

# The Fight

Rebecca sat in her favorite place in the clearing under the pines. She held a book in her lap, but she was just about to drift off to sleep.

“You better take that back.” It was her little brother Louis, and he was fighting again. Rebecca jumped up and ran toward the sound. Louis was on the ground, sitting on top of his friend Tom. Louis was yelling at the top of his lungs.

“What is wrong with you this time?” Rebecca grabbed Louis by his shirt collar and pulled him away from Tom.

“He said I’m not an American,” Louis cried. We were playing soldier and I wanted to be General Harrison. Tom said I can’t be General Harrison, because I’m not even American. Tell him I am too American.”

Tom sat up and yelled back at Louis. “You are not. You’re French. You don’t even say your own name right. You say it ‘Lou-ee’like a Frenchman.”

Rebecca started to laugh. “Let me tell you a story,” she said. “Then you can both decide.

This story starts before you were born, Louis,” she began. “It was before you were born, too, Tom. Father was an officer with the soldiers here

at Arkansas Post. It was a French post, all right. And we were all French. The whole place was owned by France.”

“See, I told you so,” Tom broke in.

“Wait a minute,” Rebecca said, “there’s more. “We were all getting ready to leave. The Governor had sent word that America was about to buy this country. Father and Mother were very excited. We would go to France. We would live in Paris. I would grow up in a great city.”

“Why didn’t you go?” The boys spoke at the same time.

“Just about that time,” Rebecca went on, “Mother told Father that a new baby was going to be born.”

“That was you,” Tom poked at Louis’ shoulder.

“Yes,” Rebecca said, “That was Louis.”

“With a baby on the way, “ Rebecca went on, “Mother just couldn’t make the long trip to France. We would have to travel down the Mississippi River on a tiny boat. It would take weeks to get to New Orleans. Then we would have to get on a ship and travel for many more weeks. It would be a long, hard trip. It would just be too hard on Mother.”

“So,” she said, “Father decided that we would wait. We would just stay for a few months. The baby – you,” she smiled at Louis, “would get to be a few months old. Then we would make the trip.”

“But you never left,” Tom said.

“You’re right. Father and Mother just kept putting it off. Father got into the fur business after the soldiers left. They talked less and less about going home to France.

Then, one night, Father said, ‘I’ve been thinking.’ They thought I was asleep, but I was listening.

‘Yes,’ Mother said.

‘We don’t have to leave. We can stay and be American citizens.’

“Citizen!” Louis looked at Rebecca and shrugged. “What’s that?”

“If you are a citizen of a country, that means you are a part of that country,” Rebecca said. “It’s like a family. Tom, you are part of your family aren’t you?”

“Sure,” Tom answered.

“You’re not part of my family and Louis’s, right?”

“Right.”

“And the soldiers – they’re part of the army, aren’t they?” The boys nodded and Rebecca went on. “We aren’t part of the army, so we’re not soldiers. Being a citizen is kind of like that.”

“I get it,” Louis said. “So what happened next?”

“Well,” Rebecca went on, “They sat quietly for a while, then Father said, ‘I know we’ve always talked about going home.’”

‘The children are at home,’ Mother replied.

‘What do you mean?’

‘Think about it,’ Mother said. ‘Rebecca was born in New Orleans – in this territory, even though it belonged to France. By the time Louis was born, Arkansas Post was part of America. They’ve never had another home but this country.’

‘Ah, yes,’ Father smiled. ‘You are right, of course. More and more it feels like home to me.’

‘So do I,’ Mother said. She was smiling, too.”

So, you see? Louis has been an American all his life. And he’s a few months older than you are, Tom. That means he’s been a citizen longer than you have.”

“See there,” Louis said. “Now I get to be General Harrison.”

“No you don’t, I’m still the general,” Tom cried. He started to run off into the woods.

Louis jumped up and caught Tom. They rolled to the ground, but they were laughing this time.

Rebecca laughed and shook her head. “Boys,” she said to herself.

# The Fight Assessment Page

## Reading

Louis was fighting with Tom because Tom said he wasn't

1. Older than Tom
2. Any good at playing soldier
3. An American
4. Very smart

Rebecca, Louis, and Tom lived in

1. New Orleans
2. Arkansas Post
3. Paris
4. Little Rock

After the soldiers left, Rebecca and Louis' Father became

1. A farmer
2. A hunter
3. A storekeeper
4. A fur trader

## Open-ended Response

Rebecca's parents made an important choice in the story. Explain why they made the choice they did and the things they had to think about in order to make their choice.

## **Scoring Rubric**

4. Student explains the personal decisions the family made, showing a grasp of what such decisions meant in that time and place. Student shows understanding of the idea of citizenship.

3. Student explains some of the personal and political aspects of the family's decision.

2. Student explains that the family was choosing to become Americans.

1. Student shows minimal understanding of the issues at stake in the family's decision.

0. Response is incorrect or irrelevant.