

# The Red Badge of Courage

A Reading A-Z Level Z2 Leveled Book  
Word Count: 3,020

## Connections

### Writing

Write an essay describing the events that led to Henry's identification as a hero. Then compare Henry's view of heroism with the author's point of view.

### Art

Research the impressionist movement in painting and write a paper that shows how Crane's writing uses impressionist techniques. Include at least three examples from this part in your analysis.

LEVELED BOOK • Z<sup>2</sup>

# THE RED BADGE OF COURAGE

Part 11



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Adapted from the Writings of Stephen Crane  
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# 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.

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## Focus Question

How do Henry and the other soldiers view their fighting? How do their commanding officers perceive it?

## Words to Know

abominable	lamentation
badgered	leisure
basked	pagan
bewildered	profound
cavalcade	purchase
determination	relentless
dexterous	repose
edifice	respite
gesticulating	restive
impotent	spasmodic
insignificant	throng
intermission	uninitiated

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### Correlation

#### LEVEL Z2

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

*In Part 10 of The Red Badge of Courage, Henry returns the packet Wilson gave him before the first battle. The regiment takes up a new position and prepares to turn back another Confederate advance.*

## Chapter 17

**T**his advance of the enemy had seemed to the youth like a ruthless hunting. He began to fume with rage and exasperation. There was a maddening quality in this seeming resolution of the foe to give him no rest, to give him no time to sit down and think. Yesterday he had fought and had fled rapidly. There had been many adventures. For to-day he felt that he had earned opportunities for contemplative **repose**. He could have enjoyed portraying to **uninitiated** listeners various scenes at which he had been a witness or ably discussing the processes of war with other proved men. He was sore and stiff from his experiences. He had received his fill of all exertions, and he wished to rest.

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.

He leaned and spoke into his friend's ear. He menaced the woods with a gesture. "If they keep on chasing us, by Gawd, they'd better watch out. Can't stand TOO much."

The friend twisted his head and made a calm reply. "If they keep on a-chasin' us they'll drive us all inteh th' river."

The youth cried out savagely at this statement. He crouched behind a little tree, with his eyes burning hatefully and his teeth set in a curlike snarl. The awkward bandage was still about his head, and upon it, over his wound, there was a spot of dry blood. His hair was wondrously tousled, and some straggling, moving locks hung over the cloth of the bandage down toward his forehead. His jacket and shirt were open at the throat, and exposed his young bronzed neck. There could be seen **spasmodic** gulplings at his throat.

His fingers twined nervously about his rifle. He wished that it was an engine of annihilating power.

He felt that he and his companions were being taunted and derided from sincere convictions that they were poor and puny. His knowledge of his inability to take vengeance for it made his rage into a dark and stormy specter, that possessed him and made him dream of **abominable** cruelties. The tormentors were flies sucking insolently at his blood, and he thought that he would have given his life for a revenge of seeing their faces in pitiful plights.

The winds of battle had swept all about the regiment, until the one rifle, instantly followed by others, flashed in its front. A moment later the regiment roared forth its sudden and valiant retort. A dense wall of smoke settled down. It was furiously slit and slashed by the knifelike fire from the rifles.

To the youth the fighters resembled animals tossed for a death struggle into a dark pit. There was a sensation that he and his fellows, at bay, were pushing back, always pushing fierce onslaughts of creatures who were slippery. Their beams of crimson seemed to get no **purchase** upon the bodies of their foes; the latter seemed to evade them with ease, and come through, between, around, and about with unopposed skill.

When, in a dream, it occurred to the youth that his rifle was an **impotent** stick, he lost sense of everything but his hate, his desire to smash into pulp the glittering smile of victory which he could feel upon the faces of his enemies.

The blue smoke-swallowed line curled and writhed like a snake stepped upon. It swung its ends to and fro in an agony of fear and rage.

The youth was not conscious that he was erect upon his feet. He did not know the direction of the ground. Indeed, once he even lost the habit of balance and fell heavily. He was up again immediately. He wondered if he had fallen because he had been shot. But the suspicion flew away at once. He did not think more of it.

He had taken up a first position behind the little tree, with a direct **determination** to hold it against the world. He had not deemed it possible that his army could that day succeed, and from this he felt the ability to fight harder. But the **throng** had surged in all ways, until he lost directions and locations, save that he knew where lay the enemy.

The flames bit him, and smoke broiled his skin. His rifle barrel grew so hot that ordinarily he could not have borne it upon his palms;



but he kept on stuffing cartridges into it, and pounding them with his clanking, bending ramrod. If he aimed at some changing form through the smoke, he pulled the trigger with a fierce grunt, as if he were dealing a blow of the fist with all his strength.

When the enemy seemed falling back before him and his fellows, he went instantly forward, like a dog who, seeing his foes lagging, turns and insists upon being pursued. And when he was compelled to retire again, he did it slowly, sullenly, taking steps of wrathful despair.

Once he, in his intent hate, was almost alone, and was firing, when all those near him had ceased. He was so engrossed in his occupation that he was not aware of a lull.

He was recalled by a hoarse laugh and a sentence that came to his ears in a voice of contempt and amazement. “Yeh infernal fool, don’t yeh know enough t’ quit when there ain’t anything t’ shoot at? Good Gawd!”

He turned then and, pausing with his rifle thrown half into position, looked at the blue line of his comrades. During this moment of **leisure** they seemed all to be engaged in staring with astonishment at him. They had become spectators. Turning to the front again he saw, under the lifted smoke, a deserted ground.

He looked **bewildered** for a moment. Then there appeared upon the glazed vacancy of his eyes a diamond point of intelligence. “Oh,” he said, comprehending.

He returned to his comrades and threw himself upon the ground. His flesh seemed strangely on fire, and the sounds of the battle continued in his ears. He groped blindly for his canteen.

The lieutenant was crowing. He seemed drunk with fighting. He called out to the youth: “By heavens, if I had ten thousand wild cats like you I could tear th’ stomach outa this war in less ‘n a week!”

Some of the men muttered and looked at the youth in awestruck ways. As he had gone on loading and firing and cursing without proper **intermission**, they had found time to regard him. And they now looked upon him as a war devil.

The friend came staggering to him. There was some fright and dismay in his voice. "Are yeh all right, Fleming? Do yeh feel all right? There ain't nothin' th' matter with yeh, Henry, is there?"

"No," said the youth with difficulty. His throat seemed full of knobs and burrs.

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.

He lay and **basked** in the occasional stares of his comrades. Their faces were varied in degrees of blackness from the burned powder. And from these soiled expanses they peered at him.

"Hot work! Hot work!" cried the lieutenant deliriously. He walked up and down, restless and eager. Sometimes his voice could be heard in a wild, incomprehensible laugh.

When he had a particularly **profound** thought upon the science of war he always unconsciously addressed himself to the youth.

There was some grim rejoicing by the men. "By thunder, I bet this army 'll never see another new reg'ment like us!"

"You bet!"

"Lost a pile men, they did. If an ol' woman swep' up th' woods she'd git a dustpanful."

"Yes, an' if she'll come around ag'in in 'bout an hour she'll get a pile more."

The forest still bore its burden of clamor. From off under the trees came the rolling clatter of the musketry. Each distant thicket seemed a strange porcupine with quills of flame. A cloud of dark smoke, as from smoldering ruins, went up toward the sun now bright and gay in the blue sky.



## Chapter 18

The ragged line had **respite** for some minutes, but during its pause the struggle in the forest became magnified until the trees seemed to quiver from the firing and the ground to shake from the rushing of men. The voices of the cannon were mingled in a long and interminable row. It seemed difficult to live in such an atmosphere. The chests of the men strained for a bit of freshness, and their throats craved water.

There was one shot through the body, who raised a cry of bitter **lamentation** when came this lull. Perhaps he had been calling out during the fighting also, but at that time no one had heard him. But now the men turned at the woeful complaints of him upon the ground.

“Who is it? Who is it?”

“It’s Jimmie Rogers. Jimmie Rogers.”

When their eyes first encountered him there was a sudden halt, as if they feared to go near. He was thrashing about in the grass, twisting his shuddering body into many strange postures. He was screaming loudly. This instant’s hesitation seemed to fill him with a tremendous, fantastic contempt, and he damned them in shrieked sentences.

The youth’s friend had a geographical illusion concerning a stream, and he obtained permission to go for some water. Immediately canteens were showered upon him. “Fill mine, will yeh?” “Bring me some, too.” “And me, too.” He departed, laden. The youth went with his friend, feeling a desire to throw his heated body into the stream and, soaking there, drink quarts.

They made a hurried search for the supposed stream, but did not find it. “No water here,” said the youth. They turned without delay and began to retrace their steps.

From their position as they again faced toward the place of the fighting, they could comprehend a greater amount of the battle than when their visions had been blurred by the hurling smoke of the line. They could see dark stretches winding along the land, and on one cleared space there was a row of guns making gray clouds, which were filled with large flashes of orange-colored flame. Over some foliage they could see the roof of a house. One window, glowing a deep murder red, shone squarely through the leaves. From the **edifice** a tall leaning tower of smoke went far into the sky.

Looking over their own troops, they saw mixed masses slowly getting into regular form. The sunlight made twinkling points of the bright steel. To the rear there was a glimpse of a distant roadway as it curved over a slope. It was crowded with retreating infantry. From all the interwoven forest arose the smoke and bluster of the battle. The air was always occupied by a blaring.

Near where they stood shells were flip-flapping and hooting. Occasional bullets buzzed in the air and spanged into tree trunks. Wounded men and other stragglers were slinking through the woods.

Looking down an aisle of the grove, the youth and his companion saw a jangling general and his staff almost ride upon a wounded man, who was crawling on his hands and knees. The general reined strongly at his charger's opened and foamy mouth and guided it with **dexterous** horsemanship past the man. The latter scrambled in wild and torturing haste. His strength evidently failed him as he reached a place of safety. One of his arms suddenly weakened, and he fell, sliding over upon his back. He lay stretched out, breathing gently.

A moment later the small, creaking **cavalcade** was directly in front of the two soldiers. Another officer, riding with the skillful abandon of a cowboy, galloped his horse to a position directly before the general. The two unnoticed foot soldiers made a little show of going on, but they lingered near in the desire to overhear the conversation. Perhaps, they thought, some great inner historical things would be said.

The general, whom the boys knew as the commander of their division, looked at the other officer and spoke coolly, as if he were criticising his clothes. "Th' enemy's formin' over there for another charge," he said. "It'll be directed against Whiter side, an' I fear they'll break through unless we work like thunder t' stop them."

The other swore at his **restive** horse, and then cleared his throat. He made a gesture toward his cap. "It'll be hell t' pay stoppin' them," he said shortly.

"I presume so," remarked the general. Then he began to talk rapidly and in a lower tone. He frequently illustrated his words with a pointing finger. The two infantrymen could hear nothing until finally he asked: "What troops can you spare?"



The officer who rode like a cowboy reflected for an instant. "Well," he said, "I had to order in th' 12th to help th' 76th, an' I haven't really got any. But there's th' 304th. They fight like a lot 'a mule drivers. I can spare them best of any."

The youth and his friend exchanged glances of astonishment.

The general spoke sharply. "Get 'em ready, then. I'll watch developments from here, an' send you word when t' start them. It'll happen in five minutes."

As the other officer tossed his fingers toward his cap and wheeling his horse, started away, the general called out to him in a sober voice: "I don't believe many of your mule drivers will get back."

The other shouted something in reply. He smiled.

With scared faces, the youth and his companion hurried back to the line.

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.

As the two boys approached the line, the lieutenant perceived them and swelled with wrath. "Fleming—Wilson—how long does it take yeh to git water, anyhow—where yeh been to."

But his oration ceased as he saw their eyes, which were large with great tales. "We're goin' t' charge—we're goin' t' charge!" cried the youth's friend, hastening with his news.

"Charge?" said the lieutenant. "Charge? Well, b' Gawd! Now, this is real fightin'." Over his soiled countenance there went a boastful smile. "Charge? Well, b' Gawd!"

A little group of soldiers surrounded the two youths. "Are we, sure 'nough? Well, I'll be derved! Charge? What fer? What at? Wilson, you're lyin'."

"I hope to die," said the youth, pitching his tones to the key of angry remonstrance. "Sure as shooting, I tell you."

And his friend spoke in re-enforcement. "Not by a blame sight, he ain't lyin'. We heard 'em talkin'."

They caught sight of two mounted figures a short distance from them. One was the colonel of the regiment and the other was the officer who had received orders from the commander of the division. They were **gesticulating** at each other. The soldier, pointing at them, interpreted the scene.

One man had a final objection: "How could yeh hear 'em talkin'?" But the men, for a large part, nodded, admitting that previously the two friends had spoken truth.

They settled back into reposeful attitudes with airs of having accepted the matter. And they mused upon it, with a hundred varieties of expression. It was an engrossing thing to think about. Many tightened their belts carefully and hitched at their trousers.

A moment later the officers began to bustle among the men, pushing them into a more compact mass and into a better alignment. They chased those that straggled and fumed at a few men who seemed to show by their attitudes that they had decided to remain at that spot. They were like critical shepherds, struggling with sheep.

Presently, the regiment seemed to draw itself up and heave a deep breath. None of the men's faces were mirrors of large thoughts.

The soldiers were bended and stooped like sprinters before a signal. Many pairs of glinting eyes peered from the grimy faces toward the curtains of the deeper woods. They seemed to be engaged in deep calculations of time and distance.

They were surrounded by the noises of the monstrous altercation between the two armies. The world was fully interested in other matters. Apparently, the regiment had its small affair to itself.

The youth, turning, shot a quick, inquiring glance at his friend. The latter returned to him the same manner of look. They were the only ones who possessed an inner knowledge. "Mule drivers—hell t' pay—don't believe many will get back." It was an ironical secret. Still, they saw no hesitation in each other's faces, and they nodded a mute and unprotesting assent when a shaggy man near them said in a meek voice: "We'll git swallowed."

## Glossary

<b>abominable</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	disgusting or terrible (p. 5)
<b>badgered</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	pestered or annoyed repeatedly (p. 4)
<b>basked</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	enjoyed or reveled in the pleasure of something (p. 9)
<b>bewildered</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	uncertain or confused (p. 8)
<b>cavalcade</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a procession of people on foot or horseback or in vehicles (p. 14)
<b>determination</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	the commitment or drive to work toward a difficult goal; resolve (p. 6)
<b>dexterous</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	able to make complex movements gracefully (p. 13)
<b>edifice</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a large, impressive building (p. 12)
<b>gesticulating</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	moving one's hands and arms, often when talking in an emotional or dramatic way (p. 17)
<b>impotent</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	lacking power, strength, or the ability to take action (p. 6)
<b>insignificant</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	lacking in importance, meaning, worth, or size (p. 15)
<b>intermission</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a short break between periods of activity, such as the parts of a performance (p. 9)
<b>lamentation</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a feeling or expression of grief or disappointment about something (p. 11)

<b>leisure</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	free time (p. 8)
<b>pagan</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a person who practices a nature-based religion (p. 9)
<b>profound</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	requiring deep study or knowledge; deep or insightful (p. 10)
<b>purchase</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a firm grip or mechanical hold on something (p. 5)
<b>relentless</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	continuing at the same level of severity, intensity, or determination, despite obstacles or opposition (p. 3)
<b>repose</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a state of sleep, rest, or relaxation (p. 3)
<b>respite</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a short rest from or delay of something unpleasant or difficult (p. 11)
<b>restive</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	impatient or fidgety; resistant to control (p. 14)
<b>spasmodic</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	resembling a sudden involuntary and irregular muscular contraction (p. 4)
<b>throng</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a large group of people or other animals that are crowded together (p. 6)
<b>uninitiated</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	lacking experience or knowledge of a specific topic or activity (p. 3)