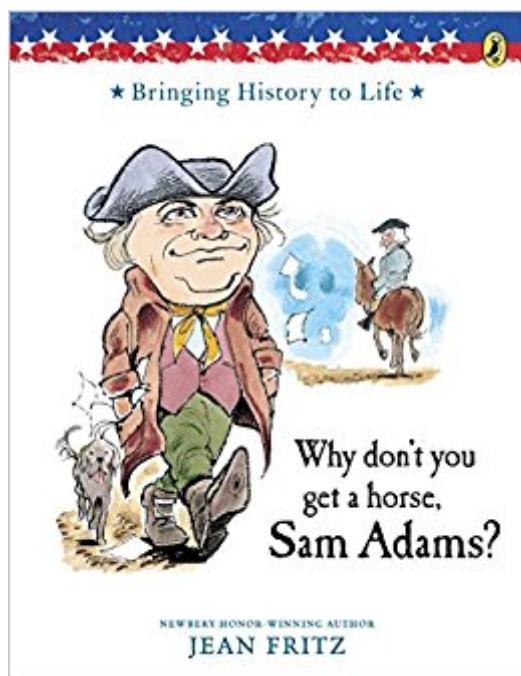


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# WHY DONT YOU GET A HORSE, SAM ADAMS? (PAPERBACK) 1996 PUFFIN



## **Synopsis**

This lively biography, by Newbery Honor-winning author Jean Fritz, is a nice, personal look at a leader and his times. In early America, when all the men wore ruffled shirts and rode grandly on horseback, one man refused to follow suit. He was the rebel leader Sam Adams, a plainspoken gent who scorned ruffles, refused to ride a horse, and had little regard for the King.

## **Book Information**

Lexile Measure: 800L (What's this?)

Paperback: 48 pages

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Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars 15 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #232,697 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #113 in Books > Children's Books > Biographies > Political #189 in Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > History > United States > Colonial & Revolutionary #433 in Books > Children's Books > Biographies > Historical

Age Range: 7 - 9 years

Grade Level: 5 and up

## **Customer Reviews**

Let the others wear the ruffled shirts and ride grandly on horseback; Sam Adams, Massachusetts rebel leader, was a plain and plain-spoken fellow, both in history and in *Why Don't You Get a Horse, Sam Adams?* Adams, it turns out, was horseless for a good reason. On the way to figuring out just what that reason was, the reader gets a nice, personal look at a leader and his times. In this book, as in the rest of her series of histories, Jean Fritz sneaks plenty of information into her story about Adams, the American Revolution, and the answer to the title question. (For ages 7 and up)

Acclaimed biographer, Jean Fritz, was born in China to American missionaries on November 16, 1915. Living there until she was almost thirteen sparked a lifelong interest in American history. She wrote about her childhood in China in *Homesick, My Own Story*, a Newbery Honor Book

and winner of the National Book Award. Ms. Fritz was the author of forty-five books for children and young people. Many center on historical American figures, gaining her a reputation as the premier author of biographies for children and young people. Among the other prestigious awards Ms. Fritz has garnered are: the National Humanities Medal, the Laura Ingalls Wilder Award, the May Hill Arbuthnot Lecture Award, the Christopher Award, the Boston Globe-Horn Book Non-Fiction Award, a New York Times Notable Book of the Year, and many ALA Notable Books of the Year, School Library Journal Best Books of the Year, and ALA Booklist Editors' Choice Awards. She passed away on May 14, 2017.

A great way to teach history.

Jean Fritz has a wonderful storytelling ability. I love that we can cover historically accurate material in an entertaining way. I enjoy her whole series of books.

What a guy! I know a few people from Boston and I can see some resemblance :-) Good, interesting history book with lots of fun details (especially loved hearing about his dog, Queue that bit the redcoats!) My 7 year old Revolutionary war nut loved it.

So much fun to learn about Sam Adams and this little, but extremely important, slice of American history; hurray for Jean Fritz-again!

This illustrated children's book is about Sam Adams' dislike for riding horses, and his reluctance to get physically or philosophically comfortable with the expected Colonial mode of transportation. The book cleverly teaches kids American history as it presents a gentle message that conforming to social pressure does not mean losing one's identity. Through bright, smart text and realistic hand-drawn illustrations by Trina Hyman, these lessons are presented as the reader literally and figuratively follows Sam Adams, on foot, through Boston. The book begins with the American Colonies still firmly under British rule, and quickly introduces Adams as a "walker and talker"; he argues with fellow classic figures of history against British rule, and their insistence that he get a horse. By the end of the book, Sam's cousin, John Adams, gets him to begrudgingly agree ride a horse for the "good of his country"• Adams' motivation.

Fritz's book uses easy-to-understand language, informative colonial-style illustrations, and historical facts to make learning about an important American figure both fun and interesting. Why Don't You Get a Horse? is easy to follow. It is also smart, relatable, and funny. In a tavern in Lexington, John Adams tries to convince his cousin to ride a horse: "It was a pity, [John] said, that early man had gone to such trouble to domesticate an animal, only to have Samuel Adams come along and reject it. Samuel Adams didn't give two hoots for early man." Fritz also uses Adams's Newfoundland dog, Queue, to help children relate to the story: "Samuel would sit down and talk about American rights; Queue, blinking through the hair that fell over his eyes, would search the floor for crumbs." Fritz's illustrations give readers additional history lessons, and match the story in the way they are drawn. Each page features ink and watercolor drawings bordered by a dark rule, as colonial-style newspapers and posters were. (Examples of miniature lessons include a sign held aloft by a colonist says "Tories go home" and a sign teaching readers a term for British sympathizers that is not in the text). Colonial architecture and fashion is portrayed throughout, allowing Fritz's text to tell Adams's story simply, but within a historically accurate context. Parents will appreciate the historic facts Fritz includes in the text beyond what the illustrations offer. (The author's postscript says that the story is based on John Adams's actual diaries.) Events such as the Boston Massacre, the Boston Tea Party, and Paul Revere's ride are punctuated with details that keep the reader interested in Samuel Adams's personal story at the same time they are learning about these important dates in American history. Children should read this book because it is fun and interesting, but also because it offers an important benefit: learning about American history. Its illustrations, writing style, and engaging facts about Sam Adams's life offer an unusual way to experience colonial history. This matters because all too often, American history and its important figures are presented to children in a boring, unimaginative way. In addition to their children's interest, parents will surely appreciate Fritz's thoughtful lesson in maintaining individuality in the face of expected social norms. Why Don't You Get a Horse, Sam Adams? is as entertaining as it is relevant to a young readers.

Fritz has the rare talent of making historical figures more than interesting. She makes them human. Immersing the usual boring caricatures of her subjects in the small true stories that she has

discovered in their lives, she gives us an entirely different way of looking at our American heroes. In this book, her talent for storytelling has been expertly paired with Trina Schart Hyman's intricate and intriguing pencil drawings. Sam Adams suddenly becomes somebody you'd like to sit down and have a mug of Guinness with. Without a doubt he is boisterous and a bit of a braggart. But he's also a great man, and this book never loses sight of the fact that, though ridiculous at times, Adams did great things and deserves to be remembered for them. There is little debate that Fritz's books remain some of the best historical children's biographies today. I well remember her stories from when I was a child myself, though I half wish Hyman illustrated ALL her books. This book would be absolutely perfect to teach to children during Revolutionary War history classes. Pairing it with all of Fritz's books would also be an exceptionally bright idea.

Oliver Cromwell wanted Sir Peter Lely to paint him "warts and all," showing who he really was. Jean Fritz's wonderful biography, *Why Don't You Get a Horse, Sam Adams?* apparently does the same for a Founding Father. Sam Adams' attitudes revealed in this history book for young readers may be somewhat objectionable to some, however, it is important to note that people are the product of the time and society in which they live. Adams is no different. This is our history, and you cannot tell the truth with lies. Jean Fritz's book is both humorous and accurate. Let us never lose sight of the need for accuracy, despite our objections to what truth may be.

I liked this book, and found that what the previous review objected to was not the author's ideas, but Sam Adams. I think that it is important to remember that most of the Founding Fathers were not the idealistic gods that we hold them up to be. Many owned slaves, many believed that as intellectuals, they were too good for battle. It's important that kids realize that not everything is black and white, and just because a book portrays a historical figure accurately, doesn't mean you're going to like them. While Sam Adams is an elitist full of quirks, he was a great thinker and an idealist, and Jean Fritz portrays him as such.

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