# The Hiding of the Bell

1 On a chilly, mid-September night in 1777, darkness blanketed the city of Philadelphia. Outside the city, British General Howe's troops lay in wait like lions ready to pounce. Muffled sounds came from the Statehouse steeple. Billy Ross watched in awe as a trap door above his head opened. He held his breath as his father and some friends slowly and carefully lowered the great Liberty Bell onto the sturdy farm wagon that stood below.

2 Danger and uncertainty lay ahead. They had to sneak the bell out of the city and hide it somewhere safe. If they failed, the British would surely capture it, melt it down, and use the metal for musket balls. Billy shuddered to think how many one-ounce balls the enemy could make from the 2,080-pound bell.

3 Mr. Loeser hitched four sturdy black horses to the farm wagon. Billy climbed aboard, grabbed a pitchfork, and began to toss straw over the bell. Soon it was completely covered.

4 "Billy," his father whispered, "man the door." Quickly, Billy jumped from the wagon and opened the door. Mr. Loeser drove the wagon outside.

5 "Climb aboard, Billy," Mr. Loeser ordered. "We must be well on our way before first light." Billy clambered onto the seat beside him. Billy's mother and father were sending him away from the dangers of the city to stay with his aunt in Allentown. There, he and the bell would be hidden away in a safe place. Billy still worried. During the difficult five-day journey, they could be stopped at any time by British soldiers.

6 The second day out, they joined a convoy of some 700 wagons. All bore families who were fleeing Philadelphia. As they bounced along among the other wagons in the huge train, Billy hoped their wagon would be safe.

7 When the wagon train rattled into Bethlehem, Billy breathed easier. Allentown was only a day's journey from here. As they reached the main square, though, Billy heard a terrible crunching, screeching sound. The wagon tipped dangerously. The great weight of the bell had caused the wagon to collapse! Mr. Loeser and Billy leaped from the wagon. The bell had shifted and crushed one side of the wagon. Onlookers stared at the ruined wagon.

8 "Oh, no!" Billy exclaimed. He dashed to the village stable shouting, "We need a wagon fast! A big, strong one to carry a heavy load to Allentown!"

9 A man strode up to him. "My name's John Jacob Mickley," he said. "My wagon can haul whatever you have." Volunteers helped load the bell onto Mr. Mickley's wagon. Billy breathed a sigh of relief to be on the road again.

10 On September 27, they arrived in Allentown. Billy was relieved when the wagon drew up before old Zion's Reformed Church. Swiftly, men ripped up the floorboards and lowered the bell into the basement of the church. Billy went on to the home of his aunt. Never would he forget the hiding of the bell.



LIVEWORKSHEETS

Questions

1. Who are the characters?

2. Where and when does the story take place?

3. Why is this reading a historical fiction reading? Explain with 4 characteristics.

LIVEWORKSHEETS