

Oak Meadow American Literature Teacher Manual

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Lesson 1: The Red Badge of Courage

Vocabulary

- **epithet:** v. a descriptive name, particularly a disparaging or abusive word or phrase. *Sometimes his anger reached an acute stage, and he grumbled and shouted epithets about the camp like a veteran.*
- **perambulate:** v. to walk about or stroll. *Once, when the command had first come to the field, some perambulating veterans, noting the length of the column, had accosted them.*
- **vociferous:** adj. making a loud outcry; shouting noisily. *Loud and vociferous congratulations were showered upon the maiden, who stood panting and regarding the troops with defiance.*
- **harangue:** v. or n. a ranting speech characterized by vehement expression. *He thought he must break from the ranks and harangue his comrades.*
- **pilfer:** v. to steal. *A rather fat soldier attempted to pilfer a horse from a dooryard.*
- **confidant:** n. one to whom secrets are entrusted. *His wife was his confidant, so he told her everything.*
- **stolid:** adj. having or expressing little or no emotion; impassive. *Many remained stolid despite the ravages of battle.*
- **commiserate:** v. to feel or express sorrow or compassion for. *There wasn't any time to commiserate about the ones they lost.*

Comprehension

1. They're dissatisfied because they have been camped for months without seeing action. The monotony of drills and such drives Henry crazy.
2. Henry's mother discourages her son from going to war. Her conviction on this matter is strong. She tells Henry a number of things before he leaves—not to do anything she would be ashamed to know about, to watch the company he keeps, and never to shirk his duties on her account.
3. Some of his schoolmates surround him with awe and admiration; one girl makes fun of his "martial spirit," and one girl grows sad at the sight of him.
4. The tall soldier says they're going to battle tomorrow, while the loud private says it's a lie. They argue about whether or not the regiment will fight the next day. The tall soldier is mistaken.
5. In Chapter 1: "He had grown to regard himself merely as part of a vast blue demonstration. His province was to look out, as far as he could, for his personal comfort." Since the Union soldiers wear blue, and since they're not doing much of anything, they're a "blue demonstration."

6. A girl fights the soldier off. The troops take her side and cheer in her favor.
7. The loud soldier's name is Wilson. He is very enthusiastic about the impending battle; he is very proud; he gets insulted when Henry suggests that he's not the bravest man in the world.
8. Some of the soldiers dig little hills of rocks and sticks to protect themselves; others believe they should fight straight ahead, like "duelists."
9. Henry remembers a circus parade in the spring.
10. The man who runs from the battle is pummeled by the lieutenant and is driven back to the ranks.

Critical Thinking

NOTE: In their critical thinking responses, students should provide specific examples and direct quotes as support. All responses will vary based on the student's interpretation of the material.

1. Students should highlight the contrast between the natural landscape and what's happening on the battlefield: "It was surprising that Nature had gone tranquilly on with her golden process in the midst of so much devilment." The fact that nature keeps going on is important. Also, there are instances of nature's symbolic quality. The natural descriptions add a great deal of mood as well.
2. Crane's description of the corpse is straightforward, with a poetic edge that can be noticed in the description of the dead man's beard. Crane also highlights the soles of the dead man's shoes. Henry regards the dead body with a sense of mystery and awe, wondering what happens when we're dead, as signified by "the Question." This is different from the rest of the soldiers, who move around the body indifferently and view it as just another part of their job.
3.
 - a. Before Henry enlists, he sees the world in almost purely romantic terms. What he fears most is that he will turn out to be a coward and run from battle. This shows us how unstable Henry really is; it can also be said that he is obsessed with himself—his image of himself. He is unsure of himself. He sees himself as a "mental outcast" because he thinks he's the only one considering all these things.
 - b. Yes, it can be said that Henry experiences something of this change in the first battle, when he feels a sense of brotherhood with the regiment.
4. The student's creative responses will vary.
5. The basic cause of the Civil War was the South's secession from the Union. The issue was slavery in the New Territories, but not the abolition of slavery, as many students suppose. It was not until the Civil War began that Lincoln assumed the authority to sign the Emancipation Proclamation.

From Grolier's Multimedia Encyclopedia:

Politics became inextricably mixed with the SLAVERY issue in the years after the MISSOURI COMPROMISE (1820–21), by which Maine entered the Union as a free state and Missouri as a slave state but slavery was forbidden in the rest of the Louisiana Purchase territory north of 36° 30'N latitude. Southern leaders feared their power in the House of Representatives would dwindle as new free states were created. They resisted in the Senate by calling for a Southern slave state to balance every Northern free one, and by upholding the ideas of state sovereignty and the sanctity of private property—even slaves.

Lesson 2: The Red Badge of Courage

Vocabulary

- **blanch:** v. to make ashen or pale. *He blanched like one who has come to the edge of a cliff at midnight and is suddenly made aware.*
- **marshal:** v. to place in proper order or position. *He marshaled all his strength as he sprang up and went careening off through some bushes.*
- **imprecation:** n. curse or invocation of evil. *His body vibrated from the weight and force of his imprecations.*
- **laggard:** n. one who lags, a dawdler. *There was no time to be a laggard after the cavalry began to advance.*
- **sinuous:** adj. of a serpentine or wavy form; winding. *Avoiding the obstructions gave the forward-going column the sinuous movement of a serpent.*
- **fracas:** n. a brawl. *Before long, their minor disagreement turned into a major fracas.*
- **remonstrance:** n. forcefully reproachful protest. *The sight of the dead was enough remonstrance against the war.*
- **ague:** n. an attack of fever marked by chills or shivering. *Then he was shaken by a prolonged ague.*

Comprehension/Critical Thinking

Note: Student responses will vary, but should provide specific examples and direct quotes to add support to each response.

1.
 - a. Just when they think they've won the battle, the enemy approaches again, stunning Henry's regiment. Henry retreats because he was convinced they were being beaten, and he sees other soldiers running. In the description there is nothing to suggest that Henry is being cowardly.
 - b. Initially, Henry feels no shame in his retreat; he feels it's justified. As he watches another battery in action, he feels pity for them, thinking them fools. He begins to feel anger and shame when he finds out that his regiment held the Confederates back after all. He thought he had fled for good reason, that he was superior to those who had stayed. Then he dreads going back to the men and seeing their reactions. He tries to reconcile himself by seeing that it is natural to run: he throws a pine cone at a squirrel and it runs.

2.
 - a. Jim, who has been shot, asks Henry to take him out of the road so that he doesn't get run over by the artillery wagons. He runs frantically away from the road, towards a clump of bushes. Jim lurches, and then towards death, goes into more violent kicking and strangulation until he falls to the ground. Henry is deeply shaken, unable to let Jim go, yet unable to face him.
 - b. Crane has a detached, yet passionate tone that describes things in exacting detail. The narrator himself doesn't seem emotional, but the descriptions bring the reader close to the eeriness and panic.
 - c. The tattered man starts calling Henry Tom Jamison. He also suggests Henry might be injured. Henry can't handle the questions and the proximity to another dying and delirious soldier, so he runs away. Whether it's a selfish act or not is up to the reader to decide.
3. Henry's concept of honor comes from romantic visions of war, Greek-like affairs. He sees honor in not running, in becoming a fearless battle soldier, in being wounded, and even dead. But he sees it as a particularly individual affair, one that the other more experienced soldiers don't seem to exhibit. Thus far, Henry has not been able to live up to his standards, especially after he runs.
4.
 - a. Henry gets hurt when he stops a running soldier, asking him desperate questions. When Henry doesn't let go, the soldier strikes him across the head with his rifle, opening a bloody wound on his skull. Crane described the wound in gory terms several times.
 - b. Henry behaves so wildly because he's lost, he has run from battle, and has witnessed the death of his friend.
5.
 - a. Crane is suggesting that nature has its own rhythms and life that are independent of the drama of the human battle and suffering. There is order and beauty to nature that lifts Henry's spirits.
 - b. The squirrel episode gives Henry hope that by running he was wise. There are many examples of Henry looking upon beauty and seeing how it is not affected by war. This gives him solace.
 - c. Student will copy and decorate an excerpt.
6.
 - a. Henry lies and says he was shot and separated from his regiment, where he saw lots of fighting.
 - b. Wilson has become humble, wise, and caring, with a quiet self-assuredness. He regards himself as a fool in his earlier days.
 - c. The weapon is in the envelope with the letter that Wilson, thinking he would be killed, had given to Henry. Henry does give it to Wilson, who asks for it, though he doesn't want to at first, and feels power over his friend.