Helping your children choose books they will love

I ♥ reading

Lovereading4kids.co.uk is a book website created for parents and children to make choosing books easy and fun

opening extract from

# Geronimo

written by

## Tanya Landman

published by

## Barrington Stoke Ltd

**All Text is Copyright © of the Author and/or Illustrator**

please print off and read at your leisure.

Lovereading4kids.co.uk

# Geronimo

By

Tanya Landman

Barrington Stoke Reality Check

series

# Introduction

*Picture this.*

*You come home one day and find strangers in your house. They've moved in. Taken over. While you've been at school they've chopped down the tree in the garden and dug up the grass. They've made a bonfire with your stuff. They say your home belongs to them. They've got a piece of paper to prove it. They want you out. NOW. And they've got guns. If you don't leave quietly they'll kill you.*

*"But where am I supposed to go?" you ask them.*

*That's when they show you a map. They've marked the place you've got to live in from now on. It's down on the waste land near the stinking canal. One of them points his gun at your head. His eyes are cold. Merciless. His finger's on the trigger. You can see he wouldn't*

*think twice about pulling it. You've got no choice. You go.*

*When you get to the waste land you find there are soldiers all around it. The strangers have got their own army! Once you're through the gates you can't leave. Everyone you know seems to be crammed on to that little plot of ground – even the gang from the year above you. You've hated them since you started school. One of them has already got in a scuffle with a mate of yours. They're throwing punches at each other. Your mate's nose has started to bleed.*

*Your stomach rumbles. You haven't had tea. You look around. There's nothing to eat and even if there was food there's no way to cook it.*

*You're thirsty. But there's nothing to drink. Some people have started taking water from the canal but you know it's polluted. If you swallow that it will kill you. That's if you don't die of cold first. There's no shelter anywhere – not so much as a shed to sleep in.*

*What do you do? Do you give in? Starve? Die?*

*Or do you fight?*

*How far would you go to defend your freedom?*

# Chapter 1

## Geronimo!

“Geronimo!”

You’ll have heard that name before. It’s what the movie hero shouts when he springs off the roof of a burning building.

It’s what people in books scream when they leap across a gaping chasm.

The custom of yelling “Geronimo!” started in the Second World War. The men of the 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment watched a cowboy film the night before a dangerous mission. In one scene an actor playing the part of Geronimo leaps off a cliff into a river. When the movie ended one paratrooper said he’d shout “Geronimo!” as he jumped out of the plane to prove he wasn’t scared. The trend caught on. It’s now the official motto of the 501st.

But the real Geronimo wasn’t given that name by his parents. When he was born in 1829 in what’s now known as New Mexico they called him Goyathlay – “one who yawns”.

Geronimo was a Chiricahua Apache Indian. The courage and skill of all Apache fighters was legendary. But Geronimo became the most famous of them all.

At that time there were several different Apache tribes. Each one was split into small groups, or bands, of related families and each one had its own chief. Some tribes farmed the land but most hunted deer and other game. They also harvested the fruits, roots, nuts and seeds that grew wild. The Apaches believed that Ussen – the creator and life giver – gave each tribe a homeland which provided all they needed to survive.

It sounds like a gentle, peaceful life, but there were dangers – mountain lions and bears, rattlesnakes, poisonous spiders and scorpions.

Severe droughts might be followed by flash floods. Dust storms, wildfires and blizzards sometimes swept through the territory. And the Apaches had many enemies.

Children learnt survival skills from an early age. As a small boy Geronimo knew where to find water in the dry landscape. He knew how to ride and hunt and how to make a fire. He knew how to move across the land with astonishing speed and how to endure hardships.

Children practised by taking a mouthful of water and running for miles without spilling or swallowing it. They played “creep and freeze” – sneaking up on each other without being seen.

Geronimo knew how to stay perfectly still so that from a distance he would be mistaken for a rock. He knew how to leap from stone to stone so that he wouldn’t leave a trail. He – like all Apaches – could melt into the landscape so well that his enemies believed he could become invisible.

Geronimo learnt how to hide. But he also learnt how to fight.

He mastered a bow and arrows and learnt to thrust a lance. He tested his strength in wrestling matches against other boys and had mock battles armed with slings and rocks.

Sometimes the men left the camp on an expedition. They might need to find cattle or supplies to feed and clothe their families. They might be going to fight an enemy. On these occasions the older boys often went with them. Their role was to tend the horses and cook the meals. Four was a sacred number to the Apaches. When a youth returned from his fourth such journey – if he had done well – he would be considered a man.

Geronimo was just seventeen when he completed his fourth journey and was admitted to the tribe’s council. Soon afterwards he married the woman he loved, Alope, and they had children.

Geronimo said, “We followed the traditions of our fathers and were happy.”

It didn’t last.

In 1850 the Apaches’ ancient enemy shattered Geronimo’s happiness. In one devastating blow the Mexicans gave him a hunger for revenge that lasted his entire life.