

Red Badge of Courage: Character Analysis

Directions: Watch the following video clips and answer their corresponding questions.

1. Begin by viewing the clip titled [“Two Days in the Life of Henry Fleming.”](#) The narrator observes, “He fancies himself a hero until the stark reality of the battlefield hits him. Henry is suddenly faced with the key question of his life—and of the book—will he measure up?” What evidence can you find in the novel to support this claim that Henry is uncertain about the skill and bravery that are required of a soldier in the midst of war?

2. View the clip titled [“Stephen Crane: Author of *The Red Badge of Courage*.”](#) The narrator points out that *The Red Badge of Courage* was written over thirty years after the Civil War by a young author who had never been near a battlefield in his life. Still, critics and readers were amazed at the realistic and accurate portrayal of the events and of the feelings that the soldiers must have felt as they prepared for battle. How do you think Stephen Crane was able to provide such a realistic view of Civil War battles and the thoughts and emotions of the young men who served in the armies? What kinds of resources do you think he used to create this realistic image? Do you think that the fact that he never fought in a war himself diminishes the impact of his novel? Explain.

3. Henry Fleming continues to wonder if he has the courage to stand and fight when his regiment is called to battle. Watch the video clip titled [“A Soldier’s Doubt: Do I Have What it Takes to Fight?”](#) and listen to the comments by veterans of other wars in American history. In what ways do you think that the experience of war is universal and that the situations in which soldiers find themselves are similar, regardless of the dates and locations in which these wars have been fought. Using specific references from the novel, explain what Crane meant when he wrote, “He became not a man but a member. He felt the subtle battle brotherhood, more potent even than the cause for which they were fighting. It was a mysterious fraternity”

4. The video clip titled [“The Vulnerability of the Infantryman: Henry Deserts the Army”](#) depicts a pivotal moment in the novel. In this scene, Henry becomes frightened by the battle and retreats for safety. The narrator observes, “There could be no worse failure. Henry is appalled at himself. Even worse, he is mistaken for one of the wounded.” Using what you know about Henry’s character, why do you think that his situation is made worse by the fact that others mistake him for a wounded soldier? As Henry thinks about the events that led to his retreat from the battle lines, how does he justify his actions?