep.

I was still dreaming when I felt the bed shake. “Wake up, sleepy head!” my sister Grace chirped, giving the bed one final shake. “We’re having breakfast in the dining room!”

I got dressed quickly and rushed downstairs.



★ The late morning sun was shining brightly through the windows of the dining room. Everyone was seated around the table in fancy chairs.

“I’m sorry I’m late for breakfast,” I said politely.

Ma smiled at me and proudly announced, “Uncle Will has found both of us a job, Ben!”

I must have looked very surprised because Ma went on to say, “Times are hard and everyone has to pitch in, Son. We’ll be working for a nice lady in town named Betsy Ross. We start tomorrow.”



★ I was so excited about my new job that I could hardly sleep that night. The sun was just coming up when I got out of bed the next morning. I could hear Uncle Will outside, hitching the horse to the wagon.

After breakfast, we headed out. As we rode through town, I noticed that many of the houses in Philadelphia were big and fancy like my uncle's house. There were all sorts of shops along the main street. We stopped in front of a nice house with a sign in front that read: "Fine **Upholstery** Work Done Here."

We were greeted at the front door by a pleasant lady. "My name is Betsy Ross," she said. "Welcome to Philadelphia."





CHAPTER 4

A True Patriot

★ Working at the **upholstery** shop kept Ma and me very busy. I kept the fires going in all of the fireplaces and made deliveries around the city. Ma helped Mrs. Ross with the cutting and sewing. It had been three weeks since we left our farm to come to Philadelphia. We hadn't heard from Pa, but I hoped that he was safe.

“We need more firewood in the parlor, Ben,” Mrs. Ross said, pulling me away from my thoughts. I nodded and headed outside.

I noticed a crisp chill in the air as I made my way to the woodpile. Winter was on its way. I filled the box with firewood and bent down to pick up the heavy load.

“Ben, come quickly!” I heard Ma's voice shout excitedly. Ma met me halfway as I ran toward the house. “What is it?” I asked, slightly out of breath.

“We have news about Pa,” she answered joyfully.

★ I let out a great shout. “Where is he? Is he safe? Did they capture Fort **Ticonderoga**?”

“Let’s get inside before we freeze to death,” Ma said, smiling. “There is someone here who can answer all of your questions.”

Betsy Ross was standing next to a very tall gentleman in the parlor. I knew right away that he must be someone important. “Ben, I’d like you to meet General George Washington,” she said proudly.

I had never met such a famous person before. General Washington was a **patriot** and the leader of the American **Continental Army**. Stories about him appeared in every newspaper.



★ “How do you do, sir?” I said as General Washington bent down to shake my hand.

“It has come to my attention that it was your father who led the Green Mountain Boys to Fort **Ticonderoga**,” he said in a strong, clear voice.

“Yes, sir,” I answered respectfully. “Is Pa all right?”

“Your father is alive and well,” General Washington answered. “The fort was captured without anyone getting hurt. Your father and the other men were able to take much needed supplies from the fort. They walked many miles to bring those supplies to me and the **Continental Army**.” Then he looked me in the eyes and added, “Your father is a hero and a true **patriot**.”

My heart filled with pride. “Thank you, sir.”



★ General Washington told me that Pa had joined the army and was now fighting with a small troop of men near Canada. I wished I could be there to fight with him. He then showed me a piece of paper with a hand-drawn picture of a flag on it. “What’s this?” I asked.

“I hope this will be the new flag that brings all of the American colonies together,” he answered. “Right now, the soldiers need one flag to remind them that it takes courage and strength to build a nation.” He handed the picture of the flag to Betsy Ross.

“I’ll give this my full effort, General Washington,” she promised. He thanked her, then slipped quietly out the backdoor.

