

The Red Badge of Courage

A Reading A-Z Level Z2 Leveled Book
Word Count: 3,399

LEVELED BOOK • Z²

THE RED BADGE OF COURAGE

Part 6

Connections

Writing

Create a Venn diagram that compares how Henry treats the tattered soldier with his treatment of Jim. Discuss with a partner what this reveals about Henry's character.

Social Studies

In this section, Stephen Crane presents a vivid scene of war, yet he had never been in battle. Research his life and write a biography that explains how he used his experience to craft the novel.

Reading A-Z

Visit www.readinga-z.com
for thousands of books and materials.



Adapted from the Writings of Stephen Crane
Illustrated by Aaron McConnell

www.readinga-z.com

THE RED BADGE OF COURAGE

Stephen Crane
(1871–1900)



Stephen Crane was an American writer of poems, short stories, and novels. He wrote *The Red Badge of Courage* in 1895 without ever having been in battle. Following the success of the novel, he worked as a war correspondent in Greece and Cuba. He died of tuberculosis at age twenty-eight.

Adapted from the Writings of Stephen Crane
Illustrated by Aaron McConnell

www.readinga-z.com

Focus Question

What is a red badge of courage, and why is it important to Henry?

Words to Know

agape	ironical
ague	melancholy
beseached	obscure
contortion	obstinately
devotee	peevish
dogged	perfunctory
doggerel	philippic
eloquent	plight
forlorn hopes	reiterated
ilk	sardonic
immaterial	suffused
industriously	transfixed

Photo Credits:

Title page: © PhotoQuest/Archive Photos/Getty Images; page 3: © Victoria Ryabina/iStock/Thinkstock

The Red Badge of Courage (Part 6)
Level Z2 Leveled Book
© Learning A–Z
Adapted from the Writings
of Stephen Crane
Illustrated by Aaron McConnell

All rights reserved.

www.readinga-z.com

Correlation

LEVEL Z2

Fountas & Pinnell	Y–Z
Reading Recovery	N/A
DRA	70+

In Part 5 of The Red Badge of Courage, Henry's courage fails when Confederate soldiers charge again. He flees until he can hear the sounds of battle no more.

Chapter 8

The sun sank until slanted bronze rays struck the forest. There was a lull in the noises of insects as if they had bowed their beaks and were making a devotional pause.

Then, upon this stillness, there suddenly broke a tremendous clangor of sounds. A crimson roar came from the distance.

The youth stopped. He was **transfixed** by this terrific medley. It was as if worlds were being rended. There was the ripping sound of musketry and the breaking crash of the artillery.

His mind flew in all directions. He conceived the two armies to be at each other in panther fashion. He listened for a time. Then he began to run in the direction of the battle. He saw that it was an **ironical** thing for him to be running thus toward that which he had been at such pains to avoid. But he said, in substance, to himself that if the earth and the moon were about to clash, many persons would doubtless plan to get upon the roofs to witness the collision.

As he ran, he became aware that the forest had stopped its music, as if at last becoming capable of hearing the foreign sounds. The trees hushed and stood motionless. Everything seemed to be listening to the crackle and clatter and earthshaking thunder. The chorus peaked over the still earth.

It suddenly occurred to the youth that the fight in which he had been was, after all, but **perfunctory** popping. In the hearing of this present din he was doubtful if he had seen real battle scenes. This uproar explained a celestial battle; it was tumbling hordes a-struggle in the air.

Reflecting, he saw a sort of a humor in the point of view of himself and his fellows during the late encounter. They had taken themselves and the enemy very seriously and had imagined that they were deciding the war. Individuals must have supposed that they were cutting the letters of their names deep into everlasting tablets of brass, or enshrining their reputations forever in the hearts of their countrymen, while, as to fact, the affair would appear in printed reports under a meek and **immaterial** title. But he saw that it was good, else, he said, in battle every one would surely run save **forlorn hopes** and their ilk.

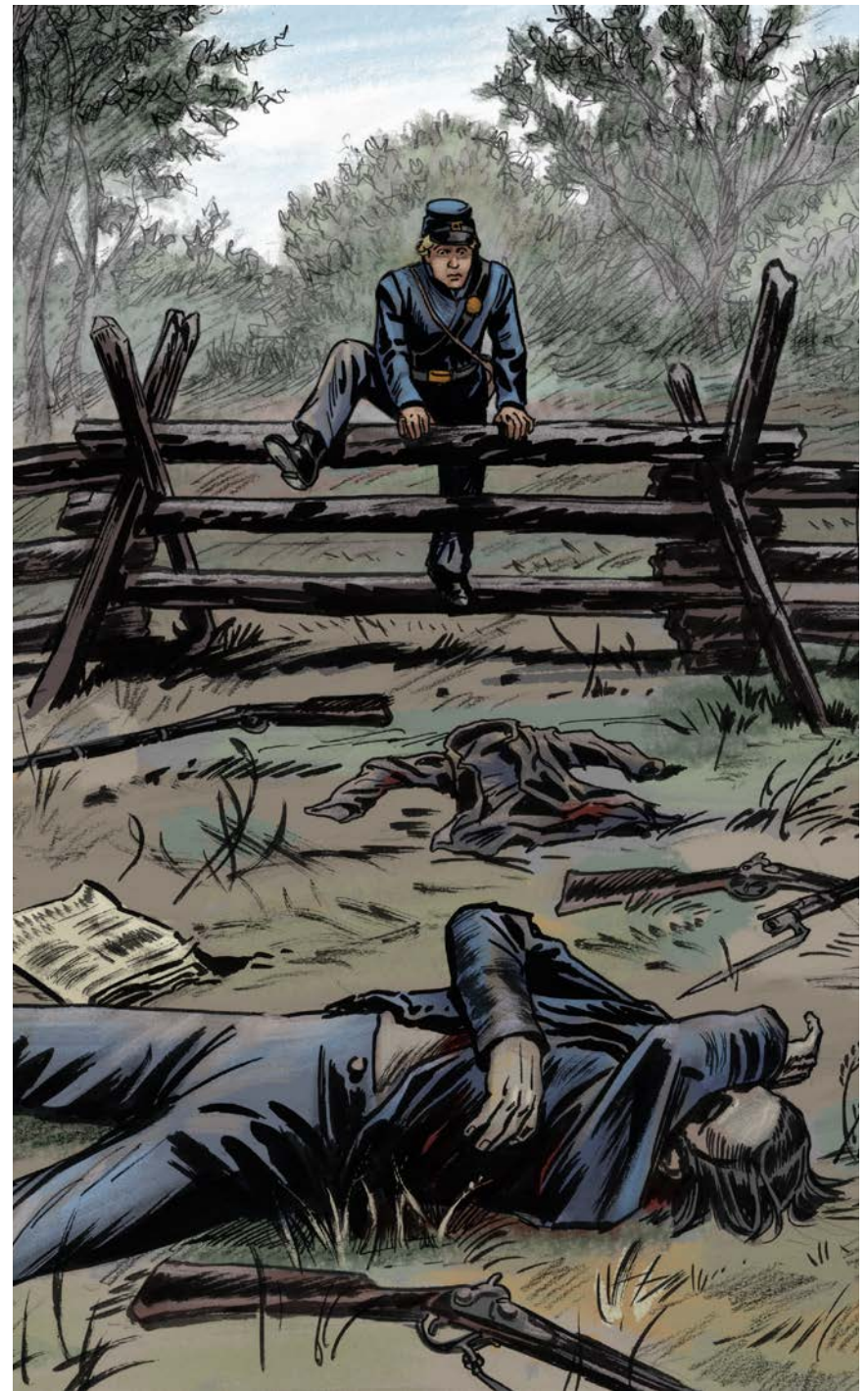
He went rapidly on. He wished to come to the edge of the forest that he might peer out.

As he hastened, there passed through his mind pictures of stupendous conflicts. His accumulated thought upon such subjects was used to form scenes. The noise was as the voice of an **eloquent** being, describing.

Sometimes the brambles formed chains and tried to hold him back. Trees, confronting him, stretched out their arms and forbade him to pass. After its previous hostility this new resistance of the forest filled him with a fine bitterness. It seemed that Nature could not be quite ready to kill him.

But he **obstinately** took roundabout ways, and presently he was where he could see long gray walls of vapor where lay battle lines. The voices of cannon shook him. The musketry sounded in long irregular surges that played havoc with his ears. He stood regardant for a moment. His eyes had an awestruck expression. He gawked in the direction of the fight.

Presently he proceeded again on his forward way. The battle was like the grinding of an immense and terrible machine to him. Its complexities and powers, its grim processes, fascinated him. He must go close and see it produce corpses.



He came to a fence and clambered over it. On the far side, the ground was littered with clothes and guns. A newspaper, folded up, lay in the dirt. A dead soldier was stretched with his face hidden in his arm. Farther off there was a group of four or five corpses keeping mournful company. A hot sun had blazed upon this spot.

In this place the youth felt that he was an invader. This forgotten part of the battle ground was owned by the dead men, and he hurried, in the vague apprehension that one of the swollen forms would rise and tell him to begone.

He came finally to a road from which he could see in the distance dark and agitated bodies of troops, smoke-fringed. In the lane was a blood-stained crowd streaming to the rear. The wounded men were cursing, groaning, and wailing. In the air, always, was a mighty swell of sound that it seemed could sway the earth. With the courageous words of the artillery and the spiteful sentences of the musketry mingled red cheers. And from this region of noises came the steady current of the maimed.

One of the wounded men had a shoeful of blood. He hopped like a schoolboy in a game. He was laughing hysterically.

One was swearing that he had been shot in the arm through the commanding general's mismanagement of the army. One was marching with an air imitative of some sublime drum major. Upon his features was an unholy mixture of merriment and agony. As he marched he sang a bit of **doggerel** in a high and quavering voice:

"Sing a song 'a vic'try,
A pocketful 'a bullets,
Five an' twenty dead men
Baked in a—pie."

Parts of the procession limped and staggered to this tune.

Another had the gray seal of death already upon his face. His lips were curled in hard lines and his teeth were clinched. His hands were bloody from where he had pressed them upon his wound. He seemed to be awaiting the moment when he should pitch headlong. He stalked like the specter of a soldier, his eyes burning with the power of a stare into the unknown.

There were some who proceeded sullenly, full of anger at their wounds, and ready to turn upon anything as an **obscure** cause.

An officer was carried along by two privates. He was **peevish**. "Don't joggle so, Johnson, yeh fool," he cried. "Think m' leg is made of iron? If yeh can't carry me decent, put me down an' let some one else do it."

He bellowed at the tottering crowd who blocked the quick march of his bearers. "Say, make way there, can't yeh? Make way, dickens take it all."

The youth joined this crowd and marched along with it. The torn bodies expressed the awful machinery in which the men had been entangled.

Orderlies and couriers occasionally broke through the throng in the roadway, scattering wounded men right and left, galloping on followed by howls. The **melancholy** march was continually disturbed by the messengers, and sometimes by bustling batteries that came swinging and thumping down upon them, the officers shouting orders to clear the way.

There was a tattered man, fouled with dust, blood and powder stain from hair to shoes, who trudged quietly at the youth's side. He was listening with eagerness and much humility to the lurid descriptions of a bearded sergeant.

His lean features wore an expression of awe and admiration. He was like a listener in a country store to wondrous tales told among the sugar barrels. He eyed the story-teller with unspeakable wonder. His mouth was **agape** in yokel fashion.

The sergeant, taking note of this, gave pause to his elaborate history while he administered a **sardonic** comment. "Be keerful, honey, you'll be a-ketchin' flies," he said. The tattered man shrank back abashed.

After a time he began to sidle near to the youth, and in a diffident way try to make him a friend. His voice was gentle as a girl's voice and his eyes were pleading. The youth saw with surprise that the soldier had two wounds, one in the head, bound with a blood-soaked rag, and the other in the arm, making that member dangle like a broken bough.

After they had walked together for some time the tattered man mustered sufficient courage to speak. "Was pretty good fight, wa'n't it?" he timidly said. The youth, deep in thought, glanced up at the bloody and grim figure with its lamblike eyes.

"Yes," said the youth shortly. He quickened his pace.

But the other hobbled **industriously** after him. There was an air of apology in his manner, but he evidently thought that he needed only to talk for a time, and the youth would perceive that he was a good fellow.

“Was pretty good fight, wa’n’t it?” he began in a small voice, and then he achieved the fortitude to continue. “Dern me if I ever see fellers fight so. Laws, how they did fight! I knowed th’ boys ’d like it when they oncet got square at it. Th’ boys ain’t had no fair chanct up t’ now, but this time they showed what they was. I knowed it’d turn out this way. Yeh can’t lick them boys. No, sir! They’re fighters, they be.”

He breathed a deep breath of humble admiration. He had looked at the youth for encouragement several times. He received none, but gradually he seemed to get absorbed in his subject.

“I was talkin’ ’cross pickets with a boy from Georgie, oncet, an’ that boy, he ses, ‘Your fellers ’ll all run like hell when they oncet hearn a gun,’ he ses. ‘Mebbe they will,’ I ses, ‘but I don’t b’lieve none of it,’ I ses; ‘an’ b’ jiminey,’ I ses back t’ ‘um, ‘mebbe your fellers ’ll all run like hell when they oncet hearn a gun,’ I ses. He larfed.

“Well, they didn’t run t’-day, did they, hey? No, sir! They fit, an’ fit, an’ fit.”

His homely face was **suffused** with a light of love for the army which was to him all things beautiful and powerful.

After a time he turned to the youth. “Where yeh hit, ol’ boy?” he asked in a brotherly tone.

The youth felt instant panic at this question, although at first its full import was not borne in upon him.

“What?” he asked.

“Where yeh hit?” repeated the tattered man.

“Why,” began the youth, “I—I—that is—why—I—”

He turned away suddenly and slid through the crowd. His brow was heavily flushed, and his fingers were picking nervously at one of his buttons. He bent his head and fastened his eyes studiously upon the button as if it were a little problem.

The tattered man looked after him in astonishment.

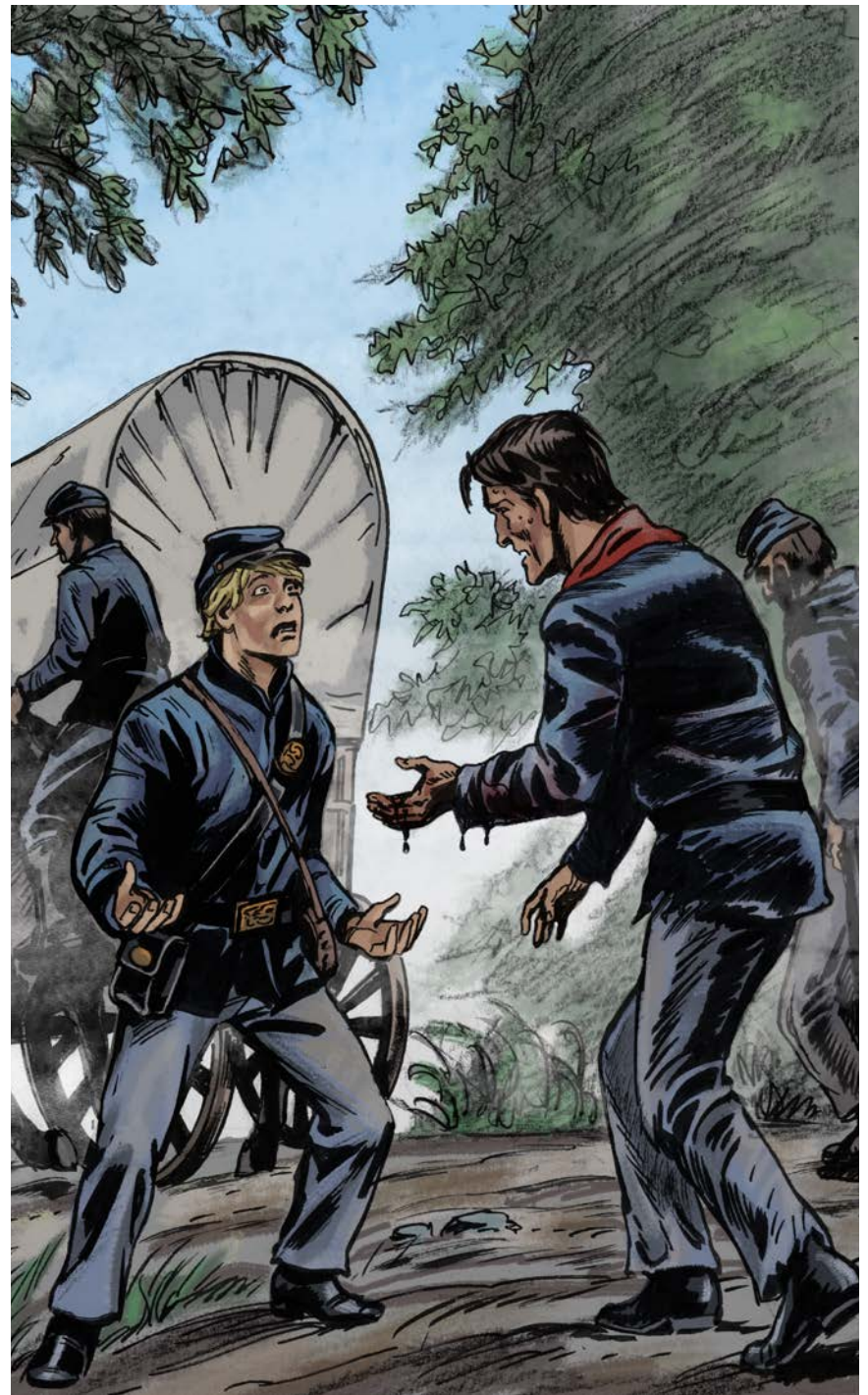
Chapter 9

The youth fell back in the procession until the tattered soldier was not in sight. Then he started to walk on with the others.

But he was amid wounds. The mob of men was bleeding. Because of the tattered soldier's question he now felt that his shame could be viewed. He was continually casting sidelong glances to see if the men were contemplating the letters of guilt he felt burned into his brow.

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.

The spectral soldier was at his side like a stalking reproach. The man's eyes were still fixed in a stare into the unknown. His gray, appalling face had attracted attention in the crowd, and men, slowing to his dreary pace, were walking with him. They were discussing his **plight**, questioning him and giving him advice. In a **dogged** way he repelled them, signing to them to go on and leave him alone. The shadows of his face were deepening and his tight lips seemed holding in check the moan of great despair. There could be seen a certain stiffness in the movements



of his body, as if he were taking infinite care not to arouse the passion of his wounds. As he went on, he seemed always looking for a place, like one who goes to choose a grave.

Something in the gesture of the man as he waved the bloody and pitying soldiers away made the youth start as if bitten. He yelled in horror. Tottering forward he laid a quivering hand upon the man's arm. As the latter slowly turned his waxlike features toward him the youth screamed:

"Gawd! Jim Conklin!"

The tall soldier made a little commonplace smile. "Hello, Henry," he said.

The youth swayed on his legs and glared strangely. He stuttered and stammered. "Oh, Jim—oh, Jim—oh, Jim—"

The tall soldier held out his gory hand. There was a curious red and black combination of new blood and old blood upon it. "Where yeh been, Henry?" he asked. He continued in a monotonous voice, "I thought mebbe yeh got keeled over. There's been thunder t' pay t'-day. I was worryin' about it a good deal."

The youth still lamented. "Oh, Jim—oh, Jim—oh, Jim—"

"Yeh know," said the tall soldier, "I was out there." He made a careful gesture. "An', Lord, what a circus! An', b' jiminey, I got shot—I got shot. Yes, b' jiminey, I got shot." He **reiterated** this fact in a bewildered way, as if he did not know how it came about.

The youth put forth anxious arms to assist him, but the tall soldier went firmly as if propelled. Since the youth's arrival as a guardian for his friend, the other wounded men had ceased to display much interest. They occupied themselves again in dragging their own tragedies toward the rear.

Suddenly, as the two friends marched on, the tall soldier seemed to be overcome by a tremor. His face turned to a semblance of gray paste. He clutched the youth's arm and looked all about him, as if dreading to be overheard.

Then he began to speak in a shaking whisper:

"I tell yeh what I'm 'fraid of, Henry—I'll tell yeh what I'm 'fraid of. I'm 'fraid I'll fall down—an' them yeh know—they damned artillery wagons—they like as not 'll run over me. That's what I'm 'fraid of—"

The youth cried out to him hysterically: "I'll take care of yeh, Jim! I swear t' Gawd I will!"

"Sure—will yeh, Henry?" the tall soldier **beseached**.

"Yes—yes—I tell yeh—I'll take care of yeh, Jim!" protested the youth. He could not speak accurately because of the gulpings in his throat.

But the tall soldier continued to beg in a lowly way. He now hung babelike to the youth's arm. His eyes rolled in the wildness of his terror. "I was allus a good friend t' yeh, wa'n't I, Henry? I've allus been a pretty good feller, ain't I? An' it ain't much t' ask, is it? Jest t' pull me along outer th' road? I'd do it fer you, wouldn't I, Henry?"

He paused in piteous anxiety to await his friend's reply.

The youth had reached an anguish where the sobs scorched him. He strove to express his loyalty, but he could only make fantastic gestures.

However, the tall soldier seemed suddenly to forget all those fears. He became again the grim, stalking specter of a soldier. He went stonily forward. The youth wished his friend to lean upon him, but the other always shook his head and strangely protested. "No—no—no—leave me be—leave me be—"

His look was fixed again upon the unknown. He moved with mysterious purpose, and all of the youth's offers he brushed aside. "No—no—leave me be—leave me be—"

The youth had to follow.

Presently the latter heard a voice talking softly near his shoulder. Turning he saw that it belonged to the tattered soldier. "Ye'd better take 'im outa th' road, pardner. There's a batt'ry comin' helitywhoop down th' road an' he'll git runned over. He's a goner anyhow in about five minutes—yeh kin see that. Ye'd better take 'im outa th' road. Where th' blazes does he git his stren'th from?"

"Lord knows!" cried the youth. He was shaking his hands helplessly.

He ran forward presently and grasped the tall soldier by the arm. "Jim! Jim!" he coaxed, "come with me."

The tall soldier weakly tried to wrench himself free. "Huh," he said vacantly. He stared at the youth for a moment. At last he spoke as if dimly comprehending. "Oh! Inteh th' fields? Oh!"

He started blindly through the grass.

The youth turned once to look at the lashing riders and jouncing guns of the battery. He was startled from this view by a shrill outcry from the tattered man.

“Gawd! He’s runnin’!”

Turning his head swiftly, the youth saw his friend running in a staggering and stumbling way toward a little clump of bushes. His heart seemed to wrench itself almost free from his body at this sight. He made a noise of pain. He and the tattered man began a pursuit. There was a singular race.

When he overtook the tall soldier he began to plead with all the words he could find. “Jim—Jim—what are you doing—what makes you do this way—you’ll hurt yerself.”

The same purpose was in the tall soldier’s face. He protested in a dulled way, keeping his eyes fastened on the mystic place of his intentions. “No—no—don’t tech me—leave me be—leave me be—”

The youth, aghast and filled with wonder at the tall soldier, began quaveringly to question him. “Where yeh goin’, Jim? What you thinking about? Where you going? Tell me, won’t you, Jim?”

The tall soldier faced about as upon relentless pursuers. In his eyes there was a great appeal. “Leave me be, can’t yeh? Leave me be for a minnit.”

The youth recoiled. “Why, Jim,” he said, in a dazed way, “what’s the matter with you?”

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 these 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.

At last, they saw him stop and stand motionless. Hastening up, they perceived that his face wore an expression telling that he had at last found the place for which he had struggled. His spare figure was erect; his bloody hands were quietly at his side. He was waiting with patience for something that he had come to meet. He was at the rendezvous. They paused and stood, expectant.

There was a silence.

Finally, the chest of the doomed soldier began to heave with a strained motion. It increased in violence.

This spectacle made the youth squirm and he saw something in his friend's eyes that made him sink wailing to the ground. He raised his voice in a last supreme call.

"Jim—Jim—Jim—"

The tall soldier opened his lips and spoke. He made a gesture. "Leave me be—don't tech me—leave me be—"

There was another silence while he waited.

Suddenly his form stiffened and straightened. Then it was shaken by a prolonged **ague**. He stared into space. To the two watchers there was a curious and profound dignity in the firm lines of his awful face.

His tall figure stretched itself to its full height. There was a slight rending sound. Then it began to swing forward, slow and straight, in the manner of a falling tree. A swift muscular **contortion** made the left shoulder strike the ground first.

The body seemed to bounce a little way from the earth. "God!" said the tattered soldier.

The youth had watched, spellbound, this ceremony at the place of meeting. His face had been twisted into an expression of every agony he had imagined for his friend.

He now sprang to his feet and, going closer, gazed upon the lifeless face, with its open mouth.

As the flap of the blue jacket fell away from the body, he could see that the side looked as if it had been chewed by wolves.

The youth turned, with sudden, livid rage, toward the battlefield. He shook his fist. He seemed about to deliver a **philippic**.

"Hell—"

The red sun was pasted in the sky like a wafer.

Glossary

agape (<i>adj.</i>)	wide open in shock, surprise, or wonder (p. 10)
ague (<i>n.</i>)	a high fever with alternating chills and sweating (p. 21)
beseached (<i>v.</i>)	begged or pleaded for something (p. 17)
contortion (<i>n.</i>)	a twisting movement or position (p. 21)
devotee (<i>n.</i>)	an enthusiastic follower or believer of something (p. 20)
dogged (<i>adj.</i>)	determined to achieve a goal (p. 13)
doggerel (<i>n.</i>)	simplistic or bad poetry, often meant to be humorous (p. 8)
eloquent (<i>adj.</i>)	simple, powerful, and elegant in speech or writing (p. 5)
forlorn hopes (<i>n.</i>)	groups of soldiers chosen to perform a desperate task with little chance of success (p. 4)
ilk (<i>n.</i>)	the same sort or kind as something already referred to (p. 4)
immaterial (<i>adj.</i>)	unimportant or irrelevant (p. 4)
industriously (<i>adv.</i>)	in a hard-working manner (p. 11)

ironical (<i>adj.</i>)	describing the opposite of what is expected, such as a twist in a story in which something turns out to be the opposite of what it seems; ironic (p. 3)
melancholy (<i>adj.</i>)	sad and thoughtful; gloomy (p. 9)
obscure (<i>adj.</i>)	not easily seen or understood (p. 8)
obstinately (<i>adv.</i>)	stubbornly (p. 5)
peevish (<i>adj.</i>)	easily annoyed and complaining often (p. 9)
perfunctory (<i>adj.</i>)	in a superficial manner suggesting a lack of true interest, attention, or effort (p. 4)
philippic (<i>n.</i>)	a speech full of criticism that is delivered in an angry manner; a rant (p. 22)
plight (<i>n.</i>)	an unfortunate or dangerous situation (p. 13)
reiterated (<i>v.</i>)	said something again, often for emphasis (p. 16)
sardonic (<i>adj.</i>)	grimly or scornfully humorous (p. 10)
suffused (<i>v.</i>)	filled or spread through as if by light (p. 12)
transfixed (<i>adj.</i>)	unable to move because of shock, fear, or wonder (p. 3)