SAM THE MINUTE MAN

 About two hundred years ago a young boy named Sam lived with his parents on a farm in Lexington, Massachusetts, near Boston, Massachusetts. At that time, America was not a country of its own. It belonged to England.

 Their family’s farm was small, and the earth was rocky. Sam and his father did most of the outdoor work together.

 Sam’s mother worked indoors. Everything they needed, they had to make or grow or cook for themselves.

 Once, while visiting the city of Boston, Sam and his father saw the soldiers that the British King had sent to keep order in the colonies. The people were unhappy with the way things were being run. Sometimes they had riots. Some people hid guns and gun powder in case there was trouble with the soldiers. They didn’t like the soldiers living in their town and watching over them. They called the soldiers Lobster Backs because they always wore red coats.

 On their way home from Boston, Sam asked his father, “What do these soldiers want? Why are they here?”

 “They want to keep us from becoming too strong,” his father said. “They are afraid of us.”

 “That makes us even,” said Sam. “I am afraid of them, too.”

 One night in early spring Sam woke to the sound of church bells ringing.

 “What’s this?” he thought. “It can’t be Sunday yet. I wonder what could be wrong.”

 Sam went to the window. In the darkness he could see men running. They seemed to come from everywhere. He heard the voices of his father and his mother. His mother sounded frightened. Sam knew there was trouble.

 Sam dressed quickly and went downstairs.

 “What’s going on?” he asked.

 “Go back to bed,” said his mother.

 “NO!” said his father. “We need everyone we can get.” His father was a Minuteman, which meant he had to be ready for trouble at a minute’s notice.

 “Get your gun, Sam,” father said.
 “Why? What’s happening?” asked Sam.

 “Nobody know for sure. The British soldiers have left Boston and are coming this way,” said father.

 “Who told you?” asked Sam, hoping it wasn’t true.

 “Paul Revere,” said his father. “Now get your gun.”

 So Sam got his gun and followed his father through the darkness to the village green. The bells were still ringing, and a drum was making a rattling noise. Sam felt cold and afraid.

 Captain Parker, the head of the Minutemen, told them to line up near the meeting house. Sam saw his friend John Allen. John looked the way that Sam felt, which made Sam feel much better.

 “Why are the British coming?” Sam asked John.

 “They want the guns and powder that are hidden in Concord,” said John. “They have to come past here to get them.”

 Slowly, it began to get light. The drums and bells stopped. It was so quiet that Sam could hear the birds twittering in the trees. He could smell the apple blossoms and feel the wet dew on the grass.

 “Maybe they won’t come, after all,” he said to John. “Maybe they will go another way.”

 “Maybe, but not likely,” said John.

 Then it was daylight, and the men began to relax. Some of them yawned. Sam’s father talked with his friends. Sam ad John played games throwing their knives in the grass. Sam wished he had eaten some breakfast.

 Suddenly John said, “Listen!”

 Everyone listened.

 In the distance they could hear the sound of many marching feet, tramp, tramp, tramp tramp tramp tramp

and then . . .

 Over the hill and past the tavern came the soldiers! They came on and on and on. Sam could see their red coats and the sun glinting on their bayonets. They looked like a bright river of red.

 As they came closer, Captain Parker tried to count them. There seemed to be a thousand of them and he had only eighty Minutemen.

 “There are too many of them,” he shouted. “We had better move away.”

 “I’m all for that,” said Sam. “I think I’ll go on home.”

 “Me too,” said John. “There’s nothing I can do here.”

 Sam and John and their fathers and the other Minutemen began to move off.

 “I’ll see you after breakfast,” Sam said to John. Then he saw a British officer who was shouting and waving his sword.

 “I wonder what he wants,” Sam said.

 “He told us to disperse,” said John.

 “I’m dispersing as fast as I can,” said Sam. “He doesn’t need to shout at us.”

 Then someone, somewhere, fired a gun – BANG!

All the troops began to shoot. Minutemen fell all around.

 “Sam!” John cried. “I’m hit!” John held his leg and fell down to the ground.

 The British officer made his troops stop shooting and got them back into a line. He marched them off toward Concord, leaving eight dead Minutemen behind.

 Sam and his father helped John’s father take him home. Sam felt he must be having a bad dream. He saw John’s mother crying as she put a bandage on his leg.

 “How does it feel?” Sam asked.

 “Not too good,” said John.

 When Sam and his father got to their house, all of Sam’s fear changed to anger.

 “How did they dare do that?” he cried. “If they come back, I’ll shoot them - every single one!”

 “Be quiet,” his father said, as he washed the grit and gun powder off of his face. “You may just have that chance.”

 “He will not,” said his mother. “He doesn’t leave this house again.”

 Then the bells began to ring again! The troops were coming back!

 “Sam, you stay here!” cried his mother.

 But Sam had already grabbed his gun and run outside. His father followed close behind.

 By now more farmers had come from all around. They were shooting at the soldiers as they marched by. They never got in close but fired from behind rocks and trees. This worked much better than meeting the soldiers out in the open fields.

 Then more British troops came out from Boston. For a while the battle was quite heavy. The British troops burned some houses, but their hearts weren’t really in it. Soon they headed back to Boston, followed on all sides by the farmers, whose bullets buzzed about like bees.

 Late that night Sam and his father got back home. The rain was falling gently.

 “Where have you been?” asked Sam’s mother. “I’ve been worried sick about you.”

 But Sam was too tired to answer. All he wanted to do was go to sleep. No one knew it then, but that day was the start of the American Revolution. The war lasted eight long years. At the end, America became a country on its own. But Sam didn’t think of that. He thought of his friend John and wondered how he was doing. And then Sam slept.