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Study Guide

for

**The Red Badge
of Courage**

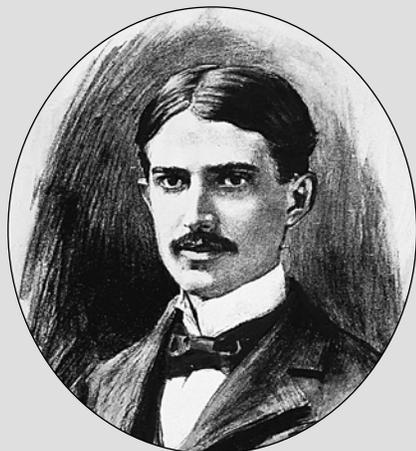
by Stephen Crane



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Meet Stephen Crane



I decided that the nearer a writer gets to life, the greater he becomes as an artist, and most of my prose writings have been toward the goal partially described by that misunderstood and abused word, realism.

—Stephen Crane

As a young man, Stephen Crane was determined to get close to life. While studying at Syracuse University in 1891, where his two passions were baseball and literature, he worked part-time as a reporter for the *New York Tribune*. In his work, he explored the slums and police courts of Syracuse. There he fraternized with the poor and homeless and pursued his goal of studying “humanity” firsthand.

While working as a journalist, Crane also began to write fiction, including a story that would become his first novel, *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*. In his early twenties, Crane avidly read the works of realist writers such as the Russian author Leo Tolstoy. Crane especially admired Tolstoy’s book *Sebastopol* for its unromantic portrayal of war. He was also attracted to two leading American realists of the time, William Dean Howells and Hamlin Garland. Both wrote about the hardships and ethical problems of middle- and lower-class characters. Crane admired both for emphasizing “nature and the truth.”

In 1891 Crane met Garland and had a chance to discuss his literary ideas with the writer. Garland

stressed that realism has only one law: “to be true, not to the objective reality, but to the objective reality as *the author sees it*.” Crane had already come to a similar conclusion about his writing. Once, when a friend asked him for advice on writing, Crane threw a handful of sand into the air and said, “Treat your notions like that. Forget what you think about it and tell how you feel about it.” Crane’s discussions with Garland, which often occurred while throwing a baseball back and forth, helped Crane to crystallize his ideas about writing and to launch himself as a novelist.

Crane’s writing was also influenced by his upbringing. Born in 1871 in Newark, New Jersey, he was the son of a Methodist minister. His mother came from a long line of Methodist clergymen. Although Crane did not embrace his parents’ religion, he was strongly affected by certain Christian ideas. In particular, he was acutely aware of the insignificance of human beings in the universe and the guilt and fear that the thought of sin could inspire. In *The Red Badge of Courage*, as in many of his stories and poems, Crane reveals his interest in moral issues by focusing on personal responsibility, conscience, and life as a spiritual journey.

Crane’s use of language also reflects the influence of religion in his life. Religious imagery plays a major role in *The Red Badge of Courage*, as well as in Crane’s poetry. Many of Crane’s references come directly from the Bible or from the sermons and hymns he heard during his youth.

Crane lived a short but adventurous life. He died of tuberculosis and exhaustion before reaching the age of twenty-nine. His masterpiece, *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895), was published before he turned twenty-four. Cited for its fresh narrative style and realistic depiction of combat, the novel made him a celebrity. Its critical success led to assignments as a roving newspaper reporter in the West and as a war correspondent in Cuba, Mexico, Greece, and Turkey. Crane turned his adventures into material for more than one hundred stories and sketches.

Introducing the Novel

When *The Red Badge of Courage* was first published in 1895, many readers were impressed by its unflinchingly honest portrayal of war. “They all insist I am a veteran of the Civil War,” Crane noted in a letter. In truth, at the time he wrote the novel, Crane had never even seen a battle.

The Red Badge of Courage is a profile of an inexperienced young soldier undergoing his first experience of battle. “The youth” in the novel, Henry Fleming, makes a journey of self-discovery. But what he learns, and whether he learns, from his experiences is a point that is still debated.

In writing *The Red Badge of Courage* nearly thirty years after the Civil War ended, Crane referred to stories of actual battles written in popular magazines. He also likely had heard oral accounts from veterans and seen Mathew Brady’s photographs of Civil War battlegrounds. In addition, Crane was acquainted with the memoirs many veterans had written in the 1860s, 1870s, and 1880s. These works often portrayed going off to war as an experience of initiation, or growing

up, in which a young person moves from innocence, to familiarity, to wisdom.

In constructing *The Red Badge of Courage*, Crane drew on a predictable pattern followed in Civil War memoirs and novels of initiation. But what Crane created was not an ordinary Civil War story. Crane’s approach was startlingly unconventional. He wrote about the violence and confusion of the battlefield. While some European novelists, such as Tolstoy and Emile Zola, had written about war in a gritty and unsentimental way, most war novels by American writers at the time were simply adventure stories or romances. Crane, however, went beyond giving a realistic picture of war. He focused on the effects of war on the human mind. Crane himself called the novel a “psychological portrayal of fear.”

The novel’s style is impressionistic, reflecting this subjective approach. *Impressionism*, a term borrowed from the fine arts, refers to a highly personal way of seeing. Like an impressionist painter, the impressionist writer does not present objects



Nearly three million men served in the Civil War. More than two million were Union soldiers like those shown at this Civil War encampment.

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Did You Know?

In a typical Civil War battle, the opposing armies were only a few hundred yards apart. Usually one side would attempt to advance across an open field, while the defenders fired at them from the cover of trees or trenches. Such assaults were murderous because the attackers were so exposed. Nevertheless, this tactic remained common throughout the war.

Large battles consisted of countless skirmishes, or minor fights, involving small groups of soldiers. The attacking soldiers did not advance steadily toward the enemy in neat ranks. Rather, they dashed forward a few yards, fired, then lay down or hid to reload before dashing forward a few more yards to fire again.

The thick, eye-watering smoke that settled over the battlefield made combat madly confusing. Soldiers could see only a short distance ahead. It was not uncommon for troops in the second or third line to fire into their own front rank. Soldiers often felt shots coming at them from all directions. The noise of the battle—the booming explosions of cannons, the sharp bursts of rifle shots, and the shouts and groans of those fighting and dying—added to the confusion. Gruesome deaths were common, and advancing or retreating soldiers often had no choice but to step on the dead and wounded.

or events as they might appear to an objective observer, in precise and accurate detail. Instead, the writer shows the objects or events as they *seem* or *feel* to an individual at a precise moment in time. Crane's impressionistic approach, emphasizing the "drama of thought" rather than action, was radically new.

A second element in *The Red Badge of Courage* is its ironic tone. **Tone** refers to the writer's attitude toward his or her subject matter. **Irony** involves an awareness of a contradiction between appearance and reality. Irony is evident throughout the novel in Crane's attitude toward both war and courage. His realistic descriptions of battle undercut the traditional view of war as a stage for glorious acts of heroism. Many readers also believe that Crane's attitude toward his main character is ironic. His descriptions of Henry often call into question the accuracy of Henry's perceptions about himself. Thus, what appears to be true to Henry Fleming may not coincide with what the author or reader knows—or thinks—to be true about Fleming.

Because of its ironic tone, its emphasis on the psychological, and its impressionistic style, *The*

Red Badge of Courage has been called the first modern American novel. Although written before the turn of the century, Crane's novel has more in common with the works of twentieth-century writers such as Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald than it does with works of the 1890s. While many war novels have been written since, *The Red Badge* remains one of the most-admired in American literature.

THE TIME AND PLACE

The setting for *The Red Badge of Courage* is an unnamed battle during the Civil War. However, historians have studied details in the novel relating to time, weather, the lay of the land, and the movements of the troops during the battle. Using these details as clues, they have deduced that Crane was describing a portion of the Battle of Chancellorsville, Virginia, which lasted four days in May of 1863.

Crane not only withholds the name of the battle but also never mentions the Civil War. He devotes relatively little space to the physical setting. Many critics believe that the real setting of this novel is Henry Fleming's mind.

Before You Read

The Red Badge of Courage Chapters 1–7

FOCUS ACTIVITY

How do people discover what their strengths and weaknesses are? How would you respond to the idea that each person is an “unknown quantity” until he or she is tested by a challenging situation?

Chart It

Working with a partner create a chart listing some challenging or stressful situations that test a person’s character. Consider using such categories as school, work, or sports. Discuss your examples. What might people discover about themselves in each situation?

Setting a Purpose

Read to find out how an inexperienced young soldier’s courage is tested in his first combat situation.

BACKGROUND

Did You Know?

Every story is told from a certain point of view. In *The Red Badge of Courage*, readers see the action through the eyes of just one character, the youth named Henry Fleming. Henry is not the narrator of the story but we are inside Henry’s mind throughout the novel. We never know any of the other characters from the inside. This approach is known as the **third-person limited point of view**.

In the novel, the narrator describes things as Henry perceives them, and Henry’s observations are highly colored by his emotions. At times, Henry’s surroundings almost seem to be an extension of his personality. While the descriptions of what Henry sees might seem distorted, they provide a highly accurate picture of Henry’s personal reality. This special kind of realism, which is subjective rather than objective, is known as **psychological realism**.

A Poetic Style

The style of the novel is closely related to its point of view. In passage after passage, Crane presents Henry’s impressions of his surroundings. To convey these impressions, or psychological effects, he uses many images and symbols. For example, to Henry the campfires of the enemy across the river look like the “red eyes” of a “row of dragons.” In other cases, the images suggest the author’s attitude toward the subject of the novel—war. For example, as Henry’s regiment marches through the woods and fields, the narrator says, “They were going to look at war, the red animal—war, the blood-swollen god.” The abundant visual imagery, which often emphasizes particular colors, contributes to the highly poetic style of the novel.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

annihilate [ə nīˈə lāt] *v.* to totally destroy

ardor [ärˈdər] *n.* burning passion

din [din] *n.* loud, jarring noise

fathom [fathˈəm] *v.* to understand; to probe

ominous [omˈə nəʃ] *adj.* forecasting disaster or threat

prowess [prouˈɪs] *n.* bravery and skill

solemnly [solˈəm lē] *adv.* seriously

tumult [tūmˈəlt] *n.* uproar; disorder

Active Reading

The Red Badge of Courage Chapters 1-7

Many striking images appear throughout this section. Variations on these images occur throughout the novel. As you read, use this chart to record phrases and sentences that contain examples of each kind of image listed.

Animal images	Other images from nature
<p>enemy campfires look like "red eyes" of a "row of dragons"</p>	
Religious images	Machine images

Responding

The Red Badge of Courage Chapters 1–7

Personal Response

What is your first impression of Henry Fleming?

Review the chart you created for the **Focus Activity** on page 12. What challenging or stressful situations does Henry face?

Analyzing Literature

Recall and Interpret

1. Why does Henry enlist? What new thoughts does he struggle with before battle? Do other soldiers share these thoughts? Explain.

2. How does Henry perform during the first attack? Why does he run from the battle during the second attack?

3. Alone in the woods, how does Henry justify his flight? When Henry enters the chapel of trees, does he find comfort? Explain.

Responding

The Red Badge of Courage Chapters 1–7

Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

Evaluate and Connect

4. Crane usually calls Henry simply “the youth.” What reason might he have for referring to the main character in this way?

5. What details help to give a realistic picture of the combat experience of Civil War soldiers and of soldiers in general?

Literature and Writing

Critic’s Analysis

Review the chart of images you completed in the **Active Reading** on page 13. Then write an analysis of the way the images contribute to the impact of the novel. In your writing, consider the following: How do the images help to create a certain mood? How do they reflect Henry’s psychological state at certain moments? How do they reflect the author’s attitude toward war or his view of human nature?

Extending Your Response

Literature Groups

In Chapters 1 through 7, Henry’s emotions swing back and forth, mirroring the conflict within him. In your group, discuss the character and the nature of his conflict. Anchor your discussion in the text by assigning one or more chapters to each person for review. Skim your chapter to find passages in which Henry expresses a strong emotion. Describe the emotion and the thoughts or perceptions that accompany it. Give everyone a chance to describe at least one passage. Then, based on your group’s discussion, make a list of adjectives that describe Henry. Compare your lists with those of other groups.

Learning for Life

Employers often evaluate the performance of their employees in a report. This report is then shared with the employee as feedback. Both positive comments and suggestions for improvement are usually included. Play the role of Henry’s commanding officer and evaluate his performance during the first brief attack (see Chapter 5). In your written report, give specific examples of behaviors that you feel deserve praise or criticism. Based on this performance only, evaluate whether Henry has the potential to be a good soldier.

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Before You Read

The Red Badge of Courage Chapters 8–16

FOCUS ACTIVITY

How would you define the word *conscience*? How can having a guilty or troubled conscience interfere with a person's daily life?

Sharing Ideas

Think about the meaning of the word *conscience*. Write a brief definition in your own words. Then, meet with a partner to share definitions. Discuss why feeling guilty is such an uncomfortable experience.

Setting a Purpose

Read to find out more about how Henry Fleming struggles with his conscience.

BACKGROUND

Did You Know?

Desertion was common during the Civil War. Some soldiers deserted out of fear during battle. Most recruits received little training and almost no guidance about what to expect in battle. Whole units were often composed of untried men, without veterans who could provide information or advice. In their memoirs, Civil War soldiers often express a fear of battle, but many were as afraid of being branded cowards as they were of being wounded or killed. "Showing the white feather," or displaying cowardice, could bring humiliation both in the regiment and back home with friends and family.

Other desertions were more calculated and for reasons other than fear. Some men left the army because of the harsh physical conditions. Others tired of not being paid on time, or returned home to help their struggling families. Still others resented their officers, who often lacked military training. Many men deserted because they had enlisted simply for the bounty, or reward that was offered to enlistees late in the war.

Religious Imagery

"The red sun was pasted in the sky like a wafer." This sentence, which appears at the end of Chapter 9, contains probably the most famous image in *The Red Badge of Courage*. The image is a topic of much debate. Some critics believe that Crane is making a comparison between the red sun and a communion wafer. In the Christian sacrament of communion, participants recognize the death and sacrifice of Christ by receiving both bread and wine as symbols of Christ's body. Readers who accept this interpretation of Crane's image also see Jim Conklin as a Christ-like figure who helps to redeem, or save, Henry. They point to his initials and to other elements of Christian imagery that occur in Chapter 9 as justification for this interpretation. As you read, think about the role Jim Conklin plays in the novel and about his effect on Henry Fleming.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

conjure [kon'jər] *v.* to think up

derisive [di rī'siv] *adj.* scornful

frenzy [fren'zē] *n.* wild or violent activity

gaunt [gônt] *adj.* excessively thin

plight [plīt] *n.* unfortunate situation

spectral [spek'trəl] *adj.* ghostly

sullenly [sul'ən lē] *adv.* gloomily; with silent anger

transfixed [trans fikst'] *adj.* held motionless

valor [val'ər] *n.* bravery

vindication [vin'də kâ'shən] *n.* justification; confirmation

Active Reading

The Red Badge of Courage Chapters 8–16

In Chapters 8 through 16, Henry continues to wrestle with his conscience. In the chart below, list several statements from Chapters 11 and 15 that reveal Henry’s feelings and thoughts. Focus on passages where he reflects on his experiences and considers the future. Next to each passage, note the main emotion expressed in the statement.

Chapter 11

Statement	Emotion Expressed
“He felt that he was regarding a procession of chosen beings ... He could never be like them”	envy

Chapter 15

Statement	Emotion Expressed

Responding

The Red Badge of Courage Chapters 8–16

Personal Response

Think about Henry’s experiences with and behavior toward Jim Conklin, Wilson, and the tattered man. What questions would you like to ask Henry about these relationships?

Analyzing Literature

Recall and Interpret

1. What happens to Jim Conklin? How does Henry respond? How does the wounded “tattered man” treat Henry? Why does Henry desert him?

2. Why does Henry envy the other soldiers? How does he become wounded? What is ironic, or contradictory, about his “red badge”?

3. What fear does Henry have as he returns to his regiment? How is he received? What loud remarks does Henry make as the regiment waits to fight?

Responding

The Red Badge of Courage Chapters 8–16

Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

Evaluate and Connect

4. What change does Henry notice in his friend Wilson? How, in your opinion, does Wilson provide a foil, or contrast, to Henry?

5. Do you think that Henry's thoughts and actions in Chapters 8 through 16 illustrate some basic tendencies that all human beings have? Explain.

Literature and Writing

Comparing Characters

Compare and contrast the characters of Jim Conklin (the tall soldier), Wilson (the loud soldier), and the tattered man. How are they similar and how are they different? What interactions do they have with Henry in Chapters 8 through 16? How are they like or unlike Henry Fleming? What role do these minor characters seem to play in the novel? Write a one-page analysis of one of the three minor characters.

Extending Your Response

Literature Groups

After returning to his regiment, Henry seems to develop a new attitude:

There was a little flower of confidence growing within him. He was now a man of experience. He had been out among the dragons, he said, and he assured himself that they were not so hideous as he had imagined them.

Discuss whether you believe this statement. In your discussion, consider these questions:

- Is Henry really a “man of experience” at this point? If so, in what way?
- Is Henry being overconfident here? Is Crane making fun of him, or being ironic, by describing Henry's attitude in such elevated terms?
- Do you think Henry has changed since receiving his wound? Do you think he will behave differently when the regiment fights the next time?

To prepare for your discussion, review Henry's thoughts about himself that you listed in your **Active Reading** chart on page 17.

Performing

Prepare a dramatic monologue that explores Henry's internal conflict. Before writing the script for your monologue, review your notes about conscience and guilt from the **Focus Activity** on page 16. Then review the events in this section of the novel and Henry's responses to those events. In addition, skim the chapters, especially Chapters 11 and 15, to note key statements that indicate Henry's shifting frame of mind. Finally, think about how you can use posture, gesture, vocal quality, and expression to capture Henry's personality. Perform your monologue for a small group of students or for the entire class.



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Before You Read

The Red Badge of Courage Chapters 17–24

FOCUS ACTIVITY

In what ways do you think young people become more realistic as they grow into adulthood?

Discuss

In a small group, discuss some situations in which young people adjust their dreams or expectations to fit reality as they get older. What factors contribute to a more realistic view? Is there any comfort or advantage in learning that life is complex?

Setting a Purpose

Read to find out whether Henry Fleming resolves the conflict with which he has been wrestling.

BACKGROUND

Did You Know?

The soldier who carried the regiment's flag, or colors, was exposed to great danger on the battlefield. The regimental flag was a badge of honor and pride. Therefore, the color-bearer had to carry the flag visibly, in front of the action, as an inspiration to the fighting men. Because the flag symbolized defiance and aggression to the enemy, the color-bearer was always a first target. The color-bearer had the shortest life expectancy in the unit. Several color guards in succession might be killed in the same battle. Civil War battle accounts are full of stories of the exceptional bravery and sacrifice of the color guards.

A Plotless Novel?

Some critics have called the *The Red Badge of Courage* a nearly plotless novel. While this may be an overstatement, the novel certainly does not follow a conventional structure. Many of the most important "actions" occur inside Henry's head. In addition, the action does not rise steadily to a climax, or point of highest tension. Rather, action alternates with reflection. Instead of creating a neat cause-and-effect chain of events, Crane presents a series of tense and conflicting episodes. As you finish reading the novel, think about how this structure—or lack of structure—serves the author's purpose. Also, think about the novel's climax and resolution. Is there a distinct turning point in Chapters 17 through 24? Is Henry's conflict resolved at the end?

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

clamor [klam'ər] *n.* noisy shouting

delirium [di lēr'e əm] *n.* confused or excited mental state

despondent [di spon'dənt] *adj.* depressed; hopeless

frantic [fran'tik] *adj.* emotionally out of control

gospels [gos'pəls] *n.* things taken to be the truth

lurid [loor'id] *adj.* shockingly pale; horrifying

Active Reading

The Red Badge of Courage Chapters 17–24

In the final pages of Chapter 24, Henry reflects on how his experiences have affected him. Using the chart below, list statements in which Henry draws conclusions about how he has changed. Next to each statement, note whether you find the statement convincing and why.

Statement	Convincing?		Why?
	Yes	No	
"He saw that he was good."	✓		Henry realizes that, in spite of his failures, he is still a good person.

Responding

The Red Badge of Courage Chapters 17–24

Personal Response

What was your response to the ending of the novel? How do you feel about Henry and his journey of self-discovery?

Analyzing Literature

Recall and Interpret

1. When the enemy charges (in Chapter 17), how does Henry fight? Afterward, how does he feel? How does he feel after eavesdropping on the two officers?

2. How does Henry earn the praise of his lieutenant? During the regiment's second charge (in Chapter 23), what role does Henry play?

3. What memory at first darkens Henry's proud feelings after the battle? How does he think his experiences have changed him?

Responding

The Red Badge of Courage Chapters 17–24

Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

Evaluate and Connect

4. Crane repeatedly uses animal images to describe the regiment’s fighting. Find three examples. Based on these images, how do you think the author might define courage?

5. In what ways do you think the qualities Henry shows in battle would be useful in war today? Explain.

Literature and Writing

War Correspondent’s Report

In writing about war, reporters strive to give an accurate picture of what happened in a particular battle or incident. Many also try to capture the gritty reality of warfare “on the ground.” Write a factual account of the Union regiment’s charge, enemy counterattack, and second charge into the enemy line, as described in Chapters 19 through 23. For ideas on accurately representing the entire scene, reread Chapter 22, in which Henry becomes almost a spectator of the larger battle. To humanize your story, focus on the raw recruit who becomes the flag bearer. You may also want to incorporate “invented” quotations from the fighting men.

Extending Your Response

Literature Groups

In the novel, Henry’s encounters with war and death challenge his perception of himself and test his moral character. Think about your responses to the **Focus Activity** on page 20.

Then, in your group, discuss this question: Has Henry truly matured through his experiences?

To prepare for your discussion, review the **Active Reading** chart on page 21 in which you listed and evaluated Henry’s perceptions of himself in the final chapter. What has Henry discovered about himself and about life? In your opinion, does he see himself clearly at the end? Do you think the author wants readers to accept Henry’s statements at face value, or is there a note of irony in the final paragraphs? If so, what is the source of the irony? Cite evidence from the novel to support your opinions.

Music Connection

In your group, work together to develop a soundtrack for Chapters 17 through 24. To begin, create an informal outline that briefly states what happens in each chapter. Then, think about what type of music would be appropriate for each scene. For example, will you use instrumental or vocal music? blaring brass horns or a quiet guitar? pleasing sounds or jarring sounds? After selecting or creating music and recording your soundtrack, play it for the class, explaining how the music conveys the mood and meaning of this section of the novel.



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Responding

The Red Badge of Courage

Personal Response

Henry's personal test comes in war. What is a personal test you have faced? Did surviving this test help you to grow in some way or make you feel wiser? Did succeeding or failing at this test affect what you learned about yourself?

Can you see any parallels between your own experience and Henry Fleming's experience? Explain.

Writing About the Novel

Early in the novel, Henry Fleming wonders if he will prove to be "a man of traditional courage." Would you describe Henry in this way? Do you consider him to be a hero? On a separate sheet of paper, define what courage means to you. You may wish to refer to traditional views on courage or heroism in your definition. Then analyze Henry's character according to your standards. Support your analysis by referring to his responses in battle, his encounters with other characters, and the thoughts and feelings he expresses as he reflects on his actions.



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A Son of the Gods

Ambrose Bierce

Before You Read

Focus Question

What steps do you go through when you have to make difficult decisions? Does one of those steps include fighting feelings of fear and doubt?

Background

Ambrose Bierce enlisted in the Union army when he was eighteen years old and served until the Civil War ended three years later. He was involved in some of the most fierce and important battles of the war. Despite the fact that he had firsthand knowledge, Bierce, like Crane, did not emphasize specific battles or military leaders in his writings. Instead he focused on the emotions and impressions of men caught up in the war.

Responding to the Reading

1. Although Bierce's horseman knew that allowing himself to be captured might save his life, why was it important to the troops that he did not exercise that option?

2. How does the young officer make the best use of his remaining time and life after he spots the concealed enemy forces? What feelings might he be having at this time?

3. What does the author mean when he writes "At what a dear rate an army must sometimes purchase knowledge"?

4. How does the soldiers' attitude toward the young officer change over the course of the story? What dramatic gesture does their feeling for the officer inspire them to make?

5. **Making Connections** Today, technology allows troops to communicate with each other and gather information about enemy positions with little risk to the intelligence gatherer or the communicator. What important communications function did Henry Fleming perform for his regiment after he retrieved the flag from the wounded bearer? What task was Bierce's young officer performing? What risks did the two men share?

Creative Writing

One of the challenges of communicating effectively is being able to describe something to someone who is completely unfamiliar with it. Imagine you are one of the soldiers who survived the events Bierce describes. In a letter to a family member who has never seen military conflict, write in detail about your recent experiences.

A Day

Louisa May Alcott

Before You Read

Focus Question

What challenges could you expect to encounter if you volunteered to work in a battlefield hospital?

Background

In her twenties, Louisa May Alcott wrote in her journal that she “longed to see a war.” Because women could not join the army at that time, she enlisted as an army nurse. If Henry Fleming had been wounded in the battle Crane described, he might have arrived at the makeshift hospital in Washington, D.C., where Alcott worked.

Responding to the Reading

1. What is Alcott’s first reaction when the wounded from Fredericksburg arrive? How does she soon come to view the soldiers?

2. Bill Smithers, a wounded soldier in *The Red Badge of Courage*, said he would have “rather been in ten hundred battles” than in the hospital. From Alcott’s and Smithers’s descriptions of hospital conditions, do you think the soldier was exaggerating? Why or why not?

3. **Making Connections** Compare the attitudes and personalities of the captured and wounded Confederate soldier in *The Red Badge of Courage* and the Confederate soldier in Alcott’s hospital ward.

Letter to the Editor

“A Day” is part of Alcott’s *Hospital Sketches*, which were originally written for publication in a newspaper. Imagine her readers’ reactions to one or more of the situations she described. Write a short letter to the editor of the newspaper praising or criticizing the work of the hospital staff.

Stephen Crane's Historic War Novel Owes a Debt to His Love of Baseball

Ed Burns

Before You Read

Focus Question

What might sports and war have in common?

Background

Because Crane's descriptions of battle scenes seem so authentic, many readers in the 1890s were surprised to learn that the author of the best-selling novel had no experience in warfare. To research the war, Crane read recollections written by veterans and saw drawings and photographs of the battlefields. Crane himself attributed his talent for capturing the feel of combat to his experiences in competitive team sports.

Responding to the Reading

1. What two activities did Crane participate in at the Hudson River Institute that would be helpful in his life's work?

2. What similarities can you find between a game of baseball, or another team sport, and the battle scenes described by Crane? Take into account periods of waiting, reversals in winning and losing, and the leadership of teams.

3. **Making Connections** Compare the temperament of the regiment's young lieutenant in *The Red Badge of Courage* to Burns's description of Crane's interactions with members of his university baseball team.

Art Connection

From Ed Burns's description of Crane and his baseball gear, draw a cartoon figure of Crane as the catcher of his college and university teams. Write a caption or a balloon dialogue that typifies Crane's love of the sport.

War Stories: Andy McNab

from *Frontline*

Before You Read

Focus Question

What do you think it would be like to be a soldier in wartime?

Background

The United Nations's action against Iraq in 1991, called the Gulf War, involved armed forces from several nations. This interview with a British soldier highlights how weapons have changed drastically since Civil War days, but shows how the feelings and actions of soldiers remain much the same.

Responding to the Reading

1. Why does McNab call the moments after hearing the track vehicles “a very frustrating time”?

2. What was the condition of many of the Iraqi soldiers? How did this affect McNab's attitude toward those soldiers?

3. **Making Connections** Speaking of his most vivid memories of the engagement, McNab says “it's . . . just small contained areas that . . . you see.” If the British soldier was not familiar with *The Red Badge of Courage*, how would you draw an analogy for him showing the similarity between his comment and Crane's approach to writing about war?

Listening and Speaking

Ask a fellow student to play the role of a United Nations soldier and interview that person on his or her first experience in the battlefield. On a separate sheet of paper, record your notes on the interview.

A March in the Ranks Hard-Prest, and the Road Unknown

Walt Whitman

Before You Read

Focus Question

Have you ever had to get your bearings quickly in an unfamiliar room? If so, what did you observe first?

Background

The Civil War was very real to poet Walt Whitman. Moved by the suffering he saw as he searched for his wounded brother, Whitman spent his spare time as a volunteer in the overcrowded, poorly equipped Union hospitals in Washington, D.C. He wrote many poems about war in the years immediately following the end of the Civil War.

Responding to the Reading

1. What emotions do you think the “sullen remnant” of the army felt when they first saw a dim-lighted building in the opening? What emotions might they have had when they realized that the church was a makeshift hospital?

2. What might Whitman mean when he says, “a sight beyond all the pictures and poems ever made”?

3. What happens to the young soldier who is shot in the abdomen? How does the soldier seem to meet his fate?

4. **Making Connections** What similarities do you see between the experience of Whitman’s soldier in the church and Henry Fleming’s experience in the “green chapel”?

Creative Writing

On a separate sheet of paper rewrite the poem as an objective, narrative paragraph including the many details that Whitman provides. Or, if you choose, rewrite the poem in Crane’s prose style. Remember Crane’s advice to write how you feel about your subject rather than how you think about it. Read your paragraph to a partner.