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# Introduction

## *The Red Badge of Courage* in Illustration and Art

*The Red Badge of Courage*, published in 1895, is one of the world's great war novels. Yet it was written by a man who had never fought in a war. Stephen Crane was not even alive when the American Civil War ended. Nevertheless, people who did fight in that conflict were convinced Crane had to have been there to be able to write as he did. Crane's novel is an example of literary realism. It is this style that enables the story to convey a sense of what the Civil War must have been like for the millions of ordinary soldiers who fought in it.

However, the realism of Crane's novel is not as simple as it seems. The novel does recreate vividly a lifelike Civil War battlefield. In this sense, its realism makes it useful to history teachers as a fictional supplement to lessons on that war. The novel also reflects concerns about individuals and society keenly felt in the urban and industrial United States of the late 1800s. For both reasons, *The Red Badge of Courage* is an ideal novel to include in the MindSparks Great Literature in Illustration & Art series.

As with each of the teacher's guides in this series, this one uses twelve illustrations to focus on a number of major themes in one great novel. The illustrations help provide historical or social context and a dramatic focus for activities exploring the novel in greater depth. That focus, however, is not solely on historical setting. The activities and discussion points that accompany each image relate that image both to the historical context and to key themes in the novel itself. Our goal is a unique fusion of art, literature, and historical background information.

The twelve illustrations are grouped into four lessons (three illustrations per lesson). And each of these lessons explores one broad topic in *The Red Badge of Courage*. Briefly, the four lessons are as follows:

### **The Romance of the Civil War**

The images in this lesson convey a heroic and romantic sense of the Civil War. This sense is not necessarily untrue, but it leaves out the moral ambiguities found in any war. By contrast, Crane's novel focuses sharply on these moral ambiguities.

### **"That Was at Chancellorsville"**

The battle that forms the context for the novel is never mentioned, but it is clear from many references that it was the Battle of Chancellorsville. The illustrations here touch on some key aspects of that historic clash.

### **A Soldier's View of the Civil War**

The illustrations here should add to an appreciation of the soldier's-eye view of the Civil War—and of war in general—offered by the novel itself.

### **Stephen Crane's United States**

Crane's focus in his novel is only partly on the Civil War. His concerns were also with the harsh, impersonal industrial order of the late 1800s and with a growing military ethos that saw war as a true test of manhood. It is these issues that *The Red Badge of Courage* explores and challenges.

## Using Visual Images in the Classroom

Many textbooks today contain colorful visuals, but, all too often, these images function primarily to fill space or offer little educational value. They make the text more entertaining, or at least more palatable, often doing little more than providing simple pictorial reinforcement of ideas already presented in the text. In many cases, school materials pander to the visual orientation of the young while doing little to help the students master the challenges of the visual media that dominate their lives.

By way of contrast, our approach to using visual materials emphasizes their unique strengths as social or historical documents. The lessons in MindSparks booklets focus students on the visual symbols and metaphors in editorial cartoons, the dramatic qualities of certain photographs, the potential of many images to make abstract ideas more specific and concrete, the implicit biases and stereotypes in certain images, all of which include an emotional power and the ability to invoke the spirit of a time and place. In the process, we make every effort to strengthen students' visual literacy skills in general and their ability to think critically and engage in spirited but disciplined discussions.

After using the booklet, you may wish to look at some of the many other MindSparks products using editorial cartoons, photographs, posters, and other visual images.

## How to Use This Booklet

The booklet is divided into four lessons, with three cartoons per lesson. Each lesson consists of the following:

### **A BACKGROUND-INFORMATION SHEET**

This page provides brief summaries explaining the three illustrations on which the lesson is based and their relevance to the lesson's objectives.

### **DISCUSSION-ACTIVITY PAGES FOR EACH VISUAL DISPLAY**

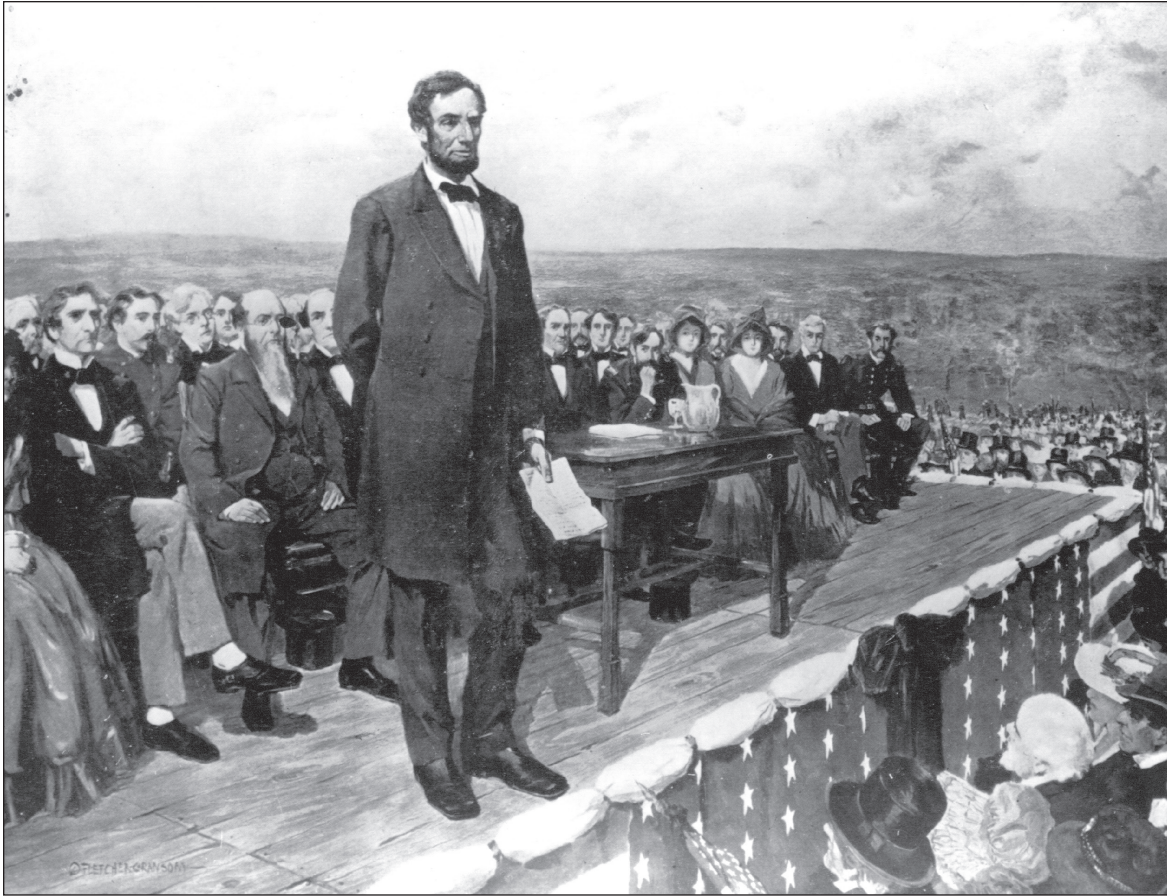
Each page includes one image, and a sequence of questions is provided to help you plan an all-classroom discussion while examining the image. The questions take students step-by-step through an analysis of the visual. For students who require more support to answer the questions, you may hand them an entire discussion-activity page, reproducible in order to provide more visual support. For students who need less support to answer questions, keep the page yourself, and ask the questions of the class as a whole in order to provide a listening and response-writing activity. In addition to these questions, one or two follow-up activities are suggested. The instructions for these activities are directed to the student. Some are individual assignments while others work best as small-group or all-class activities. You may reproduce any of these pages for classroom use. Answers to factual questions are also provided on the inside back cover of the booklet.

### **ILLUSTRATIONS AND OTHER VISUAL ART**

Images are printed alongside discussion questions and follow-up activities on reproducible pages, making them readily available to students. Stand-alone versions of all images, also reproducible, can be found in the appendix. Using images without the text may prove useful for testing or to encourage students to formulate their own analyses before consulting the text.

## LESSON 1 — THE ROMANCE OF THE CIVIL WAR

# Illustration 1



Library of Congress, Printed Photographs Division, Washington, DC

### Discussing the Illustration

1. This drawing shows a very famous moment in the American Civil War. When did the Civil War take place, and who fought in it? Can you identify the famous U.S. leader giving a speech in this illustration?
2. This illustration shows President Lincoln giving his famous Gettysburg Address in November 1863. Why did Lincoln travel to Gettysburg to give this speech?
3. Many American students used to have to memorize the Gettysburg Address. Some still do today. Do you think this is a good idea? How much of the speech do you know? Can you recite any phrases from it? If so, which ones?
4. Some historians say the Gettysburg Address may have summed up what the Civil War was about better than just about any other speech or written document. Do you agree? Why or why not? In your view, what was the overall importance of the Civil War?

### Follow-up Activities

1. Henry Fleming is the main character in *The Red Badge of Courage*. Read both that novel and the Gettysburg Address. Then try to imagine what Henry Fleming would have felt about the address. Keep in mind that the battle described in *The Red Badge of Courage* is actually the Battle of Chancellorsville. It took place in May 1863, two months before the Battle of Gettysburg. Lincoln gave his famous address a few months after that, in November. Pretend you are Henry Fleming. You have just read the Gettysburg Address in a newspaper. Write a diary entry giving your view of the address. Remember, try to describe the address as you think Henry Fleming would.
2. Look through several books on the Civil War in your library. Find five paintings or drawings of Lincoln. Learn what you can about them and think about the views they give of Lincoln and the Civil War. Are the illustrations favorable or unfavorable in their view of Lincoln? Are they realistic or overly sentimental? Bring in copies of the paintings and discuss them with the class.



## The Romance of the Civil War Illustration 2



"Good-By to Fort Sumter," *Harper's Weekly*, Feb. 23, 1861



"Mustered Out," *Harper's Weekly*, May 19, 1866, Library of Congress