



America's Youngest Ambassador

Samantha Smith grew up during the Cold War. It was a time when The Soviet Union and the United States were enemies. There was the threat of a nuclear war.

Samantha was worried about this threat. She wanted peace. In 1982, when she was only ten years old, Samantha wrote a letter to a new leader in the Soviet Union. His name was Yuri Andropov. Her letter said:

Dear Mr. Andropov,

My name is Samantha Smith. I am ten years old. Congratulations on your new job. I have been worrying about Russia and the United States getting into a nuclear war. Are you going to vote to have a war or not? If you aren't please tell me how you are going to help to not have a war. This question you do not have to answer, but I would like to know why you want to conquer the world or at least our country. God made the world for us to live together in peace and not to fight.

Sincerely,

Samantha Smith

Samantha’s letter was published in a Soviet newspaper. Her words meant a lot to the new leader. He said that she was brave and honest. He also invited Samantha and her family to visit the Soviet Union. Their trip got a lot of attention. Samantha was called “America’s Youngest Ambassador.”

When Samantha came home she said that people in the Soviet Union did not seem very different from people in America. She spoke about her trip and wrote a book about her experiences. She suggested that the leaders of the two countries “exchange granddaughters for two weeks every year, because a leader would not want to bomb a country that his granddaughter was visiting.”

Samantha sadly died in a plane crash a few years after her trip. But even in her short life she made a big difference. She helped the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union. After she died, the Soviet government created a postage stamp with her picture on it. They also named a diamond and an asteroid after her. Her mother created the Samantha Smith Foundation, which promotes peace and friendships between international children.



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NAME: _____ DATE: _____

1. Why did Samantha write to the leader of the Soviet Union?
 - a. Because she liked the Soviet Union
 - b. Because she was worried about nuclear war
 - c. Because wanted to be on a postage stamp
 - d. Because she wanted to be an ambassador
2. How did the Soviet leader respond to Samantha's words?
 - a. He said she was young and silly
 - b. He said she was wrong and rude
 - c. He said she was smart and pretty
 - d. He said she was brave and honest
3. What did Samantha think of the people in the Soviet Union?
 - a. They were mean
 - b. They were nice
 - c. They were the same as people in America
 - d. They were very different from her
4. Which of the following reasons provide support for why Samantha's mother created the foundation?
 - a. Because Samantha believed in peace
 - b. To honor Samantha's work
 - c. To remember Samantha
 - d. All of the above

Instructions for teachers:

These questions can be used to assess understanding of the reading passage.

The item in bold is the correct answer for each question.

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