There's no option to design an assessment question based on the information provided. However, if you're looking to create a question, try something along the lines of:

**How could Deborah Sampson’s story support an argument for allowing women to fight alongside men in combat?**

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**SCENE 1**

A battlefield near Tarrytown, New York, July 1782

N1: The battlefield is shrouded in smoke. Musket balls zip through the air. A group of men huddle behind a low stone wall. Beyond it, a company of Redcoats, or
British soldiers, advances steadily.

**HISTORIAN 1:** For seven years, the young United States had been fighting for its independence from England.

**HISTORIAN 2:** The soldiers who volunteered to fight risked their lives for the future of our country. These brave men were called Patriots.

**DANIEL:** How we gonna get past the enemy?

**N2:** Pop! Pop! Pop! The sound of British soldiers firing crackles across the field.

**THOMAS:** We’ll have to fight our way through.

**ROBERT:** On the count of three: one, two, three!

**DANIEL, THOMAS, ROBERT (together):** Aaahhh!

**N1:** The Patriots charge into the fray. Redcoats fire muskets, thrust bayonets, and swing sabers.

**N2:** Amid the chaos, young Robert fights bravely, felling enemy soldiers with the butt of his musket.

**DANIEL:** Bobby, behind you!

**N1:** A Redcoat slashes Robert with a saber.

**N2:** Robert falls to the ground.

**THOMAS:** Bobby! You’re bleeding from the head!

**ROBERT:** I’m . . . I’m feeling dizzy.

**DANIEL:** Hold on. We’re getting you out of here.
ROBERT: No, leave me and save yourselves.
THOMAS: Daniel, help me get him on this horse. I’ll ride to the field hospital.
ROBERT: No. Just give me my pistol and leave me to die.
DANIEL: It’s not like you to give up, Bobby.
THOMAS: We ain’t gonna let our boy die t’day!

**SCENE 2**

Middleborough, Massachusetts, six years earlier

N1: In the middle of a square, a group of townspeople gathers around a man, who is holding a document. Fifteen-year-old Deborah Sampson is among them.
TOWN CRIER: Hear ye, hear ye: The American Colonies have declared independence from English rule!
HISTORIAN 1: It was July 1776. Bells rang out with chimes of freedom.
TOWN CRIER: Here are the words of the Declaration of Independence: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”
TOWNPERSON: The King won’t let us go so easily.
DEBORAH: I wish I could fight and serve our new nation.
DEACON (laughing): Women are not fit for battle. Young women tend the home. You need to know your place.
DEBORAH: Yes, sir.
DEACON: You best run on home now. My 10 hungry sons won’t be happy waiting for supper.
DEBORAH (sighing): Yes, sir.
N2: Deborah starts to leave.
DEBORAH (to herself): I may have been your servant for seven years, but when I become an adult, I will be free. And I am going to fight.

N1: A surgeon is walking from cot to cot, caring for wounded soldiers. Suddenly, Daniel and Thomas burst in. Deborah is leaning on them.
DANIEL: Help! Help!
SURGEON: Over here, lad. Let me examine you.
THOMAS: We’ve ridden six miles from the
patter: Are you sure? You don’t have smallpox, do you? That disease is wiping us out. Killing more soldiers than enemy fire.

N2: Deborah suddenly crashes to the floor.

PATTERSON: Get this man to the hospital!

A hospital

N1: Deborah lies on a bed in a dark room. Bodies are piled around her. Some are corpses; others are barely clinging to life.

UNDERTAKER 1: I get the boots. They’ll never fit your big feet!

UNDERTAKER 2: Fine, but then the shirt and trousers are mine.

UNDERTAKER 1: Well, we can’t argue all night. We’ve got 10 more bodies to bury after this one.

N2: Deborah makes a small movement.

ROBERT: I’m . . . I’m alive.

N1: A nurse hears Deborah’s gurgled plea.

NURSE: Get away from that man, you buzzards!

BiNNey (running over): I need to check his heartbeat.

N2: Deborah gathers her strength and gasps.

ROBERT: Doctor, I need to confess—

BINNEY: Yes, what is it?

PATTERSON: Are you OK? You look ill.

RoBERT: I’m fine, sir.

Headquarters of General Patterson, early 1783

PATTERSON: Shurtliff, because of your exemplary service, we are promoting you.

ROBERT: Thank you, sir.

PATTERSON: You will be my aide.

ROBERT: It’s an honor, sir!

PATTERSON: Are you OK? You look ill.

ROBERT: I’m fine, sir.

battlefield. Please, you have to help him. He’s one of the best fighters in the regiment!

DANIEL: It’s true. And . . . and he’s our friend, sir.

SURGEON: You have lost a lot of blood, son.

N2: The surgeon dresses Deborah’s head wound.

SURGEON: You are very pale. And I noticed you were limping. Have you any other wounds?

ROBERT: No, just the one on my head.

SURGEON: But the blood oozing from your boot?

N1: The surgeon removes Deborah’s boot and washes her leg to the knee, but he finds no injury.

N2: When the surgeon turns his attention to someone else, Deborah swipes a scalpel, a needle, and bandages, and slips away.

N1: Once outside and out of view, she examines her thigh. A musket ball is lodged deep inside.

N2: Deborah talks softly to herself.

DEBORAH: I’ll have to dig it out myself.

N1: Clenching a stick in her teeth to cope with the pain, she begins cutting open her leg.

DEBORAH: Ugghh!

N2: She grows faint and removes the blade.

DEBORAH: If I wish to keep my secret, it must be done. Toughen up!

N1: Again she plunges the scalpel into the wound, deeper and deeper, until finally she extracts the ball.

DEBORAH (to herself): It ain’t over, girl. You recollect how to sew?

N2: After cleaning her leg, she uses the needle to close the gash, wincing with each stitch.

N1: And then she collapses into sleep.

Smallpox and other diseases killed more than 10,000 American soldiers during the Revolution.
ROBERT: I gotta whisper it. Lean close.

N1: Deborah whispers something in his ear.

BINNEY: Nurse, take this soldier to my home. We’ll care for him there.

**SCENE 7**

**West Point, New York, a few weeks later**

N2: Deborah, still dressed as Robert, walks into General Patterson’s office, holding a letter. She is still pale and weak, but she holds her chin high.

PATTERSON: Good to see you up and about, Shurtliff. You gave us a scare. But you’re made of strong stuff.

ROBERT: Sir, I’m instructed by Dr. Binney to give you this letter.

N1: Deborah watches anxiously as the General scans the words. There is a long silence.

PATTERSON: Is this true?

ROBERT: What will be my fate if it is?

PATTERSON: You have nothing to fear. You’ve served your country honorably. You’re entitled to our respect.

DEBORAH: Then yes, it’s true, sir. My real name is Deborah Sampson.

PATTERSON: I can hardly believe it.

DEBORAH: Now that you know my secret, perhaps it’s time I ended this charade.

N2: Patterson nods in approval.

DEBORAH: Permission to change my uniform, sir.

PATTERSON: Permission granted, soldier.

N1: Deborah retreats to another room and returns a changed person.

PATTERSON: This is truly theatrical! Here, let’s see if Colonel Jackson knows you.

N2: Jackson is called in.

PATTERSON: Jackson, this is Miss Deborah Sampson. Do you recognize her?

JACKSON: No, I have no recollection of this lady.

PATTERSON: Our Revolution is full of wonders, but this young lady exceeds them all. Examine her closely and see if you don’t recognize our own Robert Shurtliff!

JACKSON: I can’t believe it!

**EPILOGUE**

HISTORIAN 2: Deborah was honorably discharged from the army in October 1783.

HISTORIAN 1: She returned to Massachusetts, married a farmer, and had three children.

N1: But her adventures did not end.

HISTORIAN 2: She donned her uniform again, traveling to Boston, New York, and other big cities.

HISTORIAN 1: Where she gave speeches about her experiences as . . .

DEBORAH: . . . the secret soldier.

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**CONTEST**

What Would Deborah Say? Read the debate on the next page. Now imagine you are Deborah Sampson in 1783. The Colonial newspaper has asked you to write a one-page essay arguing that women soldiers should be allowed in combat. Refer to the debate for ideas on how you might craft your argument. In your essay, use details from the play. Send it to DEBORAH CONTEST. Five winners will get A Soldier’s Secret by Marissa Moss.
Should Women Be Allowed to Fight in Wars?

The role of women in the U.S. military has changed a lot since the days of Deborah Sampson. Today, more than 200,000 women are enlisted in the armed services. In January, the military made the momentous decision to officially allow women in combat for the first time in history. Was this the right decision? The debate rages on.

The issue is not whether women should be allowed in combat; it’s that our attitudes must catch up to the reality on the battlefield. In the U.S. Army (as in the other military services), women have been barred until recently from holding a combat-arms position. In addition, female soldiers have been prohibited from serving in ground-combat units.

Despite that prohibition, I was attached to an infantry battalion for my 12-month tour in Iraq. There were not enough male soldiers in my Civil Affairs detachment for all the infantry battalions we had to support. Out of necessity, the official policy was ignored. I went everywhere the infantry soldiers did, lived as they did, and faced the same dangers they did. Many female soldiers have been in the same situation: They go out on missions and face the possibility of roadside bombs, small-arms fire, and more.

Should women be allowed to hold a combat-arms role? Yes, absolutely. Some argue that women are not physically or emotionally capable of being infantry or field artillery soldiers, but women in a dozen countries, including Israel and Canada, are already proving themselves in such roles. The bottom line is that in the U.S., women are still perceived as less capable than men. For too long, the law of our land reinforced that outdated attitude—but not anymore. —Catherine Ross, Former Civil Affairs Sergeant, U.S. Army Reserves

The nation’s pride in our military women does not justify assignments in direct ground combat, which involves more than the experience of being in danger. Forget about video-game action heroes like Lara Croft, and think about real-life infantry, Marines, and Special Operations Forces that engage the enemy in the most remote and dangerous parts of Afghanistan. These men carry electronic equipment, weapons, ammunition, heavy body armor, and water weighing 50 to 100 pounds. Such burdens weigh more heavily on smaller female soldiers who have, on average, 45 to 50 percent less upper-body strength and 25 to 30 percent less aerobic capacity, which is essential for endurance.

In the Army’s own surveys, 90 percent of enlisted women have said they oppose involuntary combat assignments on the same basis as men. They know that training for female soldiers is modified to compensate for physical differences between men and women, but there can be no modifications on the battlefield. In combat, women will not have an equal opportunity to survive, or to help fellow soldiers survive.

Even if physical capabilities were objectively measured and equal, coed combat assignments may affect discipline and unit cohesion. Women lose more duty time due to medical issues, including pregnancy. Their absence may be disruptive in combat units, where concentration and mutual trust are essential for survival. At times, we have no choice about sending young men to war, but we do have a choice when it comes to sending young women. Changing that is a mistake. —Elaine Donnelly, President, Center for Military Readiness

YES

NO

What do YOU think?

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