

# Teacher's Guide

## 3rd to 5th Grade

By: Tyler White and Erin Morris  
Version 1.0

*For questions, comments, or suggestions related to this guide, please contact Erin Morris at [erin@samthesoldier.com](mailto:erin@samthesoldier.com). We are always trying to improve these materials to provide teachers what they need and therefore we welcome your contact!*



## ***Who is Sam the Soldier?***

By: Erin Morris  
<https://samthesoldier.com>  
[erin@samthesoldier.com](mailto:erin@samthesoldier.com)

# **TYLER'S BIOGRAPHY**

Tyler White is an elementary school teacher in North Carolina and was a significant contributor to the writing of *Who Is Sam the Soldier?*. Tyler graduated 2008 Arizona State University with a Bachelor of Arts in Early Childhood Education. Tyler has taught for twelve years with experience teaching in Pre-K, Kindergarten, 1st grade, 2nd grade, and 3rd grade. Additionally, Tyler is a Teacher Mentor and a Technology Leader in her school district. In her free time, Tyler volunteers as an instructor and teacher advisor to the student-run newspaper she established at her elementary school. Tyler also enjoys spending time with her family as well as crafting pieces of art.

# **ERIN'S BIOGRAPHY**

Erin Morris is an Army veteran and former Major in the United States Army Judge Advocate General's Corps. She spent nine years in the Army and deployed to Afghanistan in 2013 with the 101st Airborne Division. Since leaving the Army, Erin continues to practice law in Colorado where she lives with her husband, also an Army veteran, and her family. In her free time, Erin volunteers to support veterans through various outreaches and is the legal advisor to a veteran-support non-profit in Texas. Erin also enjoys traveling and adventuring in the great outdoors.



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[erin@samthesoldier.com](mailto:erin@samthesoldier.com)

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<https://samthesoldier.com>  
[erin@samthesoldier.com](mailto:erin@samthesoldier.com)

# **INTERACTIVE READ ALOUD**

### ***Before you read:***

Tasks:	Discussions:	Activities:
Read the back blurb.  Walk through the book and address key vocabulary that may be unfamiliar to the students.  Analyze initial impressions of soldiers.	KWL: What do you know about soldiers and/or the US Army? What do you want to know about soldiers?  Synthesize: What kind of person do you think would make a good soldier?  Turn and Talk: What do you think this story will be about? What kind of information will you learn about in this book?	Start a KWL chart.  Start Synthesize activity.

### ***During the reading:***

Tasks:	Discussions:	Activities:
Periodically stop on a page and discuss details, topics and themes from the page.	What is this part mostly about? How do you know? What is the author trying to tell you here?	Start Stop and Jot activity.  Work on Synthesize activity.



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### After you read:

Tasks:	Discussions:	Activities:
Book Talk.	Use Book Talk to navigate through various thematic discussion points.	Complete Stop and Jot.
Hold a grand conversation.	Debatable topic example: Is diversity essential to a successful team? Why or why not?	Complete Author's Purpose.
Read Erin's biography and analyze her purpose for writing this book.	Author's purpose: How did the author organize the information to help readers to understand it? Give examples? What were some important details that the author wanted you to learn? Why do you think the author wrote this book? What evidence from the story tells you that?	Complete Text Connections.
Analyze text connections.	Connections: Was there a specific fact that left an impression on you? Identify pieces of information which led you to that impression and identify how that information affected your impression. What connections do you make to the text?	Complete Compare and Contrast.
Compare and contrast Sam's life in the Army to your life.	Compare and contrast: How is Sam's life similar to yours? How is it different?	Complete Main Idea.
Analyze the main idea.	Synthesize: What kind of person would make a good soldier? Why?	Complete Synthesize.
Synthesize the reading.	Character traits: What kind of character traits do you think Sam shows? How do you know? What kind of character traits do you think a soldier would have to have? How to you know? What evidence from the text tells you that?	Complete Character Traits.
Analyze character traits of Sam.	Determining importance: What are 3 big ideas from the text?	Complete Determining Importance.
Determine important ideas from the text.		



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[erin@samthesoldier.com](mailto:erin@samthesoldier.com)

# BOOK TALK

*Who is Sam the Soldier?* portrays a day in the life of an American soldier and offers a glimpse into the diverse world of the military. The book is filled with information on various uniforms, medals, and ribbons worn by soldiers, as well as what a soldier's daily life entails. Sure, they can fire cannons, drive tanks, and travel to foreign countries to help people, but above all else, they are just ordinary people doing their jobs. Sam is a mechanic in the Army who fixes trucks, goes on runs, eats with his friends in a dining facility, and hangs out with fellow soldiers in a barracks room. Throughout the book you can also see that the Army has soldiers from various races, ethnicities and genders.

<b>Diversity</b> In the book, the author writes "The Army is very diverse." What does she mean by that? Is diversity a good thing? Why? Is our school/your classroom diverse? Does that make learning better/easier? How?	<b>Uniforms</b> In the text, there is a section that focuses on the soldiers' uniforms. Why do you think the author included this? Are uniforms important in the Army? Are they important to individual soldiers? Why or why not? Would you like to wear a uniform everyday? Why or why not?
<b>Exercise</b> In the book, the soldiers gather for physical training and complete a large group run. It is important to stay healthy in the Army. Why do you think the Army puts so much value on health? Why do the soldiers gather together to exercise? Do you think that working out together is helpful? Why or why not? How could this help you?	<b>Service</b> The text compares soldiers to other community helpers. How is a soldier a community helper? What kinds of things do they do that are helpful? Do you know a soldier? Is that person helpful in your community or family? What kinds of things can soldiers help do?
<b>Accomplishment</b> Soldiers wear their ranks on their sleeves which is both a symbol of authority and of their hard work. They also wear their medals on their dress uniforms, displaying their accomplishments for all to see. Why is this important to soldiers? How do you think this helps other soldiers? How is this like your life at school? What could you do to share your goals and accomplishments?	<b>Ambition</b> There are a lot of different kinds of jobs in the Army. What opportunities are available for young men and women entering the Army? Do you think it is important for soldiers to train in one career area? Why or why not?
<b>Respect</b> By definition, respect is the way you treat someone. Not only do we treat authority figures, like parents, teachers, and police officers with respect, but also our peers. Respect is very important in the Army. How does this story show that? Can you find some examples in the text of respect? How can we show each other respect? To whom do you show respect?	



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<https://samthesoldier.com>  
[erin@samthesoldier.com](mailto:erin@samthesoldier.com)

# **VOCABULARY**

Diverse - (adj.) having a lot of differences

Religion - (n.) a system of beliefs, faith, and/or worship, typically surrounding a god or gods.

Ethnicity - (n.) belonging to a group based on cultural traditions.

Race - (n.) a characterization of a person based on the way he or she looks.

Rank - (n.) a position within an organization. Different ranks are designated as being one on top of the other.

Achievement - (n.) something done successfully after some effort.

Competition - (n.) a contest between two or more people.

Physical Training (PT) - (n.) exercise.

Formation - (n.) an arrangement of soldiers.

Salute - (v.) a gesture used to show respect by a soldier.

Boss - (n.) the person in charge of an employee; a person under whom someone works.

Company - (n.) a designated group of about 100 to 250 soldiers.

Battalion - (n.) a group that typically consists of 4 to 6 companies.

DFAC - (n.) dining facility; cafeteria.

Barracks - (n.) a group of rooms where soldiers live similar to a hotel or dorm.

Supplies - (n.) resources that people need.

First Aid - (n.) medical treatment for an injured person.






Agreement - (n.) resolution of a different opinions.



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<https://samthesoldier.com>  
[erin@samthesoldier.com](mailto:erin@samthesoldier.com)

# ADDITIONAL POINTS OF INTEREST

 Pages 2-3	<p>-The flag on Sam's right shoulder appears backwards. However, it is actually correct. Imagine holding a flag while running forward: the side with the stars is connected to the flagpole so when you are running "toward the fight", the flag appears backwards.</p>
 Pages 4-5	<p>-There are many interesting people in this picture. However, the one who is most distinct is "Captain Singh" who is the person fifth from the right with the beard and turban. Captain Singh is a Sikh and as presented in this picture, was granted an exception to the grooming standards based on his religious beliefs.</p>
 Page 6	<p>-Sam stands here in a position called "parade rest". It is more relaxed than the position of "attention" but more rigid than the position of "at ease".</p>
 Page 7	<p>-When soldiers of the same rank stand and speak to one another, their posture is usually relaxed. In this picture, the female soldier and Sam are the same rank. However, the male soldier, Specialist Moore, is more senior than Sam so Sam's posture is closer to the position of attention.</p>
 Page 8	<p>-For a private first class to be shaking hands with a 1-star general in their dress uniforms, Sam must have done something very good. Most private first classes do not interact personally with a general officer.</p>





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<https://samthesoldier.com>  
[erin@samthesoldier.com](mailto:erin@samthesoldier.com)



Page 9

-The enlisted soldier's uniform is distinguishable from the officer's uniform in a few, very noticeable ways: 1. the shoulders of the enlisted soldier's uniform do not have rank while the officer's uniform does have "shoulder-boards" which indicate the officer's rank; 2. the enlisted soldier's uniform has the rank on the upper sleeve while the officer's uniform has nothing on the upper sleeve; and 3. the enlisted soldier's uniform has gold-colored metal disks on the upper lapel showing "US" on the right side and the soldier's branch on the left side: the officer's uniform gives the same information but with differently styled metal pins.



Page 10

-Ribbons are put in a specific order based on what the ribbons represent.  
 -Sam has 4 ribbons: Army Achievement Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, and the Army Service Ribbon.  
 -Sam also has two badges: Expert Marksmanship Qualification Badge (Rifle) and Driver and Mechanic Badge (Mechanic).



Page 11

-Veterans are allowed to wear their dress uniforms, even after they leave the service, on certain occasions.  
 -You can tell the veteran on the left is a Korean War veteran because of the blue and white striped ribbon on his ribbon rack in addition to the Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation ribbon located above his name plate.  
 - You can tell the veteran on the right is a Vietnam War veteran because of the green, yellow, and red ribbon on his ribbon rack in addition to the Vietnam Presidential Unit Citation ribbon above his name plate.



Page 12

-Both men and women can be in the Infantry.  
 -Army medics are often called "Doc" by the soldiers even though they are not actually doctors.



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<https://samthesoldier.com>  
[erin@samthesoldier.com](mailto:erin@samthesoldier.com)

 <p>Page 13</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-To be a helicopter pilot in the Army, you must be a warrant officer or an officer.</li> <li>-Artillery cannons are often referred to as "guns" in the Army while rifles are often referred to as "weapons".</li> </ul>
 <p>Pages 14-15</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Sam is working on the engine of a HMMWV (pronounced hum-vee) which stands for High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle.</li> </ul>
 <p>Page 16</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Single soldiers usually live in barracks rooms either alone or with another soldier as a roommate.</li> </ul>
 <p>Page 17</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-This is called "standing in formation". The person in the front of the group is holding the unit guidon which is a flag identifying the specific unit. The soldier holding the flag is called the guidon bearer.</li> </ul>
 <p>Page 18</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Saluting the flag starts from the position of attention. Notice how the soldiers have their feet together, backs straight, and left arm down close by their sides in a fist-like position.</li> </ul>
 <p>Page 19</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-A company commander and a first sergeant are usually in charge of a company. The company commander is an officer and most often in the rank of captain. A typical captain has been in the Army 4-7 years. The first sergeant is an enlisted soldier and often in the rank of master sergeant. A typical master sergeant has been in the Army 14-18 years.</li> </ul>



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[erin@samthesoldier.com](mailto:erin@samthesoldier.com)



Pages 20-21

-A battalion commander and a command sergeant major are usually in charge of a battalion. The battalion commander is an officer and most often in the rank of lieutenant colonel. A typical lieutenant colonel has been in the Army 14-18 years. The command sergeant major is an enlisted soldier and often in the rank of sergeant major. A typical sergeant major has been in the Army 16-22 years.



Page 22

-Soldiers do not wear headgear (hats) inside unless they are carrying a weapon in an official capacity such as a military police officer or while working as a cook.



Page 23

-Military and government vehicles are stored and maintained in "motor pools".



Pages 24-25

- Soldiers spend a lot of time together, much like a family.



Page 26

-Soldiers are just one type of community helper. There are many careers, whether inside the military or not, that provide opportunities for a person to help others.



Page 27

-Usually, the state's National Guard soldiers and units help out with natural disasters that occur within the United States and its territories. If the disaster is very large, such as Hurricane Katrina, the active duty units stationed at the bases nearby will assist the state's National Guard.



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<https://samthesoldier.com>  
[erin@samthesoldier.com](mailto:erin@samthesoldier.com)



Pages 28-29

-It is not unusual for soldiers to run into and interact with children on "the battlefield" when deployed.



Pages 30-31

-For every soldier that serves, there is an extended network of family and friends who are affected by his or her service. The support of a family is very important to a soldier.



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<https://samthesoldier.com>

[erin@samthesoldier.com](mailto:erin@samthesoldier.com)

# **ACTIVITY - KWL**

Before you read, list things you already (K)now about soldiers or the Army. Then list (W)hat you would like to know, or question you have. After you read, list some new things that you (L)earned from the story.

K	W	L



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[erin@samthesoldier.com](mailto:erin@samthesoldier.com)

# **ACTIVITY - STOP AND JOT**

**P.5** What is diversity? How does the illustration help you understand diversity?

**P.11** The author talks a lot about the uniforms in the Army. Why do you think she does this? Why are the uniforms so important?

**P.15** What have you learned so far about the Army? What are you still wondering about the Army or soldiers?

**P.21** Why is teamwork so important in the Army? When is teamwork important in your life?

**P. 25** Is Sam's life in the Army similar to yours? How?

**P. 29** Have you ever had to stand up for yourself or someone else? What happened?



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<https://samthesoldier.com>

[erin@samthesoldier.com](mailto:erin@samthesoldier.com)

# **ACTIVITY - AUTHOR'S PURPOSE**

After reading the author's biography at the end of the book, why do you think Erin Morris wrote this book? Fill in the chart below with clues from the text that leads you to the author's purpose.

Clue #1	Clue #2	Clue #3
Author's Purpose		



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# **ACTIVITY - TEXT CONNECTIONS**

Is Sam's life like yours? How? Find specific examples of how Sam's life is similar to yours and explain the connection in the table below.

<b>Specific Text</b>	<b>Self-Connection</b>



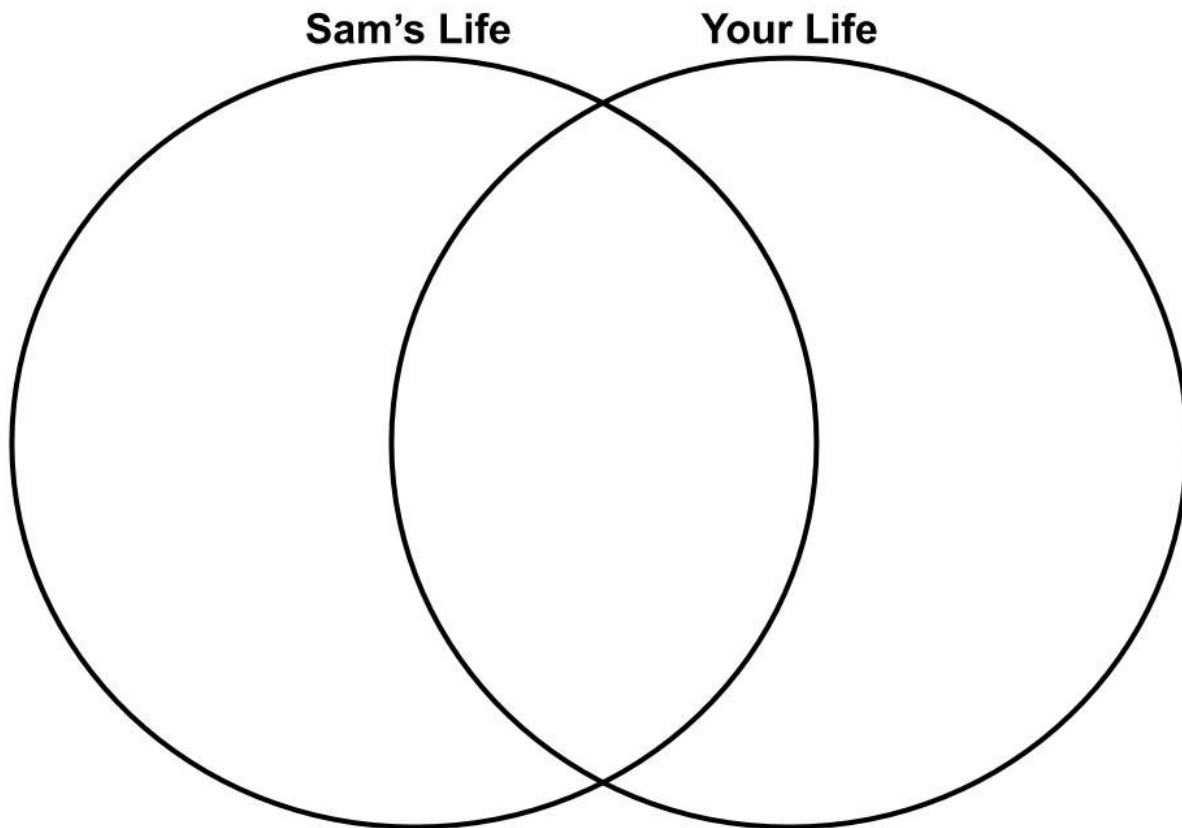


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<https://samthesoldier.com>  
erin@samthesoldier.com

# **ACTIVITY - COMPARE AND CONTRAST**

Life in the Army is very routine. Sam works very hard at his job and in his daily life to succeed and grow in the Army. How is Sam's life similar to yours? How is it different? Compare and Contrast your life and Sam's life.





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[erin@samthesoldier.com](mailto:erin@samthesoldier.com)

# **ACTIVITY - MAIN IDEA**

Find the main idea of the text and list specific text evidence.

Main Idea:

List text evidence below:

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
-



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<https://samthesoldier.com>  
[erin@samthesoldier.com](mailto:erin@samthesoldier.com)

# **ACTIVITY - SYNTHESIZE**

Think about what kind of person would make a good soldier. How does your thinking change throughout the story?

At first I was thinking\_\_\_\_\_

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(P.15) I am beginning to think\_\_\_\_\_

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---

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Now I am thinking\_\_\_\_\_

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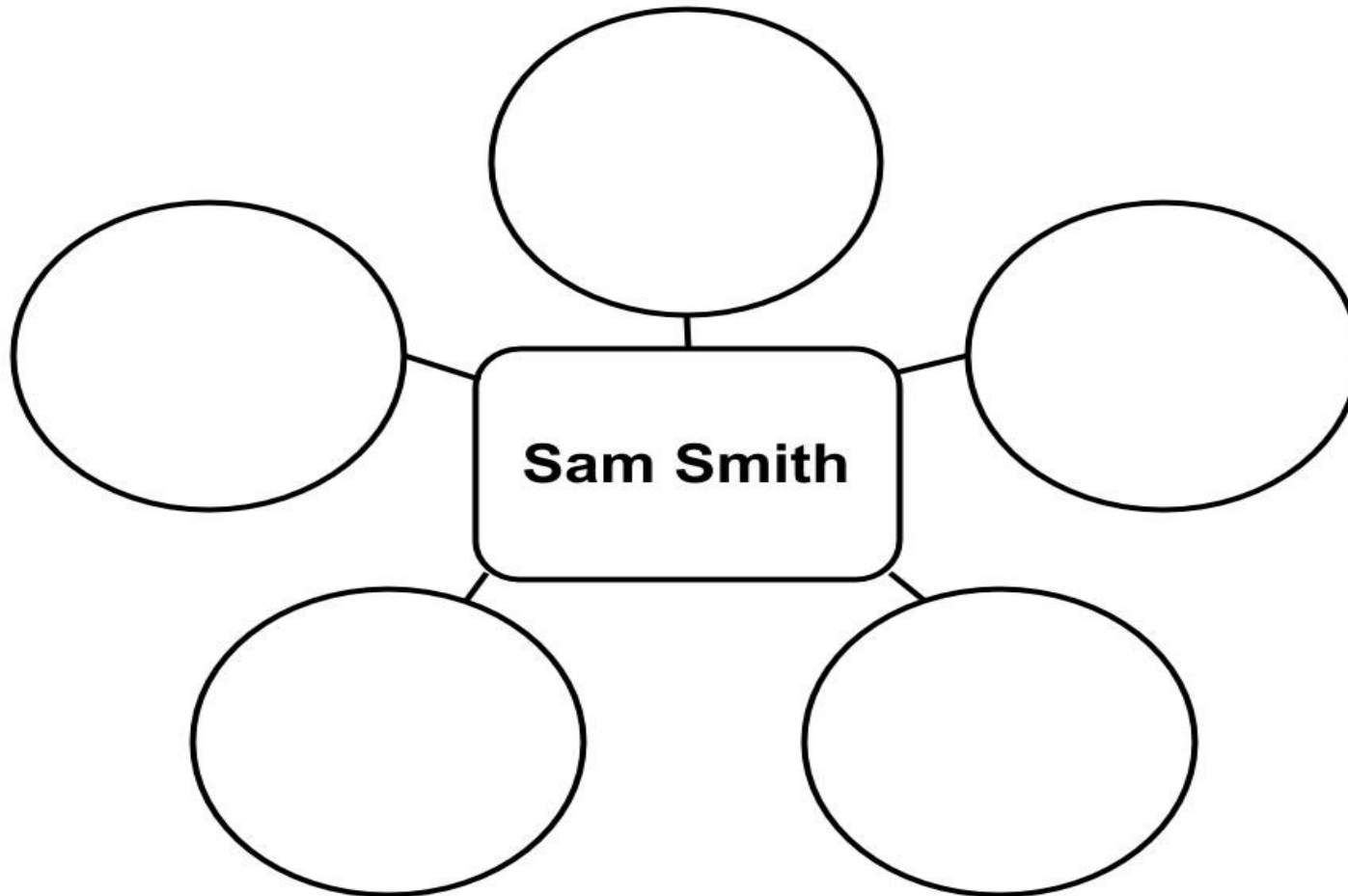
By: Erin Morris

<https://samthesoldier.com>

[erin@samthesoldier.com](mailto:erin@samthesoldier.com)

# **ACTIVITY - CHARACTER TRAITS**

Think about Sam Smith. What kind of character traits do you think he shows? How do you know? What kind of character traits do you think a soldier would have to have? How do you know? What evidence from the text tells you that?





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erin@samthesoldier.com

# **ACTIVITY - DETERMINING IMPORTANCE**

List facts from the story:

What are 3 **BIG** ideas from the text?

#1

#2

#3