

Drama

**HISTORICAL
FICTION**
a story based on true
events from the past

GIRL. FIGHTER. HERO.

In the midst of a bloody war, 16-year-old Sybil Ludington will risk everything to save the country she loves.

BASED ON A TRUE STORY FROM THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION. BY MACK LEWIS



ILLUSTRATIONS BY ALLAN DAVEY

CHARACTERS

Circle the character you will play.

*Starred characters have major speaking parts.

***Historians 1 & 2** (H1, H2)

***Narrators 1 & 2** (N1, N2)

THE LUDINGTONS: ***Sybil Ludington** (teenage Patriot), **Colonel Henry Ludington** (father), **Mother, Rebecca** (sister, 14), **Mary** (sister, 11)

THE LOYALISTS: **Mr. Prosser**, **Henchmen 1 & 2**, **Cowboys 1 & 2**

OTHERS: **Enoch Crosby** (family friend and a spy), **Messenger, Mr. Hopkins, Mr. Scribner, Mrs. Shaw, General George Washington**

The militia was a military force made up of civilians, like farmers and shopkeepers. They were called up, or "raised," to help the army in emergencies.

Sybil: No. But know this: We are well armed in this house.

Crosby: And the Colonel? Is he here?

Sybil (*suspiciously*): What do you know of my father?

Crosby: I know he swore an oath to the Crown, yet he commands the local militia against King George.

Sybil: I demand to know who you are at once.

N2: The man throws aside his cloak, brushes the hair away from his eyes, and grins.

Sybil: Mr. Crosby!

N1: Sybil flings open the door.

Sybil: Why did you not announce yourself?

Crosby: I did not recognize the horse out front. I didn't know who might be here.

Sybil: That's my new horse, Star. I've been patrolling.

Crosby: Of course you have, brave Miss Sybil. I suspect not even an army of Redcoats could frighten you.

Sybil: One cannot be brave if one is fearless, Mr. Crosby.

Mary: Are you really a spy?

Crosby: I couldn't say so if I were, now could I, Miss Mary? But whatever you've heard, you mustn't repeat it. Make no mistake, we are at war. The threats are real.

Sybil: That's why we need every **capable** person to join in this fight. Tell me, Mr. Crosby, do you think it fair that women cannot join the militia?

Mother: Sybil, leave poor Mr. Crosby alone.

Sybil: Oh, Mother! You know I am as capable as any boy.

Crosby: No one doubts that, Sybil. The Colonel tells me of your skill with a musket. But listen, I have urgent news: The British put up a reward for your father's capture. You must warn him.

★ SCENE 2 ★

Late at night, April 6, 1777

N2: Sybil, musket in hand, is standing guard in front of her house. Rebecca runs up.

Rebecca: Men on horseback are coming! One of them is that rat Mr. Prosser.

AS YOU READ, THINK ABOUT:

What does Sybil prove to others?

★ PROLOGUE ★

H1: The year is 1777. It's a dangerous and violent time: America is at war with England.

H2: The American colonists fighting for independence are called Patriots.

H1: Other colonists, who remain loyal to King George, are called Loyalists.

H2: Our story begins with 16-year-old Sybil Ludington, the eldest daughter of the much-respected Patriot Colonel Henry Ludington.

★ SCENE 1 ★

March 1777, Hudson Highlands, New York

N1: On a damp, moonless night, a mysterious traveler in a dark cloak knocks on the Ludingtons' door.

N2: Sybil cracks the door open. Her mother and 11 siblings stand behind her, tense with fear.

Sybil: Yes, what is it?

N1: The man speaks in a coarse whisper. Thick locks of hair **obscure** his eyes.

Crosby: Have you lodgings for the night?

Sybil: We do. Who are you, sir?

Crosby: Have you any guests in the house?

★ SCENE 3 ★

Evening, April 26, 1777

Sybil: Loyalist scoundrel! He must be after the reward for Father. If they find out Father isn't here, they will be bolder. They will attack us and loot the house—maybe even set it on fire.

N1: Sybil goes inside and wakes up her siblings.

Sybil: Everyone! Light candles and walk back and forth in front of the windows. We must make it look like this house is full of men.

N2: Prosser's men ride up to the house and take positions behind the trees. They see shadowy shapes pacing in front of the windows.

Prosser: The Colonel is well-guarded tonight.

Henchman 1: It looks like there's half a **regiment** in there.

Henchman 2: Too many to fight.

Prosser: Hold your positions. We will attack when they leave.

N1: Hours pass and still the "men" pace.

Prosser (*frustrated*): Let's move out. We will return another night.

N2: The family is preparing for bed when there's a pounding on the door. Sybil's father answers.

Messenger (*sweating, out of breath*): Colonel Ludington! Danbury is under siege. You must call up the militia.

Colonel: But my men are scattered over many miles. It will take all night to alert them!

N1: The messenger collapses on a bench, exhausted.

Messenger: General Wooster says to march to Danbury at once. We have vital supplies there to protect: food, tents, clothing, blankets—not to mention muskets and gunpowder.

Colonel: Ride on and tell my men to **muster** here. I will organize them as they arrive.

Messenger: I can go no farther, sir. I've ridden 20 miles, and I am utterly spent.

Sybil: I will go, Father.

Messenger: You? You're just a girl.

Sybil: I know these roads like no one else.



THE WAR

Like many people in the 13 Colonies, Sybil Ludington was passionate about independence. She believed that Americans should rule themselves as their own nation and no longer belong to England. The Revolutionary War broke out in 1775, and the Declaration of Independence was signed a year later, on July 4, 1776. The war went on for another six years.

It took six men to fire one cannon!

Messenger: Then you know that Cowboys lurk in the forest. The Highlands are Patriot territory, but they're thick with Loyalist bandits.

Mother: And don't forget Mr. Prosser.

Sybil: Father, you know I can do it.

Colonel: Take a long stick. Bang on each house as you ride past. Do not stop.

N2: Sybil saddles up Star and hoists herself onto the horse. The sky glows orange from the fire in Danbury. The siege has begun.

Sybil: Hiya!

N1: Sybil rides off.

Messenger: You have sent her to her doom.

Colonel: You do not know my Sybil.

★ SCENE 4 ★

Later that night in the Highlands

N2: The wind howls as Sybil races along the road.

N1: Her excitement carries her to the first house.

N2: She bangs on the shutters.

Sybil: The British are attacking Danbury! To arms!

Hopkins: We cannot let Danbury fall.

Sybil: Tell your neighbors: Muster at Ludington's.

N1: The first drops of rain fall. Sybil rides on to Carmel.

Scribner: Who goes there? Friend or foe?

Sybil: Sybil Ludington, sir.

Scribner: What news?

Sybil: The British are sacking Danbury! Muster at Ludington's!

Scribner: I shall spread the word!

N2: The storm worsens and Sybil's clothes are soon soaked through.

N1: She speeds through Mahopac.

N2: Fatigue sets in. Her legs ache and her neck stiffens.

N1: She leans out to bang on the shutters of a cottage and slips, falling into the mud.

In colonial days, "Cowboys" were Loyalists who robbed suspected Patriots, taking mainly food and cattle. Cowboys gave what they took to the British army and others loyal to King George.

N2: She clutches her ankle in agony as a woman appears in the doorway.

Shaw: Why, Miss Sybil, what are you doing way out here?

Sybil: Calling up the militia.

Shaw (helping Sybil up): A little thing like you shouldn't be out riding in the middle of the night.

Sybil: People are depending on me.

Shaw: Let the menfolk worry about the fighting. Come warm yourself in front of the hearth, dear.

Sybil: If the Redcoats sack Danbury, they will press on. They will burn our homes. They will capture and kill my father. Our dream of freedom will be as dead as ash.

N1: Sybil breaks away and hobbles back to her horse.

Sybil: I must continue on. Lives hang in the balance.

N2: Sybil rides off, her voice echoing in the night.

Sybil: To arms! To arms!

★ SCENE 5 ★

Near dawn, April 27, 1777

N1: Sybil and Star trudge down the road.

N2: Suddenly, Sybil sees shadowy figures in the distance.

Sybil: Whoa, boy.

N1: A group of Cowboys steps out in front of her. They surround her, grabbing Star's reins.

Sybil: Get back, you thieves! How dare you!

Cowboy 1: Now, now, little miss. We mean only to take your purse.

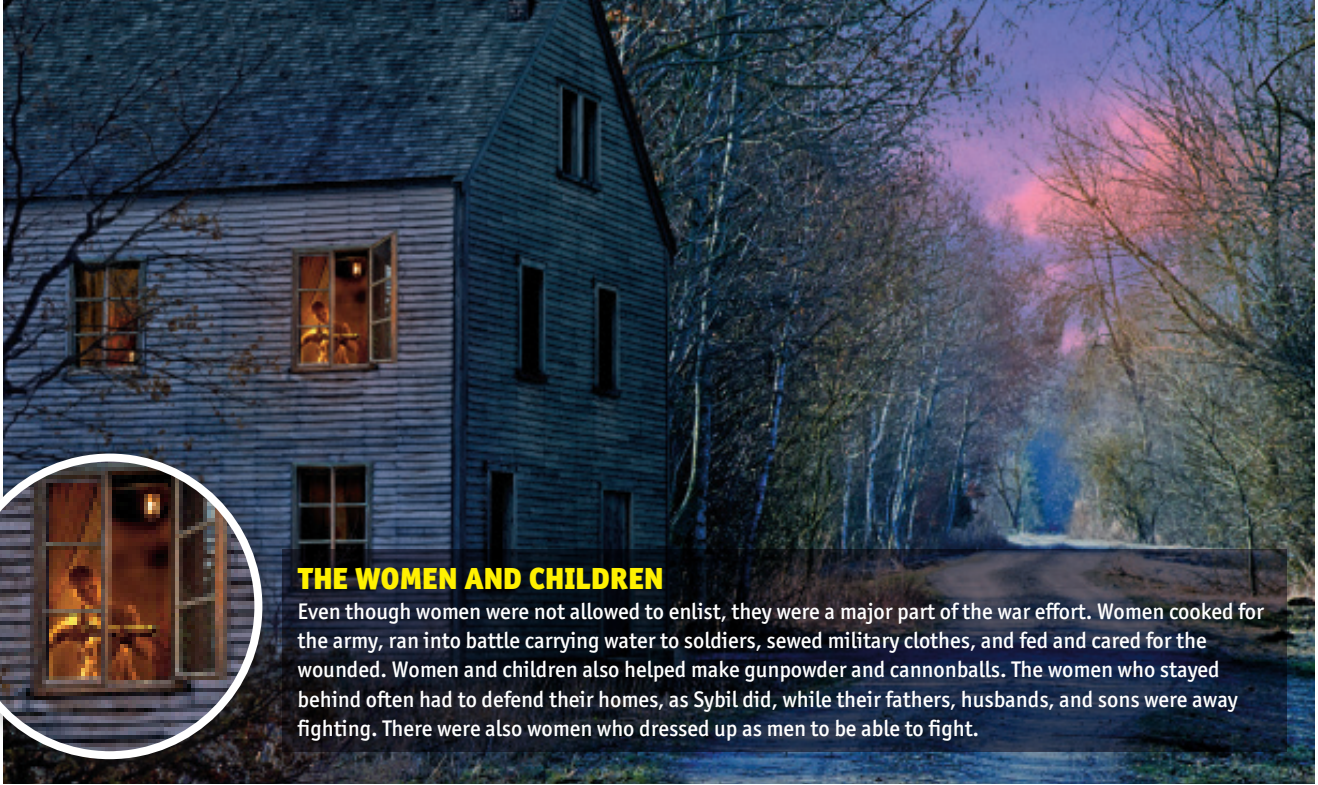
Cowboy 2: And your horse.

Sybil: I'd die before I'd see a Loyalist on *my* horse.

Cowboy 1: That can be arranged.

N2: Sybil feels herself being pulled down. Star rears up on his hind legs, kicking. Sybil hits





THE WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Even though women were not allowed to enlist, they were a major part of the war effort. Women cooked for the army, ran into battle carrying water to soldiers, sewed military clothes, and fed and cared for the wounded. Women and children also helped make gunpowder and cannonballs. The women who stayed behind often had to defend their homes, as Sybil did, while their fathers, husbands, and sons were away fighting. There were also women who dressed up as men to be able to fight.

the ground—hard.

Sybil (*staring up*): Mr. Prosser? How low you have fallen!

Prosser: Silence, traitor!

Sybil (*standing*): If you think you will get away with this, you are gravely mistaken.

N1: Brandishing her stick, Sybil jabs wildly at the Cowboys. They step back, surprised, giving her just enough time to get up on Star.

Sybil (*as she races off*): You shall pay for your disloyalty!

★ SCENE 6 ★

Early morning, April 27, 1777

N2: Sybil, slumped forward in Star's saddle, emerges from the trees to see her home bathed in morning light.

N1: In front of her house stand some 400 men: the militia. The Colonel is calling out directions. Sybil's mother and sisters are carrying food and water. Her little brothers are shining shoes.

N2: One of the men sees Sybil.

Hopkins: Sybil Ludington the Brave! You have done it!

Scribner: Because of you, the Highlands will be defended this day!

All: Cheers for Sybil the Brave! Cheers for Sybil! Hooray!

N1: The men clap and cheer.

Colonel (*beaming*): I knew you could do it, Sybil.

★ SCENE 7 ★

May 1777

N2: Sybil is mending a saddle when Mary rushes over.

Mary: Come quick! Continental soldiers are marching up the road!

N1: Sybil follows Mary out to see General George Washington and an army of men standing **solemnly**.

Colonel: General Washington would like a word.

N2: Sybil curtsies. The General extends his hand.

Washington: I want to shake the hand of the person who mustered our troops to defend Danbury.

Sybil: Thank you, sir. But I understand we were too late. Danbury was destroyed.

Washington: We may not have saved our supplies, but the British paid a heavy toll for coming near the Highlands. I'd wager they won't attempt such an **incursion** again.

N1: Sybil smiles.

Washington: Forty miles in the dead of night! It was a **feat** worthy of my best men.

Sybil: I am honored to have served our cause. And I hope I have shown you that it is not only the best "men" who can fight for freedom. ●

**TURN
THE PAGE**
to read about two
amazing female warriors.



Should Women Do This?

Two women just graduated from the Army's elite Ranger School. But they may never get to go on missions—just because they're female. **BY MELANIE ABRAHAMS**

The mangroves that crowd Florida's swamps are green and lush by day, but it's night now, and their leaves completely block the moon's light. Marching through **brackish** water while hauling about 75 pounds of heavy gear would be a grueling task at any time, but on this hot August night, the risk of tripping over roots and vines makes the journey especially **treacherous**. To make it through, the soldiers keep watch on the only thing they can see: the vague shape of the soldier ahead of them.

Welcome to the Army's Ranger School, one of the military's most difficult and elite training programs.

The Same Training

During the 62-day program, trainees face intense challenges. First, they must pass a fitness test that includes sit-ups, chin-ups, and running 5 miles in less than 40 minutes. Then comes the "mountain phase" of the training, where they practice ambushes and raids. The program ends with drills in Florida's brutal swamps. It's so difficult that only about 40 percent of trainees graduate. Those graduates go on to join the **prestigious** 75th Ranger Regiment, which is sent on some of the Army's most dangerous operations, such as rescuing hostages from terrorists.

Historically, only men have been able to sign up for

Ranger School. But this year, the school opened its doors to women, and two of them—First Lieutenant Shaye Haver and Captain Kristen Griest—made history as its first female graduates.

Yet, despite their earning the Ranger Tab—a patch worn on their uniforms indicating that they graduated—the two aren't **eligible** to become actual Rangers because they are women. So even though they have the same training as their male peers, Haver and Griest can't participate in any Ranger missions.

Equal Opportunities

The Navy first allowed women to **enlist** and serve in 1917, during World War I. Back then, women worked mainly as interpreters, messengers, and translators. It wasn't until 1976 that women were permitted to enroll in military academies. Today, female soldiers make up roughly 15 percent of the **active-duty military**. But some 240,000 military positions—including leading soldiers during combat, operating tanks, and taking part in special operations such as those undertaken by the Rangers—remain off-limits to female officers.

That could all change in January, which is the deadline for Army, Navy, and Air Force leaders to recommend whether to allow women to hold historically male combat jobs. Once all arguments are made, United States Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter will make the final decision.

"I do hope that with our performance in Ranger School,"

Griest says, "we've been able to inform that decision as to what they can expect from women in the military—that we can handle things physically and mentally on the same level as men, and that we can deal with the same stresses in training that the men can."

The Debate

Second Lieutenant Erickson Krogh, who graduated from Ranger School along with Haver and Griest, says that it's a soldier's training, not his or her gender, that should matter. "I would always rather have someone with a Ranger Tab to my left and right when I'm in combat situations," he says. "I don't care if that's a male or a female."

Still, there are those who would rather see women kept out of combat roles. Some people argue that though women may be able to accomplish the same physical tasks as their male peers, women are not naturally as strong as men, and that puts them at greater risk of injury. Others have raised the concern that male soldiers may be distracted by the presence of women in the ranks.

Yet Second Lieutenant Michael Janowski insists that the women were far from a distraction at Ranger School. In fact, he credits Haver with helping him succeed. Halfway up a rocky climb, he struggled with his heavy gear and asked the other trainees to help him carry it. "Shaye [Haver] was the only one who volunteered," he said later. "I probably wouldn't be sitting here right now if it wasn't for Shaye." ●



Kristen Griest (right) and Shaye Haver (left), the first women to graduate from Ranger school.

WRITING CONTEST

If you are *capable*, you have the ability to do something. How did Sybil Ludington prove her capability? How did Shaye Haver and Kristen Griest prove their capabilities? Answer both questions in a short essay. Use text evidence to support your ideas. Send your essay to **SYBIL CONTEST**. Five winners will get *A Soldier's Secret* by Marissa Moss.

GET THIS
ACTIVITY
ONLINE

