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The Red Badge of Courage

BY STEPHEN CRANE



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All references come from the Prestwick House Literary Touchstone edition of *The Red Badge of Courage*, copyright 2004.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Pre-Reading**Understanding Setting**

Objective: Understanding setting

Activity

The historical basis and setting of *The Red Badge of Courage* is the Battle of Chancellorsville.

In small groups, read the article that follows about this specific battle. Make a list of facts that you found either interesting or confusing.

Each group should present a list to the class. The class as a whole should then discuss those facts that seem confusing or interesting.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapters I – IV

Figurative Language

Objective: Understanding figurative language

Activity

Figurative language involves using the familiar to make the unfamiliar clear. In the first paragraph of the novel, Crane describes two opposing armies resting, waiting to go into battle. The armies are camped along either side of a river that runs through the hills.

A river, amber-tinted in the shadow of its banks, purred at the army's feet; and at night, when the stream had become of a sorrowful blackness, one could see across it the red, eyelike gleam of hostile camp-fires set in the low brows of distant hills.

Some readers may be unfamiliar with the way campfires look along hillsides at night. Crane uses the more familiar image of red eyes in the dark to give the reader an image of how the campfires look. The *topic* of this image is the hostile enemy's campfires and the *vehicle* used to help the reader understand what they look like is the image of a "red, eyelike gleam." The *similarities* between the campfires and the "red, eyelike gleam" are that they both are red and glowing or gleaming in the dark. The reader gets the impression of hostility and threat from the image of red eyes gleaming in "the low brows of distant hills." The types of figurative language Crane uses in this passage include:

- Personification: "sorrowful blackness"
- Simile: "eyelike gleam"

Analyze Crane's use of three types of figurative language (personification, metaphor, and simile) by completing the following chart. The illustration explained above is used as an example on the chart. Some of the passages contain more than one literary device.

Draw any one of the examples provided.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapters I – IV**Plot and Characterization**

Objectives: Identifying important incidents in plot
Interpreting the thoughts and language of a character

Activity

The first four chapters give a description of Henry's initial experiences in the army. Use the following page to list Henry's activities and opinions of the army.

Imagine that you are Henry. Use your notes on Henry's opinions and activities to write a letter to his mother. Decide how honest Henry would be with his mother about what he is feeling. You can restrict what you say to his activities, observations, and viewpoints on the army, or you can disclose as much as you want of his internal struggle.

Before you write your letter, write a short paragraph explaining your decision on how much disclosure Henry would disclose in a letter to his mother. Base your reasons on what you understand about Henry's character. Explain the characteristics of Henry that led you to your decision.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapters V – X

Realism and Imagery

Objectives: Understanding the purpose of realism in a literary text
Recognizing and interpreting imagery in a literary text
Recognizing contrasting interpretations of a literary text

Activity

Most critics agree that Crane's intention was to present a realistic, objective account of the Civil War. His detail is so concrete and graphic the reader can, in a sense, experience being in a Civil War battle.

There are some readers, however, who insist that *The Red Badge of Courage* can be considered anti-war literature. Pretend that you are an anti-war activist and you decide to use some of Crane's graphic images of being maimed and killed in war as anti-war propaganda posters.

You may use colored pencils, paint, the computer, or a collage of pictures to present Crane's graphic image. You can probably find present-day war pictures in many different sources that could help to create a poster.

In addition, around the border of your poster, quote some of Crane's descriptive phrases that convey the horrific quality of the image. Remember, you are an activist creating anti-war posters; you have a passion for your cause.