

# HIGH NOON BOOKS SAMPLER



**Series:** Tom and Ricky Set 1

**Content:** Reinforces phonics skills and basic sight vocabulary appropriate for first grade reading level

**Reading Level:** 1st Grade

**Interest Level:** 9 – 16+

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# **Tom & Ricky Set 1**

## **The Secret Staircase**

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## **CHAPTER 3**

### **The Old House**

Ricky's mother started to tell Tom and Ricky about Mr. Bell and the old house.

“Mr. Bell's grandfather built that house over 100 years ago. He has a grandson who lives a long way from here. Steve, his grandson, doesn't come here very much. People say there is gold hidden in that old house. They say Mr. Bell's grandfather hid it after he built this house,” she said.

“How much gold?” Ricky asked.

“Some people say there is a lot of gold hidden there. Other people don’t think there is any. Mr. Bell is very poor. He has looked and looked for the gold,” she said.

“ I don’t think there could be any gold. Mr. Bell has lived there all his life, but he hasn’t found it,” Tom said.

“Well, I heard once that it is hidden in a secret place,” she said.

“A secret place?” Ricky asked.

“Yes. I heard that there is a hidden staircase in the house. The staircase goes to a room where the gold is,” she said.

“Where did Mr. Bell’s grandfather get the gold?” Tom asked.

“A long time ago people didn’t save money. They saved gold,” she answered. “Mr. Bell’s grandfather was very rich. He owned all the land around here.”

“But what about the hidden staircase?” Ricky asked.

“When the grandfather built the house he wanted to keep all his gold there. Somewhere in that old, big house there are stairs hidden behind a wall. There is a way to open a door to walk up those stairs,” she said.

“Why doesn’t Mr. Bell open all the doors to find the stairs?” Tom asked.

“Well, that may seem easy but it is not,” she said.

“Why?” Tom asked.

“Mr. Bell’s grandfather didn’t use a real door. He hid the stairs in back of something like a wall. You can’t tell there are stairs. You have to know how to open the special door to find the stairs,” she said.

“What do you think about the gold?” Ricky asked.

“I think it would be nice for Mr. Bell,” she said.

“Well, we will start helping Mr. Bell tomorrow,” Ricky said.

“Right. Maybe there is gold in the weeds,” Tom said.

They all laughed.



*“Right. Maybe there is gold in the weeds.”*

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **Cleaning the Yard**

Tom and Ricky went to Mr. Bell's house right after school. They banged hard on the door so he could hear them. When he opened the door he looked happy. Maybe he had been thinking they might not come to help him.

“Hi, Mr. Bell. We're here to get started,”

Ricky said.

“Where should we start?” Tom asked.

“Well, let's see. Why not start by the front gate?” Mr. Bell said.

“Where do you want us to put the weeds?”

Ricky asked.

“Just put them in a big pile. Then we can clean them up at the same time,” Mr. Bell said.

Mr. Bell walked with Tom and Ricky to the front gate.

“You can work for about an hour today. Let’s see how much you can do. I won’t be able to work with you today. I have someone with me in the house,” he said.

Mr. Bell started to walk back to the house. Then he stopped and turned around. “Let me show you the side door to the house. You can come in if you want a drink of water. It is a hot day,” he said.

Mr. Bell took Tom and Ricky around to the side of the house. “This door goes into the kitchen. The door is broken. I can’t close it all the way. Just come in if you want,” he said.

Tom and Ricky went back to start weeding. There were lots of weeds. It didn’t seem they were getting much done.

“This is more work than I thought,” Ricky said.

“It sure is. Look at all the weeds we’ve pulled up. But it doesn’t seem like we’ve even started,” Tom said.

After they had worked for a while, Tom said, “I’d like a glass of water. How about you?”

“Sure,” Ricky answered.

They went around to the side of the house.  
They pushed on the kitchen door and it opened.  
Mr. Bell had put two glasses by the sink.  
Everything looked old in the kitchen.

Ricky filled his glass with water. Then they  
heard yelling from another room in the house.  
They could hear Mr. Bell and someone else.  
They didn't know what to do. They heard the  
front door open and close. Then it was quiet.

Mr. Bell came into the kitchen. He saw the  
boys. His face was red. He looked mad.

"I'm sorry. That was my grandson. He  
came to see me. He needs money but I don't  
have any. He thinks I'm rich. He got mad and  
left," Mr. Bell said.

“It was so hot we came in to get a glass of water,” Ricky said.

“Let’s see how you’re doing,” Mr. Bell said.

They all walked out to the front gate.

“It is starting to look nice again,” Mr. Bell said.

“There is still lots to do,” Ricky said.

“Why don’t you stop for today? Can you come back tomorrow? Mr. Bell asked.

“We sure can. We’ll come again after school,” Tom said.

“See you tomorrow,” Ricky said.

Tom and Ricky left to go home. They liked Mr. Bell. He really was a nice man.

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