

## Courage Under Fire

In The Red Badge of Courage, by Stephen Crane, the issue of courage under fire is brought to light through the eyes of young Henry Fleming, who is often referred to as the young soldier. Henry deals with the issue in many ways. All of these ways are very human responses to a situation that is quite fearsome and awe-inspiring.

First and foremost, Henry very vainly imagines that he would be an almost God-like figure on the field of battle, a highly romanticized and over-played soldier of legend. He imagines that he will not run from the fight, even if the odds become long, and hope is running low. He believes he will motivate men to stand their ground when they yearn to run. Yet, when it comes to it, Henry's realism and practicality take over, and he flees from his second battle, like many men from his regiment.

Additionally, Henry, upon entering his first few fights becomes lost as a cog in a greater machine of death and destruction. He loses his sense of individuality for a time. This allows him to deal with the intense emotional trauma of fighting in the battle. He does as he is commanded to do, and does not distinguish himself intentionally or willingly. Only on the battle immediately following his return does he distinguish himself, and not through conscious actions.

Also, Henry appears to be more driven on guilt, than on a desire to show what sort of fighter he was. After he flees from battle, he lies to the other men, and tells how he has been "shot." Later, he feels guilty, as he enters the column of wounded, as he is questioned by the tattered soldier. Having met Jim again, who has truly been shot, Henry's guilt comes full out. From this point on, Henry appears to grow up, and when he



returns to the battle, he fights like a man possessed, like he had longed to do, as a boy. Where Henry could not be tempered by fear, grief made him.

The final item that completes Henry's transformation is outrage. He is angry at the officers. He is angry at the tattered soldier. Most of all, he is angry and ashamed at himself, for running from the battle. The officers insult his regiment. This angers his prideful side, and he again begins to fill with the rage that he will need to make it through the fight. While guilt is his motivation, rage is his tool. Henry focuses this, and strives to be his best. He takes the regimental colors when the color sergeant is killed. He now leads by example. The men have come to hold him in awe. In essence, Henry through none of his own device, has become the stuff of his dreams.

While Henry does not exhibit the god-like heroism of his dreams initially, he does come to exhibit his own brand of heroism, and courage later in the story. While it is not the way he had wished it, it still comes.

## ELA Task: 11-1a Teacher Commentaries (partially met task)

### The Task:

Several of the novels and short stories you have read this year are tales about characters dealing with society. Choose one issue that a character from fiction deals with in his or her own unique way. Write a one-page essay, explaining the issues, both moral and philosophical, and the character's position regarding the issue(s). Use specific examples from the book or story to support your point of view.

### Circumstances of Performance:

The student work is produced under the following conditions:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alone	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> in a group
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> in class	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> as homework
<input type="checkbox"/> with teacher feedback	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> with peer feedback
<input type="checkbox"/> Timed	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> extended project
<input type="checkbox"/> no opportunity for revision	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> opportunity for revision

### What the work shows:

#### Literature

**E5a.** The student responds to non-fiction, fiction, poetry, and drama using interpretive, critical, and evaluative processes; that is, the student:

**E5a.6** makes inferences and draws conclusions about fictional and non-fictional contexts, events, characters, settings, themes, and styles **(B)**

**E5a.7.** interprets the effect of literary devices, such as figurative language, allusion, diction, dialogue, description, symbolism **(D)**

**E5a.8** identifies the stance of a writer in shaping the presentation of a subject

**E5a.9** identifies ambiguities, subtleties, contradictions, ironies, and nuances.

#### Writing

**E2b** The student produces a response to literature that:

**E2b.1** engages the reader through establishing a context, creating a persona, and otherwise developing reader interest **(A)**

**E2b.2** advances a judgment that is interpretive, analytic, evaluative, or reflective **(E)**

**E2b.3** supports a judgment through references to the text, references to other works, authors, or non-print media, or references to personal knowledge **(C)**

**E2b.4** demonstrates understanding of the literary work through suggesting an interpretation

**Eb2.5** recognizes possible ambiguities, nuances, and complexities

**E2b.6** provides a sense of closure to the writing. **(F)**

- A.** The student establishes reader interest through a description of the book's main character, Henry Fleming, and lets the reader know that he deals with the issue of courage under fire "in many ways". Articulation of some of these ways in a more specific way would strengthen the opening paragraph.
- B.** The student accurately infers that "Henry's realism and practicality take over" when discussing the character's actions. While text citations are not used, a concise summary paragraph supports the student's interpretation.
- C.** The inclusion of specific references to the text, along with quotations from the text, would enhance the literary analysis. While the student is providing an interpretive evaluation of the character's actions, it is important that students understand the value of providing specific textual references to support their statements.
- D.** Citing dialogue to exemplify how Henry lied to his men would help the reader see that the student has accurately interpreted the literary devices used by the author, and would fully meet the standard.
- E.** Expansion of the thought, "Where Henry could not be tempered by fear, grief made him", would clarify the student's interpretation of the change in Henry and meet the standard. The reader has to assume that the student fully understands the impact of the change upon the main character.
- F.** The student displays an excellent grasp of the story line throughout the text. He is able to translate the main character's actions into language revealing a high level of understanding, when he states, "While guilt is his motivation, rage is his tool".
- G.** The ideas expressed in the closing paragraph are too vague to provide a true sense of closure to the paper. Opening and closing paragraphs should summarize ideas more specifically in order to meet the standard.