

The Red Badge of Courage Book Notes

The Red Badge of Courage by Stephen Crane

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Author/Context

Stephen Crane was born November 1, 1871, in Newark, New Jersey. He was the fourteenth and last child of the Reverend John Townley Crane, a Methodist minister and published writer in ethics (*The Arts of Intoxication*, 1870), and Mary Helen Peck, the daughter of a prominent Methodist minister. Both of his parents were active in the temperance movement, and his father moved the family repeatedly as he was transferred to different ministries. Crane's father died when he was nine, and his mother earned extra money by writing for Methodist journals, the *New York Tribune*, and the *Philadelphia Press*, all with young Stephen's help.

In 1885, Stephen entered the Pennington (N.J.) Seminary, a Methodist boarding school where his father had served as principal, then later transferred to Claverack (N.Y.) College-Hudson River Institute, a military boarding school. He left mid-year in 1890 for "academic delinquencies," but attained the rank of cadet captain. In January 1891, he entered Syracuse University, which was co-founded by his mother's uncle, and became extensively involved in writing and English. Instead of returning to school the next September, he decided to concentrate on his writing, and stayed with artist friends in New York. He studied the Bowery and flophouses in New York City for inspiration in his writing. Crane's mother died in December of 1891, and a few weeks later he wrote a draft of his first novel, *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, in two days.

Crane took work in New York as a freelance writer during 1892, and with no hope of finding a publisher for *Maggie*, he borrowed his inheritance from his mother in 1893, in order to publish it himself, which he did under the pseudonym Johnston Smith. The book was not widely reviewed, but was noticed by the authors Hamlin Garland and William Dean Howells; Howells subsequently invited Crane to tea. Crane began reading Civil War memoirs, and began to write *The Red Badge of Courage* in the spring of 1893.

By 1894 Crane was writing extensively, despite anxiety over hearing no response from a publisher on the *Red Badge*. Late that October, *The Red Badge* was accepted in a condensed version for serial publication in a newspaper. After personal congratulations from the *Philadelphia Press*, the manuscript was accepted for publication as a novel in December.

Crane spent 1895 traveling through the American West and Mexico, writing the whole time. His book of poems, *The Black Riders*, was published on May 11. *The Red Badge of Courage* was published on October 5, and quickly became a bestseller, establishing Crane's reputation as an author. In 1896, his book *George's Mother* was published, and a revised version of *Maggie* was published. Although he met Theodore Roosevelt in New York and shared some of his writing, he fell out of favor with Roosevelt and the New York police when he testified in defense of a woman friend who had been arrested on charges of solicitation. Later in 1896, Crane left the U.S. for Cuba to cover the Cuban revolution.



In 1897, the boat from which Crane was covering the Cuban war sank, becoming the inspiration for his story "The Open Boat." In March, Crane took passage to Greece to cover the Greco-Turkish war. His girlfriend, Cora Howorth Steward, was hired by the *New York Journal* as their first female war correspondent. The two were married during this time, and after the war moved to Oxted, Surrey, in England. Through his British publisher, Crane met the writer Joseph Conrad, who became his close friend. Crane's book *The Third Violet*, inspired by his travels in Mexico, was published on May 15, and after moving to England, Crane wrote several short stories, including *The Monster*.

Tangled literary commitments and poverty forced Crane back to New York in 1898; he then signed on to cover the American campaign in Cuba. After being sent away from the war zone because of fever and exhaustion, he was fired, but signed on with another paper to cover the Puerto Rican campaign. During this time, he wrote but had no correspondence at all with his wife or family, who opened official inquiries as to his whereabouts. He returned to New York that November, then sailed for England at the end of December. In England during 1899, Crane became friends with David Garnett, Henry James, and H.G. Wells. A second book of poems, *War is Kind*, was published on May 20. *Active Service*, a novel about the Greek war, was published October 14. *The Monster and Other Stories* was published on December 9. On December 29, Crane suffered a tubercular hemorrhage of the lungs.

Sick and beset by deadlines, Crane concealed his serious tuberculosis until April 1, 1900, when he suffered massive lung hemorrhages. In May, he traveled as a patient to a sanitarium in Badenweiler, Germany, where he died on June 5. He was twenty-nine years old. He was buried by his wife in Hillside, New Jersey. *Whilomville Stories* (1900), *Wounds in the Rain* (1900), *Great Battles of the World* (1901), and *The O'Ruddy* (1903), were all published posthumously.

Stephen Crane was a revolutionary in that he was one of the first American proponents of a literary genre called Naturalism, which took hold as an American literary trend only after Crane's death. Naturalism takes the stance that literary composition should portray an objective, empirically-based representation of human beings and the human condition. It differs from Realism, however, in that it is decidedly pessimistic in its portrayal, championing Darwinian beliefs in biological determinism. Naturalists reject free will and see humanity as controlled strictly by instinct, emotion, and societal conditions. In Europe, where the movement started, Naturalism was championed by the writers Edmond Louis Antoine de Goncourt, Jules Alfred Huot de Gancourt, and Émile Zola. In America, the trend started by Crane was picked up by Frank Norris, Sherwood Anderson, John Dos Passos, Theodore Dreiser, and James T. Farrell. Crane himself is known for his pessimistic and brutal psychological portraits, which are offset by a beautiful sense of language and an undercurrent of human sympathy.

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Plot Summary

The Red Badge of Courage is a fictional psychological portrait of a young soldier named Henry Fleming, tracing the thread of his emotions and reactions to events that transpire during an unnamed battle of the Civil War. Henry is an average farm boy from upstate New York, who dreams of the glory of battle that he has read about in school. He has enlisted in the 304th New York regiment, which fights for the Northern (Unionist) forces.

The novel opens with Henry's regiment in camp by a river, where they have been for several months. Rumors of upcoming battle fly among the men but are largely unfounded, and the perpetual anticipation throws Henry into a bitter interior fight. He questions if he has the inner strength and courage to become a good soldier and is unsure whether or not it is in his realm of capability. He knows battle only through schoolbooks and soldiers' stories, and fears the possible ridicule of his peers, should he be deemed a coward by running from battle.

The northern army is finally put on the move and marched across the river, where they meet with Southern (Confederate) forces. Henry's regiment is initially put in a reserve position, and he is able to witness battle before actually coming in contact with it. Finally his regiment successfully repels a charge by the enemy, and Henry feels relief and elation at his feeling of success. The enemy charges again, however, and Henry flees, in the belief that his regiment will be overrun. This sends Henry on a long day's journey along the battle lines, in which he bitterly reproaches himself for running, but at the same time tries to justify what he has done. He witnesses battle, then journeys into the surrounding woods, where he finds a decaying dead man in a clearing. Running away from the body and back to the battle, Henry takes up with the procession of wounded men trudging to the army's rear for care. There he meets his friend Jim Conklin from his regiment, who has been shot in the side. He cares for Jim with another man, called the "Tattered Soldier," until Jim dies in a field. The Tattered Soldier's repeated questions regarding Henry's supposed injuries anger and embarrass Henry until he leaves the Tattered Soldier alone to die in a field, a fact that later haunts Henry.

Leaving the Tattered Soldier, Henry witnesses the charge and subsequent retreat of a Union regiment. The men retreat right through the spot from which Henry is watching the battle, and a man that he stops to ask questions about the charge hits Henry in the head with the butt of his rifle, injuring him. Having been wounded by his own comrade, Henry is only able to stumble toward the rear. He is later helped back to his depleted regiment by a cheerful soldier whose face he never sees. Back in camp, Henry meets up with another man from his regiment named Wilson. Henry senses an incredible psychological growth and maturation in Wilson since their first days in camp, and envies him. The two become great friends.

The next day the battle continues, and Henry's regiment is placed on the edge of some woods and ordered to defend it. Here Henry achieves the classic valor for which he has sought; he fights so hard and courageously that both his comrades and his command look up to him. Later, while looking for water, both Henry and Wilson overhear a general



speaking poorly of their regiment, saying he can spare them for a charge because they fight so poorly. This angers them, and creates in Henry the desire to show up the command. The regiment is sent in to charge for the first time, and amid heavy casualties, Henry saves the regiment's flag when the color bearer is shot. He becomes, along with Wilson, the noncommissioned leader of his regiment. The charge essentially fails at first and Henry's regiment is forced to retreat. Then however, they are charged by a Confederate regiment, and Henry's regiment repulses them, eventually taking their regimental flag. Even though the generals reproach the regiment's command for failing in the charge, Wilson and Henry are considered heroes in the classic sense, at least externally.

Henry undergoes countless interior changes throughout his ordeal, which offset the externally visible accolades of courage that the others shower on him. His newfound manhood at the end of the battle is described as a strong, clearheaded confidence, a sense of self-assurance that he had never before felt in his endless internal bickering. The internal peace and calm is a far cry from what had first brought him to war - the idealistic Greek-like portrayals of valor and manhood that he had been exposed to only in books.



Major Characters

Henry Fleming (the 'Youthful Soldier'): Henry is the main character in the story, and his experience is that around which the story of the battle is narrated. Henry is an average 1860's teenager, who comes from a small New York farming family. His father has died a premature death. He is forever wrestling with his own internal dilemmas concerning courage, fear, and manhood. The story of the battle becomes Henry's story of growing up.

Jim Conklin (the 'Tall Soldier') : A northern soldier and friend of Henry Fleming, who is forever talking about unfounded rumors of troop movements. He is wounded and later dies on the first day of battle. Henry finds him in the line of wounded men walking to the rear of the battle - he has been shot in the side and Henry watches him wander off and die in an open field.

Wilson (the 'Loud Soldier'): A man who Henry Fleming initially resents but then befriends in battle and later comes to respect greatly. They essentially become the non-commissioned leaders of their regiment on the last day of the battle. Their regiment charges and Henry, with Wilson at his side, takes up the regiment's colors (flag) when the color bearer is killed. Wilson is responsible for capturing the opposing regiment's colors after the successful charge.

Minor Characters

Bill Smithers: A soldier who falls during the first march out of camp and gets his fingers stepped on while trying to retrieve his rifle. He goes to the hospital and is mentioned throughout the novel by members of his regiment.

The Youth's Company's lieutenant (Hasbrouck): The youth's immediate commanding officer. He is shot through the hand during the first day of battle, but stays on to lead his men. He is later shot in the arm, during the second day's charge.

The 'Tattered Soldier': A wounded man who tries to befriend Henry as he marches with the line of wounded men to the rear. The Tattered Soldier follows him and with him watches Jim Conklin (the Tall Soldier) die from an earlier gunshot to the side. He repeatedly asks Henry where he is shot, but this makes Henry angry and ashamed since he has not yet been wounded. Henry leaves the man wandering aimlessly to die alone, a fact that later haunts Henry.

The 'Man with the Cheery Voice': A Union soldier who befriends and helps Henry back to his regiment after the first day's battle. Henry never sees the man's face.

Corporal Simpson: The officer in Henry's regiment who takes care of Henry's head wound after the first day of fighting. Henry claims that he has been shot, even though he was actually hit in the head with the butt of a rifle by another Union soldier.



Jimmie Rogers: A soldier in Henry's regiment who is shot through the body in the forest on the second day of battle.

Colonel MacChesnay: A colonel in Henry's regiment, who leads the second day's charge and is afterward reproached by the high-ranking officer who called the regiment a lot of mule drivers.

Objects/Places

American Civil War (Chancellorsville): The American Civil War was a conflict between the northern and southern American states that claimed over 600,000 lives between 1861 and 1865. It was fought to preserve the American union (the Southern Confederacy wanted to secede), and to liberate all slaves. Although it is never mentioned in *The Red Badge of Courage*, Crane mentions in the book's sequel, *The Veteran*, that *The Red Badge* takes place during the battle of Chancellorsville. The battle took place between May 1st & 3rd, 1863, involving the forces of General Joseph Hooker for the Union (Northern) Army and General Robert E. Lee for the Confederate (Southern) Army. The Confederate Army won the battle, even though they were badly outnumbered by the Union forces.

Dark blue uniform: Henry joins the 304th New York regiment, which fights for the Union (Northern) forces. The Confederate (Southern) forces wear gray uniforms.

Dead soldier #1: During the dawn march into the first day of battle, Henry's regiment comes upon the body of a dead confederate soldier. It is the first death Henry has seen in the war, and he pleads with it silently to answer questions for him about death. The dead man has a long, tawny beard and his shoes are worn almost through.

Yellow package: Before the first day of battle, the Loud Soldier (Wilson) gives Henry a package of letters and keepsakes to deliver to the Loud Soldier's family, should he die during the battle. After the first day, when Henry and Wilson are reunited, Wilson, embarrassed, asks Henry to give the package back to him.

Battle flag: Each regiment on both sides of the war has a flag, which identifies the regiment's designation and origins, such as Henry Fleming's 304th New York. The battle flag leads each regiment into battle and is a coveted prize for the winner of a skirmish.

Dead soldier #2: After fleeing the battle line, Henry wanders deep into the woods and comes upon the body of a dead Union soldier leaning against a tree in a chapel-like clearing. The body has ants crawling over its face, a vision that haunts Henry later.

Quotes

Quote 1: "He had, of course, dreamed of battles all his life - of vague and bloody conflicts that had thrilled him with their sweep and fire. In visions he had seen himself in many struggles. He had imagined peoples secure in the shadow of his eagle-eyed prowess. But awake he had regarded battles as crimson blotches on the pages of the past. He had put them as things of the bygone with his thought-images of heavy crowns and high castles. There was a portion of the world's history which he had regarded as the time of wars, but it, he thought, had been long gone over the horizon and had disappeared forever." Chapter 1, pg. 5

Quote 2: "He wished, without reserve, that he was at home again making the endless rounds from the house to the barn, from the barn to the fields, from the fields to the barn, from the barn to the house. He remembered he had often cursed the brindle cow and her mates, and had sometimes flung milking stools. But, from his present point of view, there was a halo of happiness about each of their heads, and he would have sacrificed all the brass buttons on the continent to have been enabled to return to them. He told himself that he was not formed for a soldier. And he mused seriously upon the radical differences between himself and the men who were dodging implike around the fires." Chapter 2, pg. 18

Quote 3: "Once he thought he had concluded that it would be better to get killed directly and end his troubles. Regarding death thus out of the corner of his eye, he conceived it to be nothing but rest, and he was filled with a momentary astonishment that he should have made an extraordinary commotion over the mere matter of getting killed. He would die; he would go to some place where he would be understood. It was useless to expect appreciation of his profound and fine senses from such men as the lieutenant. He must look to the grave for comprehension." Chapter 3, pg. 28

Quote 4: "He suddenly lost concern for himself, and forgot to look at a menacing fate. He became not a man but a member. He felt that something of which he was a part - a regiment, an army, a cause, or a country - was in crisis. He was welded into a common personality which was dominated by a single desire. For some moments he could not flee no more than a little finger can commit a revolution from a hand." Chapter 5, pg. 34

Quote 5: "To the youth it was an onslaught of redoubtable dragons. He became like the man who lost his legs at the approach of the red and green monster. He waited in sort of a horrified, listening attitude. He seemed to shut his eyes and wait to be gobbled." Chapter 6, pg. 41

Quote 6: "At times he regarded the wounded soldiers in an envious way. He conceived persons with torn bodies to be peculiarly happy. He wished that he, too, had a wound, a red badge of courage." Chapter 9, pg. 55

Quote 7: "The tall soldier turned and, lurching dangerously, went on. The youth and the tattered soldier followed, sneaking as if whipped, feeling unable to face the stricken man



if he should again confront them. They began to have thoughts of a solemn ceremony. There was something rite-like in the movements of the doomed soldier. And there was a resemblance in him to a devotee of a mad religion, blood-sucking, muscle-wrenching, bone-crushing. They were awed and afraid. They hung back lest he have at command a dreadful weapon." Chapter 9, pg. 58

Quote 8: "He [the youth] now thought that he wished he was dead. He believed that he envied those men whose bodies lay strewn over the grass of the fields and on the fallen leaves of the forest.

The simple questions of the tattered man had been knife thrusts to him. They asserted a society that probes pitilessly at secrets until all is apparent. His late companion's chance persistency made him feel that he could not keep his crime concealed in his bosom. It was sure to be brought plain by one of those arrows that which cloud that air and are constantly pricking, discovering, proclaiming, those things which are willed forever to be hidden. He admitted that he could not defend himself against this agency. It was not within the power of vigilance." Chapter 10, pg. 63

Quote 9: "The youth reflected. He had been used to regarding his comrade as a blatant child with an audacity grown from his inexperience, thoughtless, headstrong, jealous, and filled with tinsel courage. A swaggering babe accustomed to strut in his own dooryard The youth wondered where had been born these new eyes; when his comrade had made the great discovery that there were many men who would refuse to be subjected by him. Apparently, the other had now climbed a peak of wisdom from which he could perceive himself as a very wee thing. And the youth saw that ever after it would be easier to live in his friend's neighborhood." Chapter 14, pg. 83

Quote 10: "Besides, a faith in himself had secretly blossomed. 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. Also, they were inaccurate; they did not sting with precision. A stout heart often defied, and defying, escaped." Chapter 15, pg. 87

Quote 11: "But those other men seemed never to grow weary; they were fighting with their old speed. He had a wild hate for the relentless foe. Yesterday, when he had imagined the universe to be against him, he had hated it, little gods and big gods; to-day he hated the army of the foe with the same great hatred. He was not going to be badgered of his life, like a kitten chased by boys, he said. It was not well to drive men into final corners; at those moments they could all develop teeth and claws." Chapter 17, pg. 94

Quote 12: "These incidents made the youth ponder. It was revealed to him that he had been a barbarian, a beast. He had fought like a pagan who defends his religion. Regarding it, he saw that it was fine, wild, and, in some ways, easy. He had been a tremendous figure, no doubt. By this struggle he had overcome obstacles which he had admitted to be mountains. They had fallen like paper peaks, and he was now what he



called a hero. And he had not been aware of the process. He had slept, and, awakening, found himself a knight." Chapter 17, pg. 97

Quote 13: "These happenings had occupied an incredibly short time, yet the youth felt that in them he had been made aged. New eyes were given to him. And the most startling thing was to learn suddenly that he was very insignificant. The officer spoke of the regiment as if he referred to a broom. Some part of the woods needed sweeping, perhaps, and he merely indicated a broom in a tone properly indifferent to its fate. It was war, no doubt, but it appeared strange." Chapter 18, pg. 101

Quote 14: "Within him, as he hurled himself forward, was born a love, a despairing fondness for this flag which was near him. It was a creation of beauty and invulnerability. It was a goddess, radiant, that bended its form with an imperious gesture to him. It was a woman, red and white, hating and loving, that called him with the voice of his hopes. Because no harm could come to it he endowed it with power. He kept near, as if it could be a saver of lives, and an imploring cry went from his mind." Chapter 19, pg. 108

Quote 15: "The impetus of enthusiasm was theirs again. They gazed about them with looks of uplifted pride, feeling new trust in the grim, always confident weapons in their hands. And they were men." Chapter 20, pg. 115

Quote 16: "From under his creased brows he glowered with hate at the mockers. He meditated on a few revenges. Still, many in the regiment hung their heads in criminal fashion, so that it came to pass that the men trudged with a certain heaviness, as if they bore upon their bended shoulders the coffin of their honor." Chapter 21, pg. 117

Quote 17: "He himself felt the daring spirit of a savage, religion-mad. He was capable of profound sacrifices, a tremendous death. He had no time for dissections, but he knew that he thought of the bullets only as things that could prevent him from reaching the place of his endeavor. There were subtle flashings of joy within him that thus should be his mind." Chapter 23, pg. 127

Quote 18: "Yet gradually he mustered the force to put the sin at a distance. And at last his eyes seemed to open to some new ways. He found that he could look back upon the brass and bombast of his earlier gospels and see them truly. He was gleeful when he realized that he now despised them.

With this conviction came a store of assurance. He felt a quiet manhood, nonassertive but sturdy and strong of 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.

So it came to pass that as he trudged from the place of blood and wrath his soul changed. He came from hot plowshares to prospects of clover tranquilly, and it was as if ho plowshares were not. Scars faded as flowers." Chapter 24, pg. 134



Topic Tracking: Fear of Battle

Chapter 1

Fear of Battle 1: Henry's first reaction to the thought of battle once he is stationed in camp is a confused one. He is having a hard time reconciling the images of war that have been idealized in schoolbooks, of Greek soldiers cutting a valiant profile through battle, with the drab reality of day to day life in a muddy camp. He is scared of having to live up to the Greek ideal because he doesn't know if he possesses the "strength" he thinks it would take to fight bravely. At the same time, he questions the existence of the ideal at all, for in the present day, camp is nothing like a storybook. He though he would feel the heroism of lore once he enlisted, but perhaps it is simply something he has constructed within himself.

Chapter 2

Fear of Battle 2: Fear remains, for the first part of the novel, an internally constructed phenomenon. Henry is not afraid of battle itself - he cannot be, for he has never been in battle before. He is sick with anticipation and expectation; both are eating him alive. The fear here is as bad as it is at any other point in the book; not because of the immediate threat of death, but because of the unreconciled walk into the unknown.

Chapter 3

Fear of Battle 3: Henry is caught in limbo here - the anticipatory fear has reached a point where it ebbs and flows in his mind as he alternately wants it to go away, and tries to justify it. Here Henry reaches a point of self-assured justification.

Fear of Battle 4: This is the first time that real, visceral fear is evident in a soldier. In a way this is the proof Henry has been looking for - the Loud Soldier has let Henry know that he is not invincible, and Henry has evidence that others share his fear.

Chapter 4

Fear of Battle 5: The fear glimpsed in the Loud Soldier becomes more generally evident; the difference between the veteran regiments and the youth's untried regiment also reveals itself. There is a great difference in the way each one reacts to battle - the initial reaction of the new regiment is outright fear, while the outward reaction of those who have already seen battle and witnessed death, is to respond with biting sarcasm and black humor.

Chapter 6

Fear of Battle 6: Just as Henry's internal doubts follow cycles in the novel, his reactions to battle are just as confused. In the moment of fighting he is an invincible machine, in the moment afterward he feels joy and control over the aggressors, and in the next moment he feels the enemy to be overwhelming him completely.



Chapter 11

Fear of Battle 7: The burst of courage that Henry feels is purely produced by the actions of those around him; he feels compelled to be like the idealized warriors he perceives the men in front of him to be. Yet, his internal doubt of being able to fulfill the social expectations that he feels ultimately holds him back from acting on this burst of courage.

Chapter 12

Fear of Battle 8: With Wilson's newfound maturity comes an acceptance of battle, which is neither the quaking fear of the new regiment or the biting sarcasm of the veteran soldiers. This is the first glimpse of the true internal strength that Henry searches for within himself. It is a glimpse of something that does not surface often among the soldiers who have found it, for Henry sees that the veterans often cover up this internal strength with a cocky sarcasm that is both imposing and difficult to see through.

Chapter 17

Fear of Battle 9: "Fear" of battle has perhaps given way to something more subtle; with Henry's acceptance of battlefield reality comes a more pervasive feeling of injustice that Henry felt on the previous day when he felt pushed along by his regiment. This feeling is one of a desperate helplessness, breeding an all-encompassing hatred. This sense of hate, ironically, helps Henry to achieve the storybook ideal of the warrior, and find inner peace.

Chapter 20

Fear of Battle 10: Throughout this entire sequence of charge, retreat, and charge, Henry and the rest of the men are spurred on by the sense of the collective that they had discovered the day before. Although this sense of the whole grips the men both for the advances and the retreats, Henry and Wilson's lead under the regimental flag becomes a rallying symbol for this collective and, ultimately, leads to their sense of success when they overtake the enemy.

Chapter 23

Fear of Battle 11: At this point, Henry's fear has given way almost completely, and has been replaced by a need for some type of justice in the face of Henry's own command, and against the enemy, be that through victory or death.



Topic Tracking: Maturation

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Chapter 1

Maturation 1: *The Red Badge of Courage* is a story of a psychological growth into manhood, through the medium of war. The characters, for the most part, remain generic nameless and faceless portraits of men. Henry, the main character, is almost all the time referred to as either "The Youthful Soldier," or "The Youth." In the first chapter, Henry's first musings are a starting point for his psychological growth - his inexperienced thoughts are full of theoretical ideals. He has no idea about the "truth" of war or manhood, but can only speculate from his schooling and reading.

Chapter 2

Maturation 2: Comparing this example of Henry's internal dilemma to previous ones, a cyclical thread begins to form. The psychological debate in the novel takes on a redundant air early on and keeps that trend throughout. Henry keeps going back and forth, struggling between what he thinks at any given time and what his emotions are telling him to do. Here, he second guesses everything he has deemed right up to this point - his enlistment, his desire to leave home against his mother's wishes, etc.

Chapter 3

Maturation 3: This is another twist on Henry's cyclical mental torture. He is proceeding from one overwhelming emotion to the next: from excitement, to doubt, to adulation, to self-pity, to fear, and finally, to helpless defeat.

Chapter 5

Maturation 4: Although Henry remains thoroughly internal in his thinking, he becomes, for the first time, something more than a helpless individual, able only to compare himself relative to others. He enters a place where the larger ideal is more important than individual survival. The change is momentary, however - as happens time and time again in the novel, a psychological step forward is accompanied by a large step backward, as Henry follows up this realization by fleeing.

Chapter 8

Maturation 5: After his flight from battle, Henry still struggles with two opposing forces: what his conscious mind is telling him to do in the moment (to run), and what the instilled emotional ideals about war are telling him (to value a Greek notion of courage and valor). He first tries to justify his flight through natural means: his actions were purely an instinct to survive. Despite these justifications, he feels ashamed around the



men who stayed in the battle long enough to be wounded. He is still a long way off from any inner reconciliation.

Chapter 10

Maturation 6: Although Henry seems to have made little headway on the inner maturity and courage he desires, he acknowledges that the societal pressures he feels are overwhelming to the point of superseding the desire for life itself. While the instinct to run, like the squirrel from the pine cone, is "natural" (and in that sense justifiable), competing social pressures are enough for Henry to face death willingly. The natural instinct to survive is overridden altogether - Henry actually feels as if he *wants* to be wounded, and that he *wants* to die. Such an outcome would be heroic in the eyes of others.

Chapter 14

Maturation 7: Henry first encounters the experiential manhood he has been struggling toward (albeit unknowingly). He sees new qualities in his friend that he perceives as good; he envies them and for the first time, sees a tangible glimpse of the inner strength he desires to find in himself.

Chapter 15

Maturation 8: Although the tone of this passage is still largely naïve and smacking of cocky, youthful inexperience, Henry has taken a turn for the better. He has seen the soft assurance of his friend Wilson, and is heading in that direction himself. His basis for the assurance he feels might be misplaced and founded on feelings of superiority, but Henry has undoubtedly undergone a huge psychological turn since he was first languishing in camp.

Chapter 17

Maturation 9: Henry comes to a major realization - that the mental boundaries and subsequent anguish he has put himself through were little more than that - mental boundaries. To this point, he has allowed his internal reflection to be mapped onto his perception of reality. When he thinks of the enemy as fierce, unstoppable beasts, he allows that belief to color his interpretation of events that transpire. Now, however, he realizes the discrepancy between belief and empirical reality. Henry has found the strength of the heroic ideal he once placed on a pedestal. His inner self has become less conflicted and confident.

Chapter 18

Maturation 10: Henry has suddenly come to a realization in this instant. His jumbled psychological interior has taken a back seat; the emphasis has gone from personal justification to humility in the face of reality. He seems to be developing qualities he saw in Wilson, when he changed. It isn't simply that the content of his thinking has changed, the entire *method* by which he perceives events has changed along with it.



Chapter 20

Maturation 11: The notion of manhood as a grim, calm sense of confidence is one echoed as the ideal throughout the novel; it is a far cry from the idyllic mental images of manhood and war that led Henry to the army in the first place. This confidence is reflected in the calm, down to earth demeanor Henry observed in his friend Wilson, and the same sense he feels after the battle, when he casts off his idealistic notions of bravery.

Chapter 24

Maturation 12: Henry has made his final step to maturity, and achieves the values he observed Wilson to have found earlier. He has tested himself and found that he can cast off the evils of battle and social expectations, and this has led him to an easy sense of confidence and inner peace that he labels as true manhood.



Topic Tracking: Peer Pressure/Morale

Chapter 1

Peer Pressure/Morale 1: A significant portion of the novel revolves around the reactions of the common enlisted soldiers to each other, and the realities of a camaraderie built by necessity out of war. Rumors play a large role: the soldiers squabble over the truth of a rumor about troop movements, a theme that holds throughout the book.

Peer Pressure/Morale 2: Henry becomes preoccupied with the thought of running from battle, a recurring theme. Henry worries about running, not simply because it would be cowardly, but more specifically, how the act of fleeing would be *perceived* by his comrades. He fears their ridicule more than he fears letting his country down.

Chapter 2

Peer Pressure/Morale 3: The emphasis is put not on the movement of the troops, but on the perceptions and fears of the men. The morale of the troops is based not on the officers' coaxing, but on the intricacies of events within the common ranks.

Chapter 3

Peer Pressure/Morale 4: This is the first instance in the novel where the individual (Henry's internal struggle and doubt) comes into conflict with the community (the movement of the regiment). Henry loses control of any individual thoughts, and is swept up in the compulsion of the group. This group will take on an importance in battle that Henry has never realized in all of his visions of individual valor to this point.

Chapter 4

Peer Pressure/Morale 5: The rumors of the men seem ostensibly to go against the reality of the group that says camaraderie is all. The boasts of the men seem to uphold the storybook myth of war - they would never admit that Bill Smithers went to the hospital because he was scared; instead, they maintain that it was an act committed out of some mythical patriotism.

Chapter 5

Peer Pressure/Morale 6: It is the *group* that becomes the be all and end all of the moment of battle - no idealistic image or governmental goal is at hand. The truth of the moment is in the men being able to stand together as one.

Chapter 6

Peer Pressure/Morale 7: Just as it is the group that creates the medium in which invincible warriors are created, so it is Henry's perception of the group that makes him



doubt his strength and run. He runs because everyone around him runs; it is only later that he tries to justify his flight on an individual level.

Chapter 8

Peer Pressure/Morale 8: Again, the social pressure of the situation dictates Henry's reaction; Henry is ashamed of his flight not because he saved himself from harm, but because what he has done does not conform to the societal ideal of how he *should* have acted.

Chapter 10

Peer Pressure/Morale 9: Although Henry is still ashamed at having no wound to show as proof of his valor, the Tattered Soldier's insistence on asking where his wound is reflects the need that the soldiers have for camaraderie. Even among virtual strangers, it is the notion of companionship that prevails above any individual act.

Chapter 11

Peer Pressure/Morale 10: The fear of derision that Henry feels leads him to attempt to come up with lies about where he was during the battle. What is perceived among the men as the truth, and the relation of that "truth" to the ideal of valor is vastly more important than what actually transpired or the larger governmental "aim" of the war.

Chapter 12

Peer Pressure/Morale 11: Even though Henry has perceived the storybook ideal of a soldier to be of paramount importance, the reaction of Henry's comrades once he is back in camp show that even above the ideal, simple human compassion prevails. Just as in the moment of battle, where the men standing as one creates the invincible warrior, Wilson's tears at Henry's return show that it is simple companionship that keeps the men fighting, and not their perceptions of each other relative to an unreachable ideal.

Chapter 15

Peer Pressure/Morale 12: Though Henry has begun the road to self-acceptance, the power for righteous comparison with Wilson proves irresistible. He feels that he is closer to the ideal for valor because he never acted upon the urge to admit his fear. This is another example of the cyclical nature of Henry's thinking, as he moves toward a sense of "manhood."

Chapter 16

Peer Pressure/Morale 13: With the general acceptance of battle among Henry's regiment comes a stark notion of reality - the storybook ideal has begun to crumble under the weight of what they have witnessed. In the absence of hope among the men, perhaps lies the basis for the bitter sarcasm Henry witnessed among the other veterans.



Chapter 17

Peer Pressure/Morale 14: Although the "truth" of battle lies in the actions of the group, the storybook ideal that the men hold has to do only with the individual. In praising Henry for his individual actions, the group is forgotten. It is the group's actions that allow Henry to be courageous on an individual level, but this is lost in the moment. This is perhaps how reality and the ideal that Henry read about in school become convoluted and the truth of battle covered up.

Chapter 21

Peer Pressure/Morale 15: The Greek-like warrior ideal proves to be an even more elusive thing than the men thought - even in the wake of apparent success and glory, the survivors of the charge still feel guilty and inadequate in the face of those they perceive to be their betters. There is always something left undone and unattainable, which perhaps is what the mocking veterans mean to tell them with their jeers.

Chapter 23

Peer Pressure/Morale 16: Again the societal pressures are evident, this time among the enemy. The last prisoner feels shame not because of impending harm, but because he will be perceived as a dishonored coward.



Chapter 1

The novel opens with an image of an army of the American Civil War camping on the banks of a river, and the gleam of its campfires at night. A Tall Soldier (Jim Conklin) walks to the river to wash his shirt and races back to his friends in the camp with a rumor about troop movements. He relates the story to his comrades, saying assuredly that they will be moving the next day, and sets off a flurry of debate, most notably from a man described as the Loud Soldier (Wilson). The Tall Soldier and the Loud Soldier come close to fighting over their contentions.

Topic Tracking: Peer Pressure/Morale 1

A Youthful Soldier (Henry Fleming) listens to their debate carefully, then goes to his hut and lies down to be alone with his thoughts on the subject of the movement and the possibility of battle.

"He had, of course, dreamed of battles all his life - of vague and bloody conflicts that had thrilled him with their sweep and fire. In visions he had seen himself in many struggles. He had imagined peoples secure in the shadow of his eagle-eyed prowess. But awake he had regarded battles as crimson blotches on the pages of the past. He had put them as things of the bygone with his thought-images of heavy crowns and high castles. There was a portion of the world's history which he had regarded as the time of wars, but it, he thought, had been long gone over the horizon and had disappeared forever." Chapter 1, pg. 5

Topic Tracking: Maturation 1

The youth sees the current Civil War in America as a play affair, far removed from his notion of idealized Greek struggles. Men were different than they had been, either "better, or more timid." He had wished to enlist several times, but his mother had tried hard to stop him, finding reasons for him to stay on the farm instead of chasing dreams of glory. Finally he had given in to the propaganda of the newspapers and gossip and had enlisted over his mother's misgivings. He was disappointed when her sendoff had not lived up to his Homeric expectations; she lectured him to be careful and when she cried as he left, he felt ashamed of his purposes. When he went to the seminary to say goodbye to his schoolmates, he had been the object of admiration; he had caught the eye of a dark-haired girl there who had been impressed with his dark blue uniform, and ever since then he had thought of her often. Afterward, he was sent to Washington and had been the subject of flattering approval and good treatment. Since then, he had endured many monotonous months in camp. He began to see his purpose as little more than a tiny piece in a vast demonstration of governmental posturing.

Topic Tracking: Fear of Battle 1

He had seen the enemy once - on guard duty one night, he talked to a picket on the other side of the river and had an amiable conversation. The veterans told tales of the



enemy, portraying either grizzled men of great valor or starving hordes that would kill for food. The youth kept in mind that this was all hearsay, and as a new recruit, he was a target.

In the hut, the youth began to mull over the question of whether or not he would run from battle when the time came. He acknowledged the possibility that he might run, and it bothered him greatly. He worried that he had no precedent on which to know the answer to this question; he was starting with nothing when it came to battle.

The Tall Soldier and the Loud Soldier came into the hut, and the youth asked the Tall Soldier, Jim Conklin, for confirmation on the battle rumors. Jim assured him that it would happen. Pressing, the youth asked Jim how he thought the regiment would fight, and whether anyone would run. Jim answered that they would fight all right, adding that in every regiment there would be a few who would run. The youth asked him if he ever thought that he himself would run. Jim answered that he might, that if everyone ran he would follow, but if everyone stayed to fight he would stay, too. The youth felt some reassurance at this, for he had assumed all of the other men untried in battle possessed a confidence that he somehow did not.

Topic Tracking: Peer Pressure/Morale 2



Chapter 2

The next morning revealed that the Tall Soldier had been mistaken - the army was not on the move. Men on both sides of the previous day's argument scoffed at him. For the youth this was irritating, for it had put the question of battle in the forefront of his mind. After days of deliberation, he decided the only way to know whether he would run would be to go into battle and watch himself to see what he would do. He began to hypothetically compare himself to his peers, and decided that he would like to have had another soldier whom he knew to think the way he did. Occasionally he tried to lure some other man into admitting his fears to him, but he always failed, and feared to declare his thoughts for fear of ridicule. Depending on the moment, he either thought his comrades were heroes innately superior to himself, or quaking cowards who wondered like himself even while they waxed on about the glory of battle. Above all, he thought the generals of the army painfully slow and inconsiderate to leave him in such mental agony.

One morning, however, the regiment was put on the move. They stood for a long time, and the youth watched a colonel on his enormous horse. A horseman drew up and talked to the colonel. The youth thought it must have concerned marching orders, but the horseman shouted something about cigars over his shoulder and the youth wondered at their inanity. Finally the regiment started off, the men all the while mumbling rumors. The youth could see the men stretched out in a line as far as he could see. As they marched, one man, Bill Smithers, fell and tried to retrieve his rifle, but another man stepped on his hand and injured his fingers; his comrades laughed. The youth took no part in the conversation, preferring to keep to himself and his internal debate. He expected to hear firing from in front of him, but he did not. The glee of the veteran regiments infected the youth's corps, to his dismay, and the youth's untried comrades spoke of victory as though they knew. It seemed as if the army had forgotten their true mission.

Topic Tracking: Peer Pressure/Morale 3

A fat soldier tried to steal a horse from a farmhouse as they passed by, but a young girl came out and the two had a tug-of-war over the horse. The men in the ranks loudly supported the girl's cause and shouted jeers at the soldier. The girl won the struggle and the men cheered. That night the regiments broke up and made camp; still the youth kept to himself. The night made him feel bouts of self-pity.

"He wished, without reserve, that he was at home again making the endless rounds from the house to the barn, from the barn to the fields, from the fields to the barn, from the barn to the house. He remembered he had often cursed the brindled cow and her mates, and had sometimes flung milking stools. But, from his present point of view, there was a halo of happiness about each of their heads, and he would have sacrificed all the brass buttons on the continent to have been enabled to return to them. He told himself that he was not formed for a soldier. And he mused seriously upon the radical



differences between himself and the men who were dodging implike around the fires."
Chapter 2, pg. 18

Topic Tracking: Maturation 2

As the youth, Henry, thought, he noticed the Loud Soldier, Wilson. Wilson asked what was wrong. Henry replied that nothing was wrong; Wilson began to speak loudly and positively about the upcoming battle. During the conversation, Henry asked Wilson if he thought he would end up running from battle. Wilson assured him that he wouldn't dream of such a thing, but strained to be modest. Henry responded sarcastically and Wilson stormed off. Henry was convinced again that he was the only one who was afraid.

Topic Tracking: Fear of Battle 2



Chapter 3

The next night, the army filed across the river. They camped that night without incident. During the march, the men complained of the distance and began to leave their heavy packs by the side of the road, keeping only food, ammunition, blankets, and water. But they did not yet quite look like veterans - they still formed a complete regiment, while the veteran companies never formed more than a brigade. They marched until the youth returned to his idea of a vast marching governmental demonstration. Then, one dawn he was awakened by the Tall Soldier and forced to run. The men were bewildered. Ahead of them they heard shots. The youth realized that even if he wanted to run away at that moment he could not, for the entire regiment was running with and around him in a mob. He lamented his enlistment. As they ran further, they heard artillery fire.

The youth ran on, eager for a scene of battle. In several little fields were knots of skirmishers. In one clearing there was a definite battle line. The regiment came upon the body of a dead soldier, bearded, lying on his back, the soles of his shoes worn almost as thin as writing paper. The youth looked into the dead man's face and wanted the time to walk around the body and stare into it, to read its eyes.

During the march, the youth felt his drive onward leaving; they were going too slowly and going seemingly nowhere. He had too much time to reflect, and came to the absurd conclusion that they were marching straight into a trap, that the moronic generals were going to sacrifice them. He wished to tell his comrades of his newly discovered truth that only he saw. He said nothing, again for fear of ridicule, but instead lagged behind until a lieutenant hit him with a sword and told him to hurry.

Topic Tracking: Peer Pressure/Morale 4

The men were halted, and many began to use surrounding wood, rocks, and dirt to erect little barricades to deflect bullets. The men debated on the theory surrounding the practice, but were ordered to withdraw from the area before they could be tested. Again and again this cycle went on through the day, the men alternately building barricades and having to move to a different area. The men were impatient; the Tall Soldier swore at the Loud Soldier when the loud one berated the generals' handling of the battle plan. Throughout the day, the Tall Soldier became calmer and never raised his voice; he accepted the marching and did not complain when forced to leave behind a barricade. The youth began to muse:

"Once he thought he had concluded that it would be better to get killed directly and end his troubles. Regarding death thus out of the corner of his eye, he conceived it to be nothing but rest, and he was filled with a momentary astonishment that he should have made an extraordinary commotion over the mere matter of getting killed. He would die; he would go to some place where he would be understood. It was useless to expect appreciation of his profound and fine senses from such men as the lieutenant. He must look to the grave for comprehension." Chapter 3, pg. 28



Topic Tracking: Maturation 3

Topic Tracking: Fear of Battle 3

The sound of skirmishes and artillery grew to a roar and a nearby brigade went into action. The youth stared intensely. Suddenly, the Loud Soldier tapped the youth on the shoulder and said that he was convinced he was going to be killed that day. He gave the youth a yellow package of letters and keepsakes to deliver to his family. The Loud Soldier was trembling and turned away as he handed over the package.

Topic Tracking: Fear of Battle 4

Chapter 4

The men continued to fling rumors as they watched others go into action from the edge of a grove. The men talked about Bill Smithers, the man whose fingers had been stepped on during the first march out of camp. He had gone to the hospital as a result, they said, not because he was scared, but because he was mad at having been injured by a comrade instead of sacrificing it to his country.

Topic Tracking: Peer Pressure/Morale 5

The noise of battle became louder and drew closer until they were amidst bullets. The lieutenant of the youth's company was shot through the hand; he swore and the regiment laughed nervously. The swearing eased their tension because it was so conventional. A captain helped him bind his wound with a handkerchief and they argued on how to do it correctly.

The youth's regiment watched the battle in front of them. Suddenly the battle flag of the fighting regiment sank slowly, as if dying, and the regiment retreated out of the smoke to jeers from the veteran Union soldiers waiting in reserve on the flanks of the youth's regiment. The youth's regiment, full of untried men, was horrified at the retreat. The officers of the retreating regiment were trying desperately to check the retreating flow of men by standing their ground and flailing with their swords and fists. It was to no avail. The looks on the faces of the retreating men was appalling. The men, including the youth, who were waiting in reserve, began to quake with fear.

Topic Tracking: Fear of Battle 5

The youth had one thought during the chaos - throughout the retreat had had not glimpsed the great fearful monster that he had built up in his mind. He resolved that he wanted to see it up close - and then run away faster than these men had.

Chapter 5

The youth's regiment waited. Suddenly the youth's thoughts flashed to a scene from his childhood - the day that the circus would come to his town in the spring. He remembered the faded chariots, the dirty woman with a white horse, and the long lines of waiting people.

Someone shouted that the enemy was charging; the reserve lines readied their cartridges. The Tall Soldier took out a red handkerchief and knotted it around his neck. A swarm of men rushed toward them, led by a flag tilted forward. The youth realized that he could not remember having loaded his rifle. A general wheeled in on his horse and screamed to a colonel that they had to stop the oncoming charge. The colonel stammered an assent. The youth's company's captain coaxed the men softly and the youth sweat profusely. He saw the enemy and forgot to think of his rifle being loaded. He brought the rifle into position before he could think and fired a shot.

"He suddenly lost concern for himself, and forgot to look at a menacing fate. He became not a man but a member. He felt that something of which he was a part - a regiment, an army, a cause, or a country - was in crisis. He was welded into a common personality which was dominated by a single desire. For some moments he could not flee no more than a little finger can commit a revolution from a hand." Chapter 5, pg. 34

Topic Tracking: Maturation 4

The youth felt suddenly to be part of a new fraternity born of battle and death. He became automated - he did not think, but shot and reloaded mechanically. His eyes began to hurt and there was a constant roar in his ear - the youth felt a rage coming on, like a pestered caged animal, and cursed the ineffectiveness of his single-shot rifle. He was angry not at the oncoming men, but at the choking smoke and heat. He fought not for the country, but for respite. The men were in every possible attitude - very unlike the picturesque Greek ideal created in the youth's mind. Even the officers failed - they darted in and out of the line and barked orders. Behind the battle line, the lieutenant of the youth's company had stopped a man who had fled after the first volley of bullets. The man blubbered as the lieutenant pummeling him with his fists. He forced the man back into the ranks.

Topic Tracking: Peer Pressure/Morale 6

Here and there men crumpled up wounded or dead along the line. The captain of the youth's company had been killed early on in the action. Finally the firing dwindled; the charge had been repulsed. Some men cheered, while others were silent. The youth felt joy at having time to look around him and drink from his canteen. He watched as artillery began to fire in the direction of his line; he felt all the cannons to be aimed at him. Wounded men limped to the rear. The youth realized that there was fighting going on all over the fields around him. He wondered at the fact that nature could continue to go on with its simple processes amid such chaos.



Chapter 6

The youth was thrown into a sense of self-satisfaction at having passed what he thought the most supreme of trials. He thought himself magnificent for having fought thus. He spoke tenderly to the men around him and helped a man bind a wounded shin. All of a sudden, to the men's disbelief, the regrouped enemy mounted another charge. Shells began to explode around them as they saw the tilted flag coming again. The men around the youth began to complain - one lamented over the prodigious fate of Bill Smithers and his crushed fingers. The firing began, and the youth felt weak and nervously jaded. He tried to peer into the blurred mass in front of him, and began to exaggerate the endurance, strength, and valor of the enemy. He shot once into an oncoming cluster of men, then lowered his rifle.

"To the youth it was an onslaught of redoubtable dragons. He became like the man who lost his legs at the approach of the red and green monster. He waited in sort of a horrified, listening attitude. He seemed to shut his eyes and wait to be gobbled."

Chapter 6, pg. 41

Topic Tracking: Fear of Battle 6

Men around the youth, who had seemed so brave moments before, threw down their rifles and fled without shame. Danger seemed to encroach from all sides; the youth ran like the others toward the rear, with thoughts of possible horrors contorting his face. The lieutenant, raging, tried to stop him with his sword, to no avail. The youth ran blindly and feared death coming from behind worse than that from in front. He heard men running behind him and felt better, for they would be targeted before he could be. Once a shell flew over his head and exploded in front of him, barring the way. He threw himself to the ground and then sprang up and kept running. He came upon a battery of artillery and marveled at the calmness with which the men loaded and fired the cannons. Scrambling up a hill he watched a reserve brigade go into action to support a skirmish - the youth thought they were either some wondrous breed of men or a bunch of fools.

Topic Tracking: Peer Pressure/Morale 7

Later, the youth came upon a division general seated magnificently upon his horse. The youth tried to get near enough to listen to what he said. The youth had visions of the general asking him for his opinion on the battle; he felt he had important information on the army's imminent defeat. He hated the general and felt he wanted to thrash him for his blatant ignorance. The general barked orders at messengers, and, watching the battle, cried for joy when he saw that an advance had been held off. He cried so loudly that his horse startled; he kicked and swore at it.



Chapter 7

The youth cringed as he realized that he had been wrong about the battle; his side had won after all. He heard cheering from the lines and felt angry and cheated. He had justified his flight by convincing himself that annihilation approached, that the selfless camaraderie he had felt had given way to a duty to save his individual self. He had convinced himself that his action was a strategic move that had done the army good, for the officers could fit the little pieces back together later. Now the thought that his line had withstood the charge made him bitter. His better judgment had been bested by the ignorant droves that had not run; he feared the derision of his comrades when he returned to camp.

Filled with indulgent self-pity, the youth wandered into the woods. He got caught often in the thick underbrush and swore as he moved away from the sound of battle. Soon the battle was far off and he heard only the noises of nature. He suddenly thought of nature as a woman, with an aversion to tragedy. He threw a pine cone at a squirrel, who ran away skittishly up a tree. The youth looked to this as justification for his actions: nature had shown him that the natural way of dealing with danger was to run. The squirrel was living proof that the youth and nature, the higher power, saw eye to eye.

The youth walked through a swamp and saw an animal leap in and come out with a fish. Going deeper, he reached a place where the boughs over head looked like a chapel. Inside, he stopped as he saw a dead soldier, sitting with his back against a tree. The uniform was faded from blue to green, the mouth was yellowed and open, and ants crawled over the gray face. The youth retreated, looking all the while at the face for fear it would come to life. He fled with a vision of the ants swarming on the man's face.



Chapter 8

Suddenly, in the silence of twilight, the sound of battle raged, and the youth ran toward it. He thought it ironic to be heading back toward the battle, but he told himself it was a spectacle worth seeing. The sounds of the woods had stopped as if in deference to the battle. The roar made the youth think that the battle in which he had fought was nothing but preliminary skirmishing; he doubted that he had seen a real battle at all. He thought it good, though, that he and his comrades had taken the charge so seriously, for without delusions of grandeur, no one would have fought at all. The thick underbrush held the youth back as if trying to keep him from death, but he persisted to the edge of the wood, wishing to see the spectacle at as close a range as possible. He walked through a field where a skirmish had been fought earlier; the ground was strewn with debris and dead men and the youth felt he was invading on the propriety the dead held on the place. From his position behind the front lines, he could see a stream of wounded men moving in a line to the rear. He could hear their wails; one man was singing ironically and the wounded limped to the tune.

One of the wounded men walked along, but already had the gray look of a dead man on his face; he pressed bloody hands to his wound. Other men walked sullenly, angry at their wounds. A wounded officer swore at the two privates who carried him. The youth joined this procession. The line was broken up often by orderlies who rode through on horses. A Tattered Soldier was walking next to the youth and listening to the stories of another man. After a while, the man approached the youth and tried to be sociable - he had a wound both in his head and in his arm, both bandaged with blood-soaked rags. The youth was embarrassed to talk to the man because he had not felt that he had done his part in the battle. The Tattered Soldier pursued the youth and asked him where he was wounded. The youth stammered and blushed, then slid away from the Tattered Soldier through the crowd.

Topic Tracking: Peer Pressure/Morale 8

Topic Tracking: Maturation 5



Chapter 9

The youth fell back until he could not see the Tattered Soldier, but he was still amid wounded men who reminded him of his perceived cowardice. He looked around to see if the men were judging him.

"At times he regarded the wounded soldiers in an envious way. He conceived persons with torn bodies to be peculiarly happy. He wished that he, too, had a wound, a red badge of courage." Chapter 9, pg. 55

Back in the line he saw the spectral, dead-looking soldier at his side. He looked so much like death that a crowd had gathered and walked with him. He futilely tried to get the crowd to leave him alone. He seemed to be looking around for a place to die. Suddenly the youth started - he realized that this spectral man was Jim Conklin, the Tall Soldier from his company. They greeted each other and the youth muttered desperate condolences. The Tall Soldier said he thought the youth had been killed, then muttered repeatedly that he had been shot. The Tall Soldier grew paler and told the youth that what he was afraid of was not death, but that he would fall down and be run over by an artillery wagon. The youth swore he would take care of his friend, but the Tall Soldier continued to plead with him unhearing. The youth could not speak for his uncontrollable sobbing.

The Tattered soldier was at the youth's side again. He suggested they take the Tall Soldier out of the road, for a battery of artillery was coming down the road. The youth guided the barely conscious but still walking Tall Soldier into the adjacent fields. Suddenly the Tall Soldier took off running toward a group of bushes. The youth and the Tattered Soldier followed, but the Tall Soldier yelled that he wished to be left alone above the protests of the other two.

"The tall soldier turned and, lurching dangerously, went on. The youth and the tattered soldier followed, sneaking as if whipped, feeling unable to face the stricken man if he should again confront them. They began to have thoughts of a solemn ceremony. There was something rite-like in the movements of the doomed soldier. And there was a resemblance in him to a devotee of a mad religion, blood-sucking, muscle-wrenching, bone-crushing. They were awed and afraid. They hung back lest he have at command a dreadful weapon." Chapter 9, pg. 58

Then the man stood motionless; he had found the spot he sought. There was silence, then the man's chest began to heave violently. The youth fell to his knees and sobbed. The Tall Soldier repeated his mantra of his wish not to be touched. After a silence, the Tall Soldier died in a writhing epileptic fit that sent him to the ground. The man's jacket fell away; his torso looked to have been ravaged by wolves. The youth was livid with rage at the battle.



Chapter 10

The Tattered Soldier mused on the nerves and strength of being shown by the Tall Soldier. The Youthful Soldier brooded, but his companion reminded him that Tall Soldier was gone, and that the most important thing was to save themselves. The Tattered Soldier motioned to his wounded arm and the youth asked him haltingly if he, too, was going to die. The man responded by saying that all he needed was a bed and some pea soup.

The two left the Tall Soldier's body in the grass; as they walked, the Tattered Soldier began to complain about his wounds. He assured the youth that he would not die - he *could* not die, he said, not on account of all the children he had back home. The man smiled at this as if in fun. He said if he did die, he wouldn't do it like the Tall Soldier had - he would just flop down instead. The man kept talking and asked again where the youth was shot; he went on without giving the youth a chance to answer. He said the youth's wound might be mostly internal and that he should watch out; he recounted a story of a man named John, who had been shot right in the head and had insisted that nothing was wrong right up until he fell down dead.

Topic Tracking: Peer Pressure/Morale 9

The youth angered at the rambling speech, and embarrassed at his lack of a wound, told the Tattered Soldier to leave him alone. He hated his perceived accuser then - he said goodbye and walked off. The man, flustered and reeling from his wounds, stammered incoherently. He muttered about Tom Jamison, the man in his company who had told him he was shot. He called the youth Tom Jamison; in reply, the youth left him wandering aimlessly alone in the fields.

"He [the youth] now thought that he wished he was dead. He believed that he envied those men whose bodies lay strewn over the grass of the fields and on the fallen leaves of the forest.

The simple questions of the tattered man had been knife thrusts to him. They asserted a society that probes pitilessly at secrets until all is apparent. His late companion's chance persistency made him feel that he could not keep his crime concealed in his bosom. It was sure to be brought plain by one of those arrows that which cloud that air and are constantly pricking, discovering, proclaiming, those things which are willed forever to be hidden. He admitted that he could not defend himself against this agency. It was not within the power of vigilance." Chapter 10, pg. 63

Topic Tracking: Maturation 6



Chapter 11

The youth heard the noises of battle growing louder, and as he rounded a hillock, saw hordes of retreating wagons, horses, and men. This gave him a sense of vindication in his decision to flee. Suddenly, a column of men appeared going the other direction on the road - they were rushing headlong toward the battle and threw the retreating ranks out of the way as they charged forward. The youth's heart dropped; he could have wept in his longing to be like these men whom he considered some type of chosen beings. He wondered how these men had attained such obvious greatness, and wished to switch perceived lives with one of them. This thought made him almost start toward their ranks to join them in their cause, but he stopped short, full of doubts. He debated with himself until he had been drained of his burst of courage.

Topic Tracking: Fear of Battle 7

For the first time, the youth attended to his body, and found that he had a scorching thirst and that every bone in his body ached. His feet pained him, and in his stomach he felt a deep, aching hunger. He felt weak and began to see green patches floating before his eyes. This convinced him even more fully of his incapacity as a true soldier. He stayed, however, near the battle like a moth to a flame. He wanted to know who had won. He acknowledged reluctantly that a defeat of the Union forces would be good for him; in the resultant splintering of the forces, no one would learn of his flight. In his hypothetical reverie, he saw that a defeated army could regroup in a matter of weeks and be ready to fight. The public would deride and ruin the general of the defeated army, but the youth told himself that he cared not at all about the generals and trusted the opinion of the public very little. Also, in a defeat, he could point to his early flight as the simple utilization of his superior powers of perception and thus be vindicated.

If the army went on to a glorious victory, however, he would be lost for any chance at a successful life - his badge of dishonor would hound him always. He wished he was dead again, but felt contempt for those already dead; even if they had died intending to flee or had been killed by chance, history would reward them with traditional accolades of glory. He discounted his vain hopes - he had been taught that the Union army could never lose, and he believed it. He began to think up a convincing lie about his battle experience to tell his comrades, but threw all of them out as flimsy and vulnerable. He imagined the scene of constant derision upon his return to camp. He imagined that he would become a new slang term for cowardice in the face of battle.

Topic Tracking: Peer Pressure/Morale 10



Chapter 12

The same ranks of men that the youth had perceived as so great came tumbling back in retreat as soon as they hit the battle line. The youth was horrified; he threw aside his philosophical anguish and watched as the fight was lost. The youth found himself in the middle of the retreating ranks. The youth yelled questions at the men as they ran past, but no one heard. Finally the youth grabbed a running man by the arm and wheeled him around. The man screamed to let him go, and the youth tried to ask him what had happened. The man responded by swinging his rifle around and crushing it against the youth's head. The youth's legs collapsed from under him. He struggled up several times only to fall again, before getting to his hands and knees. He crawled, looking for a secluded spot like the Tall Soldier had. His head was covered in blood. He heard scattered officers screaming oaths at the infantry, and artillery blasted in the background.

It was now dusk, and the youth went on amid the clutter of overturned wagons and dead horses. His wound didn't hurt much any more but he moved slowly nonetheless for fear of pain. He concentrated on his wound and decided that the absence of pain was worse than the pain itself; he imagined invisible fingers clutching at his brain. He began to think once again of home - his mother's cooking, the kitchen at home, swimming in a pond in the summer with friends. He became weary, and debated whether he should lie down. Suddenly, the youth heard a man with a cheery voice behind him, who offered to help him on his way to the rear. The two began to walk together. The man talked incessantly of the day's battle, and how jumbled up the regiments had become. He spoke of his friend, a sergeant name Jack, who had been distracted in his vigil for the Confederate troops by a soldier asking directions. When Jack turned to tell the man off, he got shot in the side of the head.

The youth's companion wound them through the forest and asked questions of guards and patrols to find the youth's regiment. The youth remained exhausted, his chin on his chest. When they found the youth's regiment, the youth felt the man's hand clasp his shoulder and bid him farewell. The youth realized that he hadn't seen the man's face.



Chapter 13

The Youth walked toward the regimental fire indicated by the man with the cheery voice. As he approached, the fears of ridicule from his peers that plagued him all day returned. He wanted to hide, but found he was too tired. He walked up, but a guard pointed a rifle at him and told him to halt. The youth recognized him as Wilson, the Loud Soldier. Wilson greeted the youth warmly, and almost cried, telling the youth he had thought him dead. The youth suddenly felt like collapsing; he worked quickly to produce a story that seemed vaguely believable. He told Wilson he had been shot in the head. Wilson went immediately to get Corporal Simpson to help the youth.

Topic Tracking: Peer Pressure/Morale 11

The corporal approached, surprised to see the youth alive. After an exchange over the youth's whereabouts during the day, the corporal took him to the fire to take care of him. Wilson told the officer to wrap the youth in his blanket. Looking at the wound, the corporal confirmed the erroneous idea that the youth had been grazed by a bullet. He acknowledged, however, that the wound looked peculiar, as if the youth had been hit by a club, but he made no further inquiries. He said the wound would swell, but otherwise he would probably be fine.

The youth sat up and looked around, taking note of the soldiers around him - they staggered around exhausted, as if drunk, or slept profoundly. After a time, the Loud Soldier joined the youth, having been relieved from duty. He became the youth's makeshift nurse, giving him cold coffee to drink and wrapping a damp bandage around the youth's head wound. He then grabbed his two blankets, spreading a rubber one on the ground for the youth, and wrapped him in a woolen one. At the Loud Soldier's request, the youth flopped down, but then popped up, asking the Loud soldier where he was going to sleep. The Loud Soldier replied that he would sleep next to the youth; when the youth protested that his friend would have nothing to sleep on, the Loud Soldier told him to shut up and stop making a fool of himself. The youth settled down and fell asleep in the manner of the men around him.



Chapter 14

The youth awoke at dawn and felt as if he had been asleep for a thousand years. Already he could hear fighting in the distance. He started up and cried out when he saw the forms of sleeping men around him in strange postures; he believed himself to be in the house of the dead, and that all those sleeping men were corpses that would start up and make a terrible row. He recovered himself and realized that his vision was not reality but prophecy. He noticed the Loud Soldier already awake and tending to the fire.

The Loud Soldier asked the youth how he felt; he replied that he felt bad - his head had swollen and felt like a melon. The Loud Soldier helped him with the bandage until the youth exploded at him in pain. The Loud Soldier suggested they get some breakfast; he gave the youth coffee and hurriedly roasted meat. The youth suddenly realized a profound change in his comrade since their first days wallowing in camp. He saw that his temper was no longer short; he was in reality no longer the Loud Soldier he once was. He showed a quiet confidence in all his actions.

"The youth reflected. He had been used to regarding his comrade as a blatant child with an audacity grown from his inexperience, thoughtless, headstrong, jealous, and filled with tinsel courage. A swaggering babe accustomed to strut in his own dooryard. The youth wondered where had been born these new eyes; when his comrade had made the great discovery that there were many men who would refuse to be subjected by him. Apparently, the other had now climbed a peak of wisdom from which he could perceive himself as a very wee thing. And the youth saw that ever after it would be easier to live in his friend's neighborhood." Chapter 14, pg. 83

Topic Tracking: Maturation 7

As they ate, the two discussed the day's upcoming battle. Wilson asked the youth if he thought they'd fight well. The youth replied that two days before Wilson would have gone running headlong into the battle without question as to the army's chances. Wilson was taken aback, but then agreed, saying that "in those days" he had been a fool - he spoke as if "those days" were years ago. In the course of the discussion, the youth remembered that Jim Conklin was dead; he told Wilson so. Wilson started, then held a somber moment for the man.

Topic Tracking: Fear of Battle 8

At a nearby fire, two soldiers were teasing a large man, causing him to spill coffee. The three postured as if about to fight. Wilson went over to them and pacified the situation calmly like a true diplomat. In a few minutes, the three antagonists were talking like friends again. Wilson walked back to the youth, telling him amusedly that one of the men had challenged him to a fight after the battle that day. The youth marveled at how Wilson had changed. After a time, Wilson said that the regiment had lost over half its men the day before and he had thought them dead, but that they kept coming back after

fighting with other regiments, as the youth had. The youth shrugged the remark off hurriedly and without response.



Chapter 15

The regiment was formed into ranks on a nearby lane. The youth suddenly remembered the yellow package that Wilson had given him the day before, convinced he was going to die. It made him start and he called out Wilson's name to tell him, but thought better of it. He wished instead to use the package of letters as a bit of leverage against his friend. If Wilson were really to question him about the youth's actions the day before, he could easily put an end to the examination by embarrassing him with the package and reminding him of his weak sobs. He felt superior to Wilson and his self-pride returned. Since his acts of perceived cowardice were performed in the proverbial dark, he could still be considered a man.

Topic Tracking: Peer Pressure/Morale 12

The youth did not think much of the battle ahead. He felt that the lesson of the previous day was that retribution for a wrong could not be counted upon - he felt that he could leave the coming day to chance.

"Besides, a faith in himself had secretly blossomed. 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. Also, they were inaccurate; they did not sting with precision. A stout heart often defied, and defying, escaped." Chapter 15, pg. 87

Topic Tracking: Maturation 8

The youth remembered the men he had seen running from battle the previous day; he remembered the terror on their faces. He was not like them, he said - he had fled with dignity. Wilson called out the youth's name. Embarrassed, he asked the youth for the package of letters back. The shame Wilson obviously felt gave the youth even more confidence. He suddenly imagined himself at home, telling vibrant stories of war to his mother and the girl at the seminary that had caught his eye.



Chapter 16

The troops heard artillery join the constant sounds of muskets as they stood in formation. The youth's regiment relieved a command that had manned a series of trenches along a line of woods. The men sat, indifferent toward the battle in front of them - Wilson sat down and fell asleep. The youth wanted to shout an ironic joke to his comrades, but the cannon fire was too loud. Rumors flew down the line, but they were different from the previous day - they were no longer hopeful. The regiment was moved and they could glimpse the enemy cheering through the woods; the youth exploded in oaths against his own Union generals. He was surprised at his own words, for he hadn't deemed it good to denounce his own side. The youth felt guilty for a moment, then regained courage and put down his own command again. A nearby man accused the youth of being an egoist, and the youth was convinced that his cowardice on the previous day had been discovered. The man, although he seemed ignorant of the truth, brought the youth back to a sense of modesty.

Topic Tracking: Peer Pressure/Morale 13

Finally, the fluctuating sound of battle was heard in the woods. Artillery from the rear shot over their heads. The youth grumbled that the regiment was always being shuffled around without any sense of rhyme or reason, led through impassable briars. Wilson suddenly turned to the youth and tried ineffectively to calm him by saying everything would be all right in the end. The company's lieutenant swore at the two of them for wasting their breath when they were about to fight. He seemed ready to pounce on any disobedient man. The regiment haltingly stood its ground as the sounds of battle grew to a roar.



Chapter 17

The youth felt hunted by the enemy, dogged by a mass that would not let him rest in the midst of his exhaustion.

"But those other men seemed never to grow weary; they were fighting with their old speed. He had a wild hate for the relentless foe. Yesterday, when he had imagined the universe to be against him, he had hated it, little gods and big gods; to-day he hated the army of the foe with the same great hatred. He was not going to be badgered of his life, like a kitten chased by boys, he said. It was not well to drive men into final corners; at those moments they could all develop teeth and claws." Chapter 17, pg. 94

Topic Tracking: Fear of Battle 9

The youth leaned to Wilson and said as much to him. Wilson replied that if they kept being chased, they would be driven into the river. This statement enraged the youth. After a pause the battle moved directly in front of the regiment, which opened fire. As on the day before, the youth wished that his rifle was a wand of mass destruction. He imagined, however, that it was nothing but an impotent stick, and at this he flew into a hateful rage. He lost all sense of himself and did not know he was standing until he lost his balance and fell. He got up immediately; the only fleeting thought conscious to his cluttered brain was to wonder if he had been shot. The idea that he did not believe his army could win made him fight harder.

When the youth saw the enemy fall back, he ran forward like a dog attacking; he retreated sullenly when compelled. Once, the enemy retreated fully and the Union line ceased to fire; the youth went right on loading and shooting, blind in hatred. The others laughed at him and stared. The lieutenant praised the youth wholeheartedly for his bravery. The whole company looked at him with awe. Wilson came to him and asked if he was all right; the youth responded that he was fine.

"These incidents made the youth ponder. It was revealed to him that he had been a barbarian, a beast. He had fought like a pagan who defends his religion. Regarding it, he saw that it was fine, wild, and, in some ways, easy. He had been a tremendous figure, no doubt. By this struggle he had overcome obstacles which he had admitted to be mountains. They had fallen like paper peaks, and he was now what he called a hero. And he had not been aware of the process. He had slept, and, awakening, found himself a knight." Chapter 17, pg. 97

Topic Tracking: Maturation 9

The youth soaked up the stares of his comrades. The lieutenant paced and fidgeted deliriously, and addressed all profound insights to the youth. The entire regiment began to believe itself the greatest in all the army, and they sang and laughed their own praises.

Topic Tracking: Peer Pressure/Morale 14



Chapter 18

Although the regiment was given a rest from the fight, the din of battle shook the forest. One man, Jimmie Rogers, was screaming and thrashing on the ground, having been shot through the body. Wilson thought he had seen a stream nearby, and obtained permission to collect water. The men showered their canteens on him, asking him to fill them all. The youth accompanied his friend, wishing to throw his aching body into the supposed stream. The pair went to the site but found no water there; they began to retrace their steps. On the way back they encountered a general, the commander of their division, on his horse; a second officer, riding like a cowboy, came up and spoke to him. Wilson and the youth stood by, as close as possible so as to hear what was said. The officer told the general that the enemy was forming for a charge directed at the Union general Whitterside; he feared the Union line would not hold in its current position. The general asked what troops could be spared to reinforce, and the officer replied that he could only spare the 304th, the youth's regiment, but they fought "like a lot 'a mule drivers." The general assented to the movement, saying the charge would start in five minutes. He said he didn't think many of the "mule drivers" would make it back alive.

"These happenings had occupied an incredibly short time, yet the youth felt that in them he had been made aged. New eyes were given to him. And the most startling thing was to learn suddenly that he was very insignificant. The officer spoke of the regiment as if he referred to a broom. Some part of the woods needed sweeping, perhaps, and he merely indicated a broom in a tone properly indifferent to its fate. It was war, no doubt, but it appeared strange." Chapter 18, pg. 101

Topic Tracking: Maturation 10

The pair found their regiment, and their lieutenant was furious at the amount of time they had taken. He stopped when he saw their expressions; they told him they were going to charge. The lieutenant stammered in disbelief. Several soldiers didn't believe them. The youth announced that he wished to die in the advance. Then they could see the cowboy-riding officer talking to a colonel in their regiment. In a few minutes officers appeared and began tightening the men into a more compact mass. The youth and Wilson looked at each other knowingly; they were the only ones who knew how little the commanders thought of their regiment.



Chapter 19

Unaware of the chain of command which made it happen, the regiment seemed to gasp as it began to move forward. After the moment it took to comprehend, The Youth began to run with the rest. He believed the charge to be a simple matter of getting an unpleasant necessity out of the way quickly. As the regiment emerged from the woods, the other side of the clearing erupted in gunfire. The regiment ran as one until the underbrush broke it up into small, detached clusters of men. Shells and bullets from the enemy left a trail of bodies in the regiment's wake. The youth was painfully alert - he perceived everything, mechanically, save the logic of events that had brought him there. The charge and the death made the men into delirious, raging hordes. Soon, though, the oncoming bullets slowed the rushing regiment like a wind; the barbarians became men again.

As the regiment slowed to a stop, the fire of the enemy roared louder. The lieutenant bellowed at the men to move. He swore at the uncomprehending men. Suddenly, Wilson dropped down and fired a shot at the woods. This spurred the men, and they began to fire, then move forward again. The regiment came to a final open space and stopped again in the preceding trees, while the lieutenant bellowed oaths again. In his screaming, he addressed himself to the youth, grabbing and pulling him by the collar while telling him to come on. The youth shook him off, then followed the lieutenant down the front line. They were both trying to spur the men on. The regimental flag moved forward and the men followed hesitantly, then scurried to reach the opposing woods before bullets could find them. The youth ran low like an insane football player.

"Within him, as he hurled himself forward, was born a love, a despairing fondness for this flag which was near him. It was a creation of beauty and invulnerability. It was a goddess, radiant, that bended its form with an imperious gesture to him. It was a woman, red and white, hating and loving, that called him with the voice of his hopes. Because no harm could come to it he endowed it with power. He kept near, as if it could be a saver of lives, and an imploring cry went from his mind." Chapter 19, pg. 108

Suddenly, the color sergeant, who carried the flag, crumpled to the ground. The youth and Wilson grabbed the flag simultaneously and tried to wrench it from the corpse's grip. For a moment, the corpse seemed to pull back, unwilling to relinquish the flag; in an instant they had it, but the dead man's arm landed heavily on Wilson's shoulder as if in protest.



Chapter 20

After the altercation with the flag, Wilson and the youth turned to see their crumbling regiment slowly retreating. Officers screamed at them. The two friends fought over possession of the flag, wishing to declare themselves fit to put themselves in the way of further harm. The youth finally pushed his friend away and took the flag. The regiment fell back to the trees, then started slowly forward and met with horrendous fire. The men seemed stunned and broken by an impenetrable wall. There were apparent feelings of betrayal against the officers. At the back of the regiment, however, men continued to shoot toward the enemy line. The lieutenant had his back to the enemy and was closest to the enemy line. He had been shot in the arm and swore in pain when he forgot his arm and tried to gesture with it.

The youth had thought of a glorious revenge on the officer who had called his regiment a lot of mule drivers, but he saw that it would now do no good - the regiment had faltered at the clearing and the current retreat was one of shame. He consoled himself by keeping the flag erect, and with the lieutenant, beseeched his fellow men not to give up. It was to no avail: the few men with resolve to fight were disheartened by the many men slipping quickly back in retreat, and by the cries of the wounded left behind. At one point, the men at the head of the retreat turned against their comrades, screaming they were being fired upon from the rear. This created a horror-stricken panic in the men, who ran about looking for a route of escape, while men continually dropped from enemy bullets. The youth walked serenely and assumed the role of color-bearer, though he trembled uncontrollably. Wilson came up to him and dejectedly told him it was the end. The youth called him a damn fool and told him to shut up. The youth noticed that the lieutenant was standing motionless, using his sword as a cane. He was no longer swearing.

Suddenly, the lieutenant cried out that the enemy was charging. The enemy was so close now that the youth could see their features. Their uniforms were light gray and new looking. The enemy had been moving forward cautiously, and at the lieutenant's words, the Union regiment had opened fire. The two bodies of men then began to exchange volleys of bullets like boxers. The Union line was firing in desperate revenge. The youth sat down in despair with the flag between his knees. His only consolation was that if the regiment was to be overrun, he would have been taken with bristles forward. Eventually, to the youth's surprise, the enemy grew weak and retreated. Men danced and shouted with joy. The odds, at one time having seemed stacked against them, no longer seemed impossible.

"The impetus of enthusiasm was theirs again. They gazed about them with looks of uplifted pride, feeling new trust in the grim, always confident weapons in their hands. And they were men." Chapter 20, pg. 115

Topic Tracking: Maturation 11

Topic Tracking: Fear of Battle 10



Chapter 21

The field in front of the youth's regiment was now empty. They realized they were free, sighed collectively, then hurried nervously backward. The retreat was paradoxical - men who had stood steadfast in battle now showed their anxiety, perhaps dreading to be killed in insignificant ways. As they approached their own lines, an obviously veteran regiment shouted sarcastic comments at them. One man challenged the lounging veterans to fist fights, but the lieutenant restrained him. The youth felt stung by the remarks.

"From under his creased brows he glowered with hate at the mockers. He meditated on a few revenges. Still, many in the regiment hung their heads in criminal fashion, so that it came to pass that the men trudged with a certain heaviness, as if they bore upon their bended shoulders the coffin of their honor." Chapter 21, pg. 117

Topic Tracking: Peer Pressure/Morale 15

Turning to look at the field over which they had charged, the youth realized that the great distance he thought he had traveled was actually trivial, as was the time that had elapsed. The fact that there was perhaps some justification to the taunts of the veterans angered him. The youth, however, took satisfaction in the memory of his deeds. As he thought, the general who had branded the regiment as "mule drivers" rode up. He began to rage at colonel MacChesnay, who had led the charge, reproaching him for making a mess of things by stopping one hundred feet short of success. At the same time, he reproached the regiment's men for being poor fighters. The colonel acted injured, then shrugged and told the general they had gone as far as they could. The general departed in a rage.

The lieutenant then spoke up, saying that if the general thought the regiment fought poorly, he was a damned fool. News of the reproach went down the line, however, and weighed on the men like cuffed animals. Wilson was infuriated, but the youth rationally explained that the general had simply made an assumption on the regiment's fighting and jumped to a conclusion. They were debating, when a group of men came up and said excitedly that they had news. They said that they had overheard that colonel and the lieutenant talking; the colonel had wanted to know who the boy carrying the flag was. The lieutenant had replied that it was the youth, Henry Fleming, and that Wilson had been at his side at the head of the charge. The colonel had said confidently that Fleming and Wilson deserved to be major generals. The youth and Wilson called the men liars, but flushed with pride all the same. They quickly forgot all of their prior disappointments and felt nothing but affection for the colonel and the lieutenant.



Chapter 22

When another attack began with an enemy charge from the woods, the youth stood tranquilly and confidently erect. He watched the fighting intently, as two regiments from each side met each other's fire and a brigade marched toward a wood. After a time, the dark blue Union forces forced the gray Confederates into retreat; they cheered and the flags moved as if laughing. A moment later, a roar unlike any the youth had heard to that point surged; the entire line of each army was fighting simultaneously. The fighting was punctuated from time to time by one section or another's cheering; then just as quickly their fight resumed. There was such chaos that the youth was at a loss to see which side was winning.

When the youth's emaciated regiment was to charge, they did so with a fierceness undiminished by the fighting that day. They fought harder than they ever had; the lieutenant seemed to pull out new oaths they had never heard. The youth, still carrying the regiment's colors, was an absorbed spectator. Suddenly, a line of the enemy charged, then took cover behind a fence as the youth's regiment fired a volley at them. Both sides dug in and fought savagely. The youth had resolved not to move, no matter what came to pass. The scorn he had endured gave rise to a hatred that could only be revenged justifiably through his dead corpse lying in the field. Many men in the youth's company fell; the orderly sergeant was shot through the cheeks and his jaw hung limp. The lieutenant swore less decisively and the regiment's fire grew weaker.



Chapter 23

The colonel ran down the line and shouted that the regiment must charge. To the youth's surprise, the men did not have to be coaxed; they all nodded in assent to the idea. The regiment sprang up as if in a last show of strength before complete feebleness. The youth was at the front, waving the flag in circles and leading the men on. Their state of frenzy kept them from becoming only a sprinkling of corpses. The youth felt himself become great in that moment:

"He himself felt the daring spirit of a savage, religion-mad. He was capable of profound sacrifices, a tremendous death. He had no time for dissections, but he knew that he thought of the bullets only as things that could prevent him from reaching the place of his endeavor. There were subtle flashings of joy within him that thus should be his mind." Chapter 23, pg. 127

Topic Tracking: Fear of Battle 11

The thought of the great collision when the regiments met, made the youth run faster. In a moment, however, he could see that the gray regiment did not intend to stay for the blow - they had turned their faces and begun to run. One part of the gray line, however, remained obstinately in place behind the fence. The youth's regiment raged and ran at the holdouts as if it were a personal affront; the youth focused on the enemy flag and plunged toward it. The blue regiment stopped and fired a formidable volley; the other faltered and their color bearer was hit and was dying slowly. Suddenly the youth saw Wilson leap the fence and pounce on the dying color bearer, wrenching away the flag.

The youth's regiment had broken the enemy line. They had taken four prisoners, and flung questions at them. One prisoner spent his time swearing long oaths; he had a superficial foot wound. A second, no more than a boy, stood by calmly and accepted his fate, conversing freely with the Union men. A third man acted morose and answered all questions by telling his captors to go to hell. A fourth and final prisoner sat silent and seemed to be in a state of absolute dejection. The youth could not detect that the man gave a thought to the brutality and torture in his future; he detected only shame at having been caught.

Topic Tracking: Peer Pressure/Morale 16

After sufficient celebration, the youth sat down and leaned his flag against a post. He and Wilson congratulated each other.



Chapter 24

The roars of battle grew weaker and more distant; it was evident that the remaining forces on both sides were on the move and departing. The youth and Wilson wondered to each other what was next. In a few minutes, the regiment received orders to retrace its steps. The men grunted and groaned, objecting as much as they would have to more fighting. The regiment rejoined its brigade, and marched in column with them, parallel to the enemy's former line. They marched past a place where artillery was still firing, then turned and headed back across the river, in the direction from which they had come. The youth realized this meant the battle was over, and he said so to Wilson, who mused with him.

It took some time for the youth to resume his normal course of thinking and shake off the clogged clouds from his mind. He realized suddenly that he had escaped from the previous upheavals of battle, and for the first time he rejoiced at this fact. Later, he was able to remove himself from his prior deeds and to critique them - he felt no regret, for everything he had done in public had been impressively lauded. He told himself that he was good as he remembered the praises flung in his direction. Nevertheless, the youth was haunted by the truth of his flight from the first engagement. He felt flickerings of shame in his soul. He remembered the Tattered Soldier, who had given the last of his strength in regard for the Tall Soldier, and the youth had left him to die in the field. He felt a chill at the thought that his actions might be discovered. The thought of his cowardice colored the glory and valor he felt on the outside.

Along the column men discussed. One man said that he had a report from Bill Smithers, who said that he would have given anything to not have been in the hospital - men cried incessantly, and shells dropped in among them all the time. The youth kept to himself - he felt that his desertion of the Tattered Soldier would be with him always, and he felt afraid.

"Yet gradually he mustered the force to put the sin at a distance. And at last his eyes seemed to open to some new ways. He found that he could look back upon the brass and bombast of his earlier gospels and see them truly. He was gleeful when he realized that he now despised them.

"With this conviction came a store of assurance. He felt a quiet manhood, nonassertive but sturdy and strong of 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.

So it came to pass that as he trudged from the place of blood and wrath his soul changed. He came from hot plowshares to prospects of clover tranquilly, and it was as if ho plowshares were not. Scars faded as flowers." Chapter 24, pg. 134

Topic Tracking: Maturation 12

The remnant of the division trudged through the mud in the rain. The youth smiled - he saw that the world was for him; he had rid himself of the sickness of battle. He saw a soft, eternal peace spread out before him.