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Response Journal

Reflections: A Student Response Journal



*The Red Badge
of Courage*
Stephen Crane



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Response Journal

To The Student

Although we may read a novel, play, or work of non-fiction for enjoyment, each time we read one, we are building and practicing important basic reading skills. In our ever-more complex society, in which reading has become more and more crucial for success, this, in itself, is an important reason to spend time reading for enjoyment.

Some readers, however, are able to go beyond basic reading techniques and are able to practice higher thinking skills by reflecting on what they have read and how what they read affects them. It is this act of reflection—that is, stopping to think about what you are reading—that this journal is attempting to encourage.

To aid you, we have included writing prompts for each section; however, if you find something that you wish to respond to in the book more compelling than our prompts, you should write about that. We hope you enjoy reading this book and that the act of responding to what you have read increases this enjoyment.

After you read the indicated sections, choose the questions to which you will respond. Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers to these prompts, and there is no one direction in which you must go.

The Red Badge of Courage

Chapter I

1. Henry Fleming's mother disapproves of his going off to war. Write the dialogue you think would take place if you told one of your parents that you enlisted in the army during wartime without his or her permission?

Me: I just enlisted in the Marines.

Dad or Mom:

2. After months in his regiment, Henry still has not seen combat and finds Army life monotonous. Describe what a day in Henry's life in the regiment at that time would have been like. Can you remember an activity that you found monotonous? Try to describe the activity in detail and include whatever your feelings were at the time you had to do it.
3. In this chapter, Henry is preoccupied with the idea that he might find that he is a coward. Write him a letter telling him your thoughts about courage in his circumstances and about any experiences with courage you may have had or witnessed.

Chapter II

4. Henry is described as "considering himself as separated from the others" and feels "vast pity for himself." He believes, "he was a mental outcast." Why do you suppose Henry has these feelings? Just about everyone has this feeling at times; try to describe a time you had similar feelings.

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Chapter V

10. In the battle described in this chapter, Stephen Crane writes three things about Henry:
- “He suddenly lost concern for himself...”
 - “He became not a man but a member.”
 - “He was welded into a common personality...”

Write about a time that you felt that you were an important part of a group; how did it make you feel, and why do suppose you felt this way?

11. The color red is used symbolically throughout this novel to stand for other things (wounds, blood, war, rage, etc.) Write about other colors which you feel have symbolic associations. Can you relate any feelings that you have felt or experienced regarding colors? For example, many people feel irritable on “Blue Mondays” or wouldn’t like it if someone called them “yellow.” Explain any of your color associations.

Chapter VI

12. This chapter begins with Henry feeling very satisfied with himself because he found that he was not a coward. In a letter to a friend, write about a time when, like Henry, you have felt proud of yourself.
13. Henry’s bravery is proven to be short-lived, and when the enemy charges again, he runs, as the novel says, displaying “the zeal of an insane sprinter.” If you can understand why Henry ran this time after not wanting to finish the battle, explain it to a friend who doesn’t get it.

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27. Assume this time that another friend is depressed because of something that had happened in the past and cannot be changed. (For example, like Henry, he ran in battle and said something terrible to someone who has since died.) What advice would you give this friend?

Friend: It's crazy, but I'm feeling depressed over something that happened last year.

You:

Chapter XII

28. As Henry, write a letter to your mother about your head wound. Decide what kind of message you want to send (bragging, upset, angry, foolish, truthful, apologetic, etc.) before you begin writing.

Chapter XIII

29. In answer to his friend and comrade Wilson about where he had been, Henry says he had gotten lost and "got shot, too." Complete this dialogue:

You: Henry, I don't believe you. Men all over are dead, but you claim you were lost.

Henry: You're right. What really happened was...

30. As Henry many years later, write your memoirs and describe the night encampment where the lie was believed and your head wound gently taken care of.

Chapter XVII

40. Though he enlisted, Henry is now filled with dark and conflicting feelings. He now thinks of himself as trapped fighting in this war, while also feeling that he should fight. If you can, recall a time you may have felt trapped in a situation; what were your feelings?

41. One of the soldiers recites a rhymed couplet: "A dog, a woman, an' a walnut tree, Th' more yeh beat 'em, the better they be!" What is your reaction to the soldier's poem?

Chapter XVIII

42. The officers are overheard discussing the battle to come and the low regard they have for the soldiers under their command. Have you ever overheard a discussion in which you or someone you know was criticized? How did you feel? What response, if any, did you make to the people talking?

43. What advice would you give a fellow soldier who felt certain that he would be killed in the upcoming battle?