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Sal and Amanda Take Morgan's Victory March to the Battle of Cowpens by Mary Ann Solsbee

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Abstract

Jeffery Barbour, MLIS, University of South Carolina, reviews *Sal and Amanda Take Morgan's Victory March to the Battle of Cowpens* by Mary Ann Solsbee.

Keywords

book review, Mary Ann Solsbee, Sal and Amanda series

Sal and Amanda Take Morgan's Victory March to the Battle of Cowpens

Mary Ann Solsbee

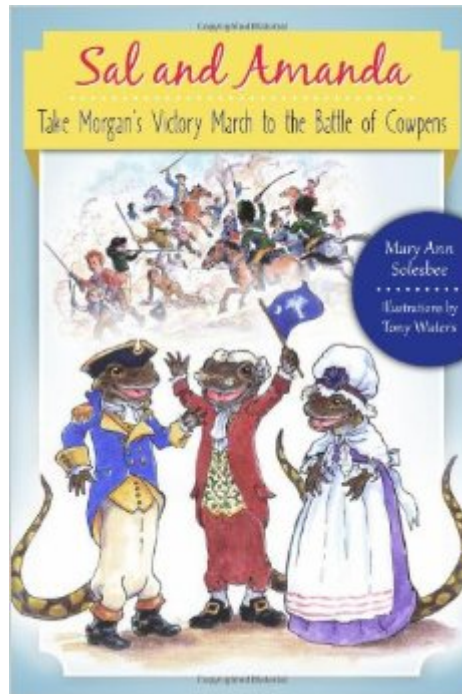
The History Press, 2014, \$12.99

Solsbee, author of *Cool with Sal and Amanda* (2010) and *Sal and Amanda Visit Walnut Grove Plantation* (2010), writes another delightful chapter book for elementary age students in the Sal and Amanda collection.

In *Sal and Amanda Take Morgan's Victory March to the Battle of Cowpens* (2014), Solsbee impresses her readers by presenting historical facts of the Revolutionary War in South Carolina with fantasy storytelling for children, a perfect combination! The Mayor of Spartanburg County, South Carolina, is Ben Henderson's grandmother, who has asked him to write a speech for the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) Essay Contest about the Battle of the Cowpens in 1781, an actual turning point of the Revolutionary War in South Carolina. While Ben and his friend, Jen, are sorting through their research, the adorable salamander friends, Sal and Amanda, return to their rescue for another enlightening story. The author's use of fantasy storytelling evokes the interest of young children as they learn about history, especially through the dialogues of the salamander friends, Sal and Amanda, and the other characters.

General Daniel Morgan was a well-known hero of the American Revolutionary War. He led the famous American defeat of the British troops at the Battle of Cowpens in South Carolina in 1781. Just days before that famous Battle, General Morgan wrote a letter to his superior officer, General Nathanael Greene, in which Morgan expressed a desire to change his

position. Fortunately, his letter did not reach General Greene in time for the General to receive a reply to change the course of battle. Morgan's victory became a significant turning point in the history of the American Revolution in South Carolina. That was also one of the single most important historical events for the background of *Sal and Amanda Take Morgan's Victory March to the Battle of Cowpens*.



The main plot revolves around Ben Henderson's entering the speech contest and participating in the American Revolutionary Reenactment of Morgan's Victory March to the Battle of Cowpens. The reader gains a comprehensive understanding about other facts of South Carolina during the Revolutionary War, such as the first English settlers coming to South Carolina, the significance of the emblems of its flag, and the Boston Tea Party. Sal and Amanda have distinct voices, but retain characteristics of salamanders,

providing delightful dialogues with appropriate humor for the eight-to-eleven year olds. Sal and Amanda supply Ben with facts and insights about Morgan's Victory March at the Battle of Cowpens in order to help him write the winning speech and win the medal at the end of the reenactment, making his Grandmother very proud!

The character trait of honesty is addressed in an unassuming, yet serious manner that does not frighten children. As Ben enters the St. David's Church in South Carolina, he uncovers the secret letter written by General Daniel Morgan. The author evokes the use of fantasy again when the famous General Morgan's spirit speaks to Ben and teaches him a valuable lesson about the importance of being truthful to himself and others.

The book includes an appendix with a copy of Daniel Morgan's letter, dated January 13, 1780 that was actually noted in the story. The discussion questions would provide a wonderful guided reading exercise for elementary students. There is a table of contents, and bibliography with useful websites, followed by an index.

As with her other stories in the Sal and Amanda collection, Solosbee writes about South Carolina history while sharing her love of literature for children. The illustrator, Tony Waters, paints numerous beautiful watercolors throughout the story, making the plot meaningful, as well, for elementary age children. Highly recommended.

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