

*New York Times* Bestselling Author

AMY HARMON

A GIRL  
CALLED  
SAMSON

A young woman in a blue and white historical outfit and a black hat stands in a field of tall grass, looking out over a sunset sky. The scene is bathed in the warm, golden light of dusk, with long shadows and a soft glow on the horizon. The woman is positioned in the center of the frame, facing right, with her hands clasped behind her back. The background is a vast, open landscape under a dramatic, cloudy sky.

A NOVEL

# A GIRL CALLED SAMSON

*From New York Times bestselling author Amy Harmon comes the saga of a young woman who dares to chart her own destiny in life and love during the American Revolutionary War.*

*In 1760, Deborah Samson is born to Puritan parents in Plympton, Massachusetts. When her father abandons the family and her mother is unable to support them, Deborah is bound out as an indentured servant. From that moment on, she yearns for a life of liberation and adventure.*

*Twenty years later, as the American colonies begin to buckle in their battle for independence, Deborah, impassioned by the cause, disguises herself as a soldier and enlists in the Continental Army. Her impressive height and lanky build make her transformation a convincing one, and it isn't long before she finds herself confronting the horrors of war head-on.*

*But as Deborah fights for her country's freedom, she must contend with the secret of who she is—and, ultimately, a surprising love she can't deny.*



Publication date: April 1, 2023

Genre: Historical, Romance

Recommended for ages: +16



## ATTENTION

**THIS DOCUMENT INCLUDES SPECIFICS YOU MIGHT WANT TO AVOID  
UNTIL YOU HAVE FINISHED READING THE BOOK.**

**BOOK CLUB KIT – A GIRL CALLED SAMSON**

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## CHARACTER LIST

Deborah Samson

John Paterson

Elizabeth Paterson

Sylvanus Conant

Deacon Thomas

Mrs. Thomas

Nat Thomas

Phineas Thomas

Jerry Thomas

Benjamin Thomas

Thomas Brothers

Agrippa Hull

Colonel Kosciuszko

Jimmy Battles

Noble Sperin

John Beebe

Anne Holmes

## QUESTIONS

What were some of the overarching themes of the story?

Who were your favorite characters?

Did the characters feel relatable and realistic?

What moments surprised you? What did you predict would happen?

Did you anticipate the role John Paterson would play in the book?

Why was Deborah's portrayal of a man so believable?

What were some of your favorite quotes from the book?

What were your favorite scenes or moments?

Did you learn anything new about the time period?

How has your perspective been changed or broadened by this story?

How did Deborah's relationship with Elizabeth help her to develop a relationship with John?

What were the most pivotal points in the story in your opinion?

How is John and Deborah's relationship different from the relationship John had with Elizabeth?

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## QUOTES

Discuss the following quotes:

*“Looks don’t matter at all if your hearts are the same.”*  
page. 8

*“I was of strong mind. And that was not a sin.”*  
page 19

*“Great miracles were wrought on their journey, but miracles do not make life easy. Most often, miracles just make the next step possible.”*  
page 28

*“Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Never have words penetrated deeper or lifted me higher. For what good is life without liberty, and what good is liberty without pursuit?”*  
page 54

*“It is not for the man who has everything and wants more that we fight, but for the man who has nothing.”*  
page 64

*“But it is hope that will give you the desire to continue. You must resist it, that hopelessness. When God takes you, let him take you. When he plucks you from this earthly coil, then you may rejoice. But as long as you continue to draw breath, as long as your heart beats, and the sun rises you must stay in the fight.”*  
page 122

*“If you die... you won’t just experience a little bit of heaven. It’ll be heaven itself. Maybe you won’t need a taste because everything will be so good.”*  
page 136

*"We cannot imagine what we do not fathom."*

page 154

*"A woman is not a corset or a gown or a pile of curls. You've always been a woman. And a remarkable one, it seems."*

page 339

*"Every Soul that has ever been born is a pinprick of light in an enormous net, and his light and mine are connected."*

page 379

*"I was a soldier, and I am proud of that. I am a mother too, and a wife, and I have not wished away the blessings or power of womanhood, as you once counseled. I have embraced every role, played every part, and made my mark on the world. But the world has made its mark on me too."*

page 389

**Were there any particular quotes that stood out to you? Which ones and why?**

## STRUCTURE, WRITING & GENERAL DISCUSSION

Structure, Writing, and General Discussion:

What did you think of the overall structure of the novel?

Were you engaged immediately?

Did you race to the end, or was this a slow-burn story for you?

What did you think about the time-line and point of view?

How did you feel reading the story?

Which emotions conveyed the story?

Did the story keep you interested?

Would you say this is a plot-driven book or does the story unfold slowly with a focus on character development?

Were you surprised by the plot? Or did you find it predictable?

How credible did the author make the setting and dialogue?

What scene did you find was the most pivotal for the book? How do you think the story would have changed had that scene not taken place?

What scene resonated most with you personally in either a positive or negative way?

Did certain parts of the novel make you uncomfortable?

Were there any scenes that made you laugh?

What is the significance of the title? Did you recognize it in the book?

Would you have given the book a different title? If yes, what is your title?

What surprised you the most about the book?

What did you learn about this time period from reading the book?

Did you think the ending was appropriate?

How would you have liked to have seen the ending go?

Have any of YOUR views or thoughts changed after reading this book?

What do you think about the cover of this book? Would you change it? How?

Has this book changed you, broadened your perspective?

What did you learn from, take away from, or get out of this book?

Did your opinion of the book change as you read it? How? Did this book leave any lingering questions you're still thinking about?

If you were making a movie of this book, who would you cast?

Though this story is set in the past, how do the issues the characters face relate to today?

How original or unique was this book?



## Discussion questions by chapter

### Chapter 1:

Who is Deborah Samson?

What makes Reverend Conant and Deborah take an immediate liking to each other?

### Chapter 2:

How are Deborah and the Thomas boys alike? It seems as if each boy has a quality that Deborah possesses within herself.

### Chapter 3:

Deborah's mother was adamant that her children understood and knew their ancestry, specifically their ties to William Bradford.

Why do you think this ancestry was so important to her?

How might it play a role in Deborah's own self-image and identity?

Nat tells Deborah she is beautiful. She disagrees. What made Deborah beautiful to the Thomas boys?

### Chapter 4:

Deborah often has nightmares of Dorothy Bradford drowning and pulling Deborah with her into the ocean. How might this dream, and the ones she has of flying, be a metaphor for how Deborah feels towards her situation in life?"

### **Chapter 5:**

How might the media have played a role in convincing or not convincing the people during this time to support the war effort?

### **Chapter 6:**

How did the death of Reverend Conant and the pressure to marry Milford Crewe add to Deborah's unrest?

### **Chapter 7:**

Deborah tells Jeremiah of a woman who followed her husband to war. In what ways might some women have been unsung heroes of the Revolutionary War?

What were the events that led Deborah to disguising herself as man and trying to enlist?

### **Chapter 8:**

Deborah was caught, how did this alter the course of her life?

Why does she decide to try again with enlistment?

Why does Deborah confront her father and risk being discovered?

### **Chapter 9:**

Deborah is a scholar. Throughout the beginning of the book she pronounces her determination and desire to read and write. How might these skills have assisted her in posing as Robert Shurtliff?

How is General John Paterson different from the John Paterson Deborah wrote letters to?

## **Chapter 10:**

Discuss this quote: *“I was accepted as a man because for me to be a woman was unfathomable.”*

Why did John continue to come back to talk with Rob night after night?

John had Rob repeat the declaration each night. Why did he do this?

## **Chapter 11:**

*“It was a funny thing, pride. It made some men leave and some men stay. My father’s pride had made him selfish. Noble’s pride had done the opposite. Like so many others, he’d been driven by the need to do his part.”*

Was it Deborah’s pride that made her enlist?

What were Deborah’s motivations behind enlisting?

How might they be different or the same as the men who enlisted?

## **Chapter 12:**

How has Deborah’s upbringing with the Thomas boys helped her as a soldier?

How did the battle with Delancey’s men change Deborah?

How might war alter a person?

## **Chapter 13:**

What are your thoughts on this excerpt from the book as Deborah contemplates her life as a woman and, now, a soldier?

*“I had never considered it a privilege to be a woman.....It had not occurred to me that men had their own burdens, that they were bridles too. It was not women who died on the battlefield. I had been denied and barred entry from a world I wanted to experience, but had I been barred because I was disdained or because I was valued? I suspected it was both. Even so, I was less inclined to complain about my lot.”*

#### **Chapter 14:**

Make a prediction: What role will Agrippa Hull play in the coming chapters/this story?

#### **Chapter 15:**

What is John Paterson and Deborah's relationship like?

How has it changed throughout the story, from the beginning to now?

How might the correspondence between Deborah and John before and at the beginning of the war help Rob in his position as John Paterson's aide?

Predictions on how it will develop?

#### **Chapter 16:**

What would make people, like Van Tassell, hesitant to help the continental army?

Who attacked them? Loyalists or soldiers from the British army?

#### **Chapter 17:**

Discuss this quote from the book

*"It is the curse of manhood.*

*'What is, sir'*

*'The need to prove oneself.' "*

#### **Chapter 18:**

What might John be thinking and feeling once he discovers Rob's true identity?

What is the conflict he is feeling?

**Chapter 19:**

What do women give up in war?

What do men?

**Chapter 20:**

Discuss this quote:

*“Some of them were animals. Maybe war made them that way, but I suspected that war just revealed their hooves and snouts.”*

**Chapter 21:**

How has Phineas changed?

How do hardships change us?

**Chapter 22:**

*“All of you have suffered for a cause that has lost its shine.”*

What keeps you going in times when hope seems lost, when the trial no longer seems like a noble challenge?

**Chapter 23:**

The murder of Captain Huddy leaves patriots seeking revenge. War creates gray areas but also demands justice while simultaneously never meting it out.

### **Chapter 24:**

John asks Rob if she intended to survive the war. He believes that her bravery comes from her belief that she would not.

Do you agree or disagree?

What makes Deborah so brave?

### **Chapter 25:**

“A woman is not a corset or a gown or a pile of curls. You’ve always been a woman. And a remarkable one it seems.”

What makes a remarkable woman?

### **Chapter 26:**

Why did Deborah don her disguise again?

What would the frustrations and limitations of being a woman during this time period have been?

### **Chapter 27:**

John plans to take a furlough and then to resign. Deborah reminds him of his promise to stay til the end.

What kind of man was John Paterson?

Why was it important for him to see it through to the end?

Why is it important for all of us to finish what we started?



## **Chapter 28:**

What was the significance of Elizabeth's character?

How were the letters exchanged between Elizabeth and Deborah guide the story?

How did the letters between Elizabeth and Deborah help Deborah to connect with and build a relationship with John and Elizabeth's daughters?

## **Chapter 29:**

How did Deborah's mother's death affect Deborah?

How did it catapult her into her choice to share her story?

What was it that Deborah was battling within herself?

## **Chapter 30:**

Deborah writes to Elizabeth,

*"I was a soldier, and I am proud of that. I am a mother too, and a wife, and I have not wished away the blessings or power of womanhood, as you once counseled. I have embraced every role, played every part, and made my mark on the world. But the world has made its mark on me too."*

What are the blessings and powers of womanhood?

In what ways do you feel you have made your mark on the world?

In what ways has the world left its mark on you?

How did Deborah leave her mark on the world?