

the little horse mystery

Chapter Three by Kay Hively

The parade was over. But Nathan sat on the fence until he could no longer hear the drumbeat off in the distance. After all the celebrating and shouting, everything was quiet. Nathan was all alone. His parents were back in the house. All the people who had come to see the soldiers had gone home.

Climbing down off the fence, Nathan sat on the porch to think. As he thought about Abner, Nathan wondered why there was a war. Why did Abner have to go away? What if Abner gets shot? What if Abner dies? Who was going to run the blacksmith shop? Maybe he could quit school and help Abner's father.

He knew his school teacher father would not let him quit school. But Nathan didn't think Mr. Walters could run the shop alone.

Nathan could not answer all the questions in his mind. Slowly he got up and opened the front door. Puzzled, he sat down by his father who was in the parlor reading a book. Mr. Curtis listened to his son and tried to answer his questions. Mr. Curtis said some people were unhappy and wanted to divide the country into two parts. Those people wanted the freedom to run their part of the country in their own way.

And some people, Mr. Curtis said, did not approve of slavery. They thought it was wrong for one man to own another man.

There were many other problems in the country as well, Mr. Curtis said. He said that keeping the nation together and ending slavery were the most important things to him.

Nathan sat quietly as his father talked. Then he asked how the war could be stopped. His father did not know the answer to that question.

"Maybe Mr. Lincoln will bring peace some day," Nathan's father said.

Nathan smiled when he heard his father talk about the President, because two years ago he got to shake hands with Mr. Lincoln. Abraham Lincoln was the tallest and skinniest man he had ever seen. But Nathan remembered how friendly Mr. Lincoln had been.

Nathan had gone with his father to a big meeting. After all the long speeches, Mr. Lincoln walked through the meeting hall. As he passed by, Mr. Lincoln stopped and bent over to shake hands with Nathan. It was something Nathan never forgot. And now that tall man who shook his hand was President of the United States.

That night after supper, Nathan trudged upstairs to bed. It had been an exciting Saturday. He was so tired that he fell asleep almost before he could blow out the flame on his lamp.

But Nathan's sleep was interrupted late in the night when he heard a loud thump downstairs. Nathan opened his eyes and listened, but he couldn't hear anything. It must have been just a dream, he thought, as he rolled over and went back to sleep.



Author Kay Hively and Illustrator Billie Gofourth-Stewart are both of Neosho, Missouri. Produced in partnership with this newspaper and the Missouri Press Foundation with support from Verizon Foundation. Copyright 2002.

Classroom Extensions

Things to Think About and Do –

- Maybe Nathan will write a letter to Abner. Learn how to write a formal letter, then write one to a friend. Address the envelope properly.
- At the end of this chapter, Nathan hears a noise in the night. What do you think it was? Write down three things you think the sound could have been. Soon you will see if you guessed right.

Show Me Standards Correlations – G1:5; G2:1,5; CA1,2,4

Next Week: Chapter Four – A Wooden Horse