Objectives

1. Engage students in the language and themes of Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage* so that they are prepared to discuss and write about the excerpt.

2. Practice and reinforce the following Grade 9-10 ELA Common Core Standards for reading literature, writing, and speaking/listening:

   **READING: LITERATURE** — RL.9-10.1-6, 10
   **WRITING** — W.9-10.1-10
   **SPEAKING/LISTENING** — SL.9-10.1-3

Time

155 minutes (with up to an additional 120 minutes of extension possibilities)

Materials

SyncTV Premium Lesson of Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage*

Overview

Published in 1895, when author Stephen Crane was only twenty-four years old, *The Red Badge of Courage* was a departure from most Civil War novels, which generally idealized the thrill and valor of battle. Instead, Crane's novel portrayed the internal reality of its main character, a young man who goes off to fight in the Civil War and finds it to be a decidedly different experience than what he'd been expecting. Though the Civil War ended before Crane was born and he had never fought a battle in his life, his novel was praised for its realism and authenticity and it had a strong influence on modernist fiction that emerged in the early part of the 20th century. Close examination of this excerpt will prepare students to consider the language and themes of Crane's story and to write thoughtful, informed, and textually-rooted responses, consistent with the ELA Common Core Standards for the high school grades.
Background (15 minutes)

1. **Watch the Preview (SL.9-10.1-2).** As a group, watch the video preview of the premium lesson. Use the following questions to spur discussion following the preview, and to give students some context before reading the excerpt:
   
a. The excerpt features a Civil War soldier contemplating “the realities of war.” How do you think the realities of war are different from the way people—especially young men—might imagine war?

b. Pay attention to the images and music in the preview. What do you know about the time period being depicted? When did the Civil War take place, and why?

c. Many famous novels of the 20th century had the goal of exposing the horrors and realities of war. Why do people continue to romanticize war, though many who have experienced it describe it as horrifying?

Extension (additional 10 minutes)

d. **Discuss (SL.9-10.1-2).** The preview mentions several words that are by now common themes in the discussion of war: courage, glory, horror, bravery, loyalty. Discuss these words and their meanings in the context of war. Do they have different meanings in other contexts?

Engaging the Text (140 minutes)

2. **Read the Text (40 minutes)**

   a. **Read and Annotate (RL.9-10.1-5, 10).** Have students read and annotate the excerpt from Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage*. If your classroom has a projector, you might use it to read and annotate the first couple of paragraphs as a class, modeling the annotating skills you wish students to use. Then have students complete the rest on their own. These annotations will be visible to you after students submit their writing assignments or beforehand if you use the “Mimic” function to access the students’ accounts.

   b. **Discuss (RL.9-10.1-3, 5; SL.9-10.1-2).** What changes take place in the main character’s perspective between the excerpts from Chapters 1 and 7? How does he feel about war at the story’s beginning, and how do his feelings change after he sees the battlefield? Speculate on what might have caused these changes.

Extension (additional 20 minutes)

c. **Listen and Discuss (SL.9-10.1-2).** As a class, listen to the audio reading of the text. What are some of the different effects of reading the text versus hearing it read aloud?

d. **Comprehend (RL.9-10.1-5, 10).** Have students complete the multiple-choice questions. Collect papers or discuss answers as a class.

3. **Watch SyncTV (40 minutes)**

   a. **Watch.** Either watch the SyncTV discussion associated with *The Red Badge of Courage* as a class or ask students to watch it on their individual computers.
b. **Focus (RL.9-10.1-2, 5; SL.9-10.1-2)** From 0:35-1:15 the SyncTV students discuss the different settings of the two excerpts. Ask your students to note how the SyncTV students use setting descriptions to derive meaning from the text.

c. **Focus (RL.9-10.1-3; SL.9-10.1-3)** From roughly 1:20-2:10, the students debate the main character’s moral ambiguity. Have students pay attention to both sides of the argument as well as to the ambiguity of the text on this question.

d. **Focus (RL.9-10.1-3; SL.9-10.1-2)** In the portion from 7:05-7:55, the SyncTV students discuss the theme of the difference between the main character’s perception and the reality of his experience. Ask students to use this section as a model for discussing theme in works of literature.

e. **Discuss (SL.9-10.1-3 and RL.9-10.1-5, 10).** After your class watches the SyncTV episode, ask them to discuss which ideas in the SyncTV episode stood out most for them. How did listening to the students’ discussion affect their thoughts about the excerpts? Divide students into small groups of 3-4 students and ask them to discuss some of the questions below, using the SyncTV episode as a model. Move around the room monitoring the groups during the discussion:

   i. Do you sympathize with the main character, Henry Fleming? Do you think he is a coward? Do his flaws make it impossible to sympathize with him? Explain your answers.

   ii. How does Stephen Crane use formal technique in the narration (point-of-view, tone, etc.) to create a sense of moral ambiguity?

   iii. What is a “red badge of courage”? Do you think this is an appropriate and meaningful symbol of courage? Does a “red badge” prove that one is courageous? Why or why not?

   iv. Crane uses many colors in his descriptions and imagery. Why do you think color plays such a big role? What does it add to the text?

   v. Discuss how Crane uses the external reality—especially nature and the way human beings interact with nature—to mirror Fleming’s internal state. How do the descriptions of Fleming’s surroundings change as his point of view changes?

   vi. Does *The Red Badge of Courage* seem realistic to you? Why or why not? Does it strike you as authentic, or imagined?

**Extension (additional 45 minutes)**

f. **Write Creatively (W.9-10.3)** As a homework assignment, ask students to write Chapter 6 of *The Red Badge of Courage*, drawing on events and Fleming’s point of view in Chapters 1 and 7. Speculate on what might have happened in Chapter 6 that caused this shift in his inner state, and write the “missing” chapter.

4. **Think (10 minutes)**

   a. **Respond (W.9-10.1, 4, 9).** Ask students to read the “Think” questions, watch the corresponding video clips, and respond to the questions, either in class or for homework.
5. **Write (50 minutes)**

   a. **Discuss** (*SL.9-10.1*). Read the prompt you have chosen for students, and then solicit questions regarding the prompt or the assignment expectations. Whichever prompt you have chosen, make sure you are clear about the assignment expectations and the rubric that you and other students will use to evaluate them.

   b. **Organize** (*RL.9-10.1-5; W.9-10.1-2, 5*). Ask students to go back and annotate the text with the prompt in mind. They should organize their thoughts and the points they’ll address in their writing as they make annotations. If you’ve worked on outlining or other organizational tools for writing, this is a good place to apply them.

   c. **Write** (*W.9-10.1-2, 4-6, 9-10*). Have students go through the writing process of planning, revising, editing, and publishing their writing responses.

   d. **Review** (*W.9-10.4-6*). Use the StudySync “Review” feature to have students complete one to two evaluations of their peers’ work based on your chosen review rubric. Have the students look at and reflect on peer evaluations of their own writing. What might they do differently in revision? How might they strengthen their writing and their ideas?

**Extension (additional 45 minutes)**

   e. **Write** (*W.9-10.1-2, 4-6, 9-10*). For homework, have students write an essay using one of the prompts you did not choose to do in class. Ask students to publish their responses online.

   f. **Write Persuasively** (*W.9-10.1, 4-6, 10*). Stephen Crane, author of *The Red Badge of Courage*, was born several years after the Civil War ended and never fought on a battlefield in his life, yet his novel was praised for its realism and authenticity. In a 400-word essay response, discuss whether you think it matters if an author has actually had the experiences he or she is writing about. Does Crane’s lack of experience affect your reaction to this text? Should it? Why or why not?
### SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

#### Key Vocabulary

1. **secular** *(adj.)* - relating to the physical and not the spiritual or religious world
2. **lurid** *(adj.)* - shocking or disgusting; unpleasantly bright
3. **ardor** *(n.)* - strong emotion of eagerness, excitement, or love
4. **impregnable** *(adj.)* - very strong; unable to be weakened or captured
5. **imbecile** *(n./adj.)* - a stupid or foolish person; stupid or foolish
6. **sagacious** *(adj.)* - wise, sharp, able to make careful, intelligent decisions
7. **derision** *(n.)* - scorn or mockery
8. **conciliate** *(v.)* - to appease
9. **intricate** *(adj.)* - composed of many parts; complex
10. **impudent** *(adj.)* - rude or disrespectful

#### Reading Comprehension Questions

1. Based on the excerpt, Henry Fleming seems to be from
   a. a large city.
   b. a farming community.
   c. the South.
   d. a factory town.
2. Fleming is excited at the outset of the excerpt because
   a. he is going home.
   b. he disobeyed his mother’s rules.
   c. there is going to be a battle.
   d. the newspapers were predicting a victory.
3. The narrator would probably describe Fleming's view of war at the beginning of the story as
   a. romantic.
   b. critical.
   c. apprehensive.
   d. confused.
4. We can infer that Fleming gained much of his desire to enlist from
   a. his family.
   b. military commanders.
   c. religious education.
   d. reading about war.
5. After Fleming has fled the battlefield, he immediately
   a. tries to rationalize his actions.
   b. heads back to the camp.
   c. tries to find other fallen soldiers.
   d. debates whether to return to battle.

6. Which of the following can be said about the setting in Chapter 7?
   a. The colors are much brighter and more vibrant.
   b. Fleming feels as if the forest is attacking him.
   c. It is littered with the bodies of his fallen comrades.
   d. all of the above

7. What action does Fleming perform in both Chapters 1 and 7?
   a. running away.
   b. fighting a battle.
   c. sleeping.
   d. hiding somewhere.

8. Fleming attempts to convince himself that his actions before Chapter 7 were
   a. unnecessary.
   b. wise.
   c. cowardly.
   d. inevitable.
   e. “It seemed now that Nature had no ears.”

9. Which of the following best paraphrases the meaning of this statement?
   a. The animals were unable to understand what he said.
   b. Animals had lost their hearing because the battle was so loud.
   c. Nature seemed unaware of or indifferent to the horrors of war.
   d. Nature was screaming so loud it could not hear.

10. From the details in the excerpt, we know that Fleming is fighting for
    a. the Union.
    b. the Confederacy.
    c. a foreign ally.
    d. he is an undercover spy.

Answer Key

  1. B
  2. C
  3. A
  4. D
  5. A
  6. B
  7. D
  8. B
  9. C
  10. A
Further Assignments

1. Have students read all of Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage*. Ask them to keep a journal while they read, noting passages in the book that discuss themes and turning points in Henry Fleming’s perceptions. *(RL.9-10.1-5; W.9-10.9)*

2. What is an anti-war novel? Is *The Red Badge of Courage* an anti-war novel? Or is it more neutral? What do you think Crane’s perspective and purpose are? *(RL.9-10.1-2; W.9-10.9)*

3. Have students read Erich Maria Remarque’s *All Quiet on the Western Front*, a novel with a similar narrative arc that is set in a different time and place. Have students compare and contrast the two novels with each other, noting how Crane’s text influenced Remarque’s, and also how the two diverge. *(RL.9-10.1-6, 10; W.9-10.9)*

4. Is Fleming a victim of some grander, nefarious scheme, as he claims in the excerpt? Or is he solely responsible for his actions as an individual? Ask students to respond to these questions with an essay of at least 300 words. *(RL.9-10.1-3; W.9-10.9)*

5. For historical context, have students research the Civil War and the battles and locations in which *The Red Badge of Courage* takes place. *(W.9-10.7-9)*

6. Have students identify words in the excerpts connected to military action and battles. Ask them to list a dozen words, copy them, and find definitions. Suggest they share their lists with a partner or two other students, exchanging information with each other about words they chose. *(ELL)*