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CLASSICS

**Simon & Schuster Classroom Activities
for the Enriched Classic edition of
The Red Badge of Courage by Stephen Crane
1-4165-0025-1 • \$3.95 / \$5.50 Can.**

Activities created by Robert Marantz

Each of the three activities includes:

- NCTE standards covered
- An estimate of the time needed
- A complete list of materials needed
- Step-by-step instructions
- Questions to help you evaluate the results

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**“Guts and Glory?”
(A Pre-reading Activity)**

The Red Badge of Courage concerns a young soldier who goes off to battle in search of the Homeric ideal of war: “He had read of marches, sieges, conflicts, and he longed to see it all” (Page 7). Once he has enlisted, however, he discovers that life in the army can be alternately boring and harrowing.

In this lesson we will explore how the media and our own biases shape our perception of war. This lesson can serve as an introduction to the novel.

This lesson will take one class period.

NCTE Standards Covered:

1. Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.
2. Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.
5. Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.
6. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and nonprint texts.
7. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and nonprint texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.
8. Students use a variety of technological and informational resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.
11. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literary communities.

12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

What to Do:

1. Start the lesson with a Journal topic: “Why do people join the army?” After 10-15 minutes, ask students to share their thoughts. Write down the different reasons on the board. This serves as an introduction for the students to the mindset of a soldier such as Henry Fleming, the protagonist of The Red Badge of Courage.
2. Now, have the class read aloud from beginning of chapter one to page 10 (ending with “...he had felt growing within him the strength to do mighty deeds of arms”). Ask the students how the men react to the news that they will be fighting the next day. Are they excited? Scared? What does their reaction say about how they view war? Then note the flashback that begins on page 6 (“He had, of course, dreamt of battles all his life...”) and ask the class why Henry enlisted.
3. Next, look at www.goarmy.com to see how people are recruited today. Have the class compare and contrast today’s reasons with Henry’s. Ask: What are the similarities? What are the differences? How realistic was Henry’s notion about war? Do recruiting posters and commercials for today’s Army paint a more realistic portrait of war?
4. Finally, have students work in pairs or small groups to create recruiting posters for the Union Army that might have appealed to Henry. For inspiration, you might have students search through the Smithsonian’s collection of war art by going to <http://americanhistory.si.edu/militaryhistory/collection/>, selecting the conflicts you wish to view from the list on the left, and selecting the “Art” category from the list on the right.

What You Need:

Poster paper, colored pens and markers, and a copy of the Enriched Classic edition of The Red Badge of Courage (ISBN: 1416500251) for each student.

How Did It Go?

In evaluating today’s recruiting tactics, did the students mention that many of the current advertisements for the U.S. Army resemble video games? What did they think about being the target audience for these ads?

What elements did your students include in their posters? If your students understood the activity correctly, they chose ideas and images that suggested the Homeric ideal of war—heroics, honor, individual glory. These are the poster elements that would have enticed a young person such as Henry during the Civil War.

**“The Color of War”
(A Lesson in Imagery)**

One of the clearest markers of Stephen Crane’s style in *Red Badge of Courage* is his use of color. In the first paragraph alone the landscape changes “from brown to green,” the river from “sorrowful blackness” to amber-tinted,” and we see the “red eyelike gleam of hostile camp fires.” ...[T]he title of the novel and its ironic use in the story invite us to think not only about color’s symbolic value but about the way that value can be manipulated.

From *Interpretive Notes, The Red Badge of Courage*, Page 198.

Crane peppers The Red Badge of Courage with many references to different colors. This helps create his vivid portrayal of war and death. In this lesson we will explore how color can be employed to represent many different moods and themes in literature.

This lesson will take one class period.

NCTE Standards Covered:

2. Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.
3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their words identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).
11. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literary communities.
12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

What to Do:

1. Start the lesson by reading the following quote from The Red Badge of Courage:

He was being looked at by a dead man who was seated with his back against a columnlike tree. The corpse was dressed in a uniform that once had been blue, but was now faded to a melancholy shade of green. The eyes, staring at the youth, had changed to the dull hue to be seen on the

side of a dead fish. The mouth was open. Its red had changed to an appalling yellow. Over the gray skin of the face ran little ants. (pp. 65-6)

2. Ask the students what they notice about the words Crane uses and the images he conveys. One of their responses should be that he uses a lot of color in his descriptions. If none of your students mention this, introduce the idea that the book is rich with colorful imagery. Cite examples:

- The title itself: *The Red Badge of Courage*
- Page 3 (“As the landscape changed from *brown* to *green*...”)
- Page 34 (“They were going to look at war, the *red* animal...”)
- Pages 65-66 (“He was being looked at by a dead man...a melancholy shade of *green*...”)
- Page 97 (“The *blue* haze of evening was upon the field...”)
- Page 111 (“*Gray* mists were slowly shifting before the first efforts of the sun rays...”)

3. Next, write these colors on the board: RED, GREEN, and GRAY. Ask the class what images, emotions, and ideas are evoked by each color. Encourage them to cite symbolism from sources other than the book. Write their responses on the board under the appropriate color.

4. Have each student pick an event from the book (they can use the examples cited but are not limited to them). Instruct the students to create a collage that evokes the tone of that scene. Each collage should have one dominant color.

5. Students will complete the activity by writing a one-page reflection to explain their choice and use of color in the collage for the scene they selected.

What You Need:

Colored paper, colored pens and markers, assorted magazines, and a copy of the Enriched Classic edition of *The Red Badge of Courage* (ISBN: 1416500251) for each student.

How Did It Go?

When the students chose images, emotions, and ideas evoked by the colors, did they include *war* and *aggression* (red), *nature* and *youth* (green), and *death* and *decay* (for gray)? While the colors are open to many interpretations, these three readings are the most popular among literary critics.

**“With His Shield or On It”
(A Lesson in Theme)**

At the end of The Red Badge of Courage, Crane writes of Henry:

He felt a quiet manhood, nonassertive but of sturdy and strong blood. He knew that he would no more quail before his guides wherever they should point. He had been to touch the great death, and found that, after all, it was but the great death. He was a man. (p. 186)

Is Crane being sincere in his assertion that Henry is now a man or is the ending meant to be ironic? Has Henry shown courage? These questions form the basis for a debate among literary critics about why Henry makes the decisions he does in the course of the novel. Today we will act as literary critics and take different sides to interpret Henry’s choices.

This lesson will take one class period.

NCTE Standards Covered:

2. Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.
3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their words identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).
4. Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.
11. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literary communities.
12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

What to Do:

1. Open the lesson by reading the passage cited above.
2. Introduce the interpretation that Crane intended this ending to be ironic, that his experiences gave Henry a false sense of maturity and mistaken notion of manhood.

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3. Break the class into five groups, and give each group one of the following questions to debate. Each question explores one aspect of the novel's theme of courage as it pertains to Henry.

- Who is the truer Henry—the Henry who realizes he is merely one man among many or the Henry who seeks individual glory, i.e. “breathless deeds” (page 7)?
- When he flees, is he being a coward or sensible?
- When he criticizes the men who stayed to fight as being “fools,” is Henry being a realist or delusional?
- Is Henry's fierce fighting near the end of the story heroic?
- At the end of the story, is Henry more of a “man” than he was at the beginning?

4. Each group will complete Handout #1 citing the question, each side of the issue it raises, and the group's ultimate consensus, if reached. Note: this is not a formal debate but a group exploration of the issue. The point here is for students to consider different interpretations of Henry's character.

5. Give the groups 20 minutes to deliberate both sides of their question. Then, have each group summarize their deliberations to the rest of the class.

6. After all five groups have presented their findings, assign the following as a writing reflection: “Given what you've read and heard today, would you classify Henry as courageous? Why or why not?”

What You Need:

Handout #1, and a copy of the Enriched Classic edition of The Red Badge of Courage (ISBN: 1416500251) for each student.

How Did It Go?

The debate over Henry's courage (or lack thereof) has raged in literary circles for nearly 100 years. This activity should have spawned strong opinions both attesting to and denying Henry's courage. Did your class come down firmly on one side of the debate? If so, you may consider asking a follow-up question: Does the current war in Iraq color your interpretation of Henry's journey?

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Handout #1

Instructions: Write the question your teacher assigns to your group in the field titled “Central Question.” Write the two positions your group will explore in the fields “Side #1” and “Side #2,” respectively. For each side, please cite a quote from The Red Badge of Courage (including page number) and then include 3-5 points to support that position.

Central Question: _____
_____?

Side #1: _____

Side #2 _____

Quote: _____

Quote: _____

Point #1 _____

Point #1 _____

Point #2 _____

Point #2 _____

Point #3 _____

Point #3 _____

Point #4 _____

Point #4 _____

Point #5 _____

Point #5 _____

Conclusion(s): _____
