

# Young Patriots



## Chapter Four - by Kay Hively

In the darkness, Ben could see sparks flying from the hooves of the horse that was coming full speed right at him. All he could do was throw himself up against a board fence in the alley. Ben pressed as close to the fence as he could and covered his head with his hands.

As the horse and rider passed by, Ben could feel the wind blowing on him from the rush of the animal. He lay still, hoping the horse would not step on him.

Almost as quickly as it had come, the horse was gone. Ben was not hurt, but he was shaking all over. The iron-clad hooves had been just inches from his head. Ben had seen two things as the animal passed over him. He could see sparks flying from the horseshoes as they struck the cobblestone street. He could also see a bright spot of white on a back leg of the horse. Gathering himself up, Ben knew one thing for sure. The horse that had nearly run over him in the alley was Ginger. She was the little mare the stranger had rented from Grandfather that very afternoon. Ben would know her anywhere.

Just as Ben started down the alley again, rain began to fall. Things were not going well. How was he going to explain his wet clothes to Grandmother?

Already wet, Ben decided to trudge on to the church. He was almost there.

At the corner where the church was located, Ben moved down a side street so he could go directly to the back of the building. A tall iron fence surrounded the back yard of the church. Ben could see that the gate was open just a bit.

Slipping across the street, Ben squeezed through the gate. Just as he got inside the fence, a jagged bolt of lightning lit up the sky. The suddenness of the flash startled Ben so badly that he jumped backward into the gate.

With a loud thud, the latch on the gate slammed shut. Grabbing the gate handle, he gave it a twist. It would not open. The gate was locked.

With rain dripping down his face, Ben turned back to the church yard. In the pale light of street lanterns, all he could see were tombstones – tall white stones that glistened with rain. He had never been so scared in all his life. Ben looked around for Will and Davey.

Making his way around the tombstones, Ben walked through the rain toward the old church. He knew there was a little covered porch on the back of the building. If he could get there he would be out of the rain while he waited.

Ben had never been in a cemetery after dark. He kept telling himself that he didn't believe in ghosts. No ghosts were going to rise up out of the ground. No spooks were going to jump on him.

As Ben tried to be brave, a clap of thunder boomed across the cemetery. Ben ran at full speed toward the little porch.



*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 -

- How do you think Ben will explain his wet clothes to his grandparents? Write a little story, telling what you would tell them.
- Visit a cemetery in your town. Find the oldest date on the tombstones. What is an epitaph? Write an interesting or funny one.

STANDARDS - G4:4; G1:2; G1:9; SS7; CA1

**Next Week: Chapter Five – A Mysterious Message**