

Good Luck Bat

1 Samantha felt sick inside when she stepped up to bat. She knew it was going to be a disaster before the first pitch was even thrown. She was going to strike out as usual. Everyone knew it. The other team had smug sneers on their faces while Samantha's own team looked sad and dejected. Samantha swung listlessly and struck out.

2 Samantha's uncle strode purposefully over to Samantha as she was hurriedly trying to brush away her tears. "You've got the wrong bat," he said, handing her a new one. "This one is special. I had it made from some wood from a tree that a sorcerer said had special powers." Samantha didn't believe in wizards or sorcery, but she knew her uncle was a scientist and explorer. He had made several trips deep into the Amazon jungle in search of medicinal plants. Perhaps one of the tribes with which he had come into contact knew something about the tree that other people didn't.

3 No one expected Samantha to hit the ball the next time she was called to bat, but she swung energetically instead of listlessly. As the ball sailed out past the farthest outfielder, there was a moment of silence as everyone stared in astonishment. Then the screaming and yelling began, and it never stopped. Time after time, game after game, Samantha hit the ball hard each time she was at bat.

4 After the second-to-last game of the season, as Samantha was carefully stowing her bat in her duffle bag, she was delighted to see her uncle. "I'm off to central Africa this time," he said, "but I wanted to watch you one more time before I left. You knocked my socks off! I'm simply amazed at what a great hitter you've become." When Samantha told her uncle that it was all due to his lucky bat, he got a peculiar expression on his face. "You're old enough to know there's nothing special about that bat," he said quietly. "You just lacked confidence, and I wanted you to believe in yourself. Samantha, I purchased that bat at the store right here in town."

5 When it was time for the ultimate game of the season, Samantha thought about what her uncle had said to her. Striding up to the plate, she stood ready for the first pitch. When she swung, she swung hard and mightily, but all she hit was air.