

RATIONALE

There are three basic goals for this unit. The first is that students will understand and appreciate the themes, movements, and historical contexts of American literature, particularly Realism in the context of *The Red Badge of Courage* and the Civil War. The second is that students will recognize the importance of characterization, irony, and imagery as literary devices. The third goal for the unit is that students will become comfortable, competent writers as they write for different purposes and audiences and in different genres and forms, both individually and collaboratively.

These unit goals are simply more specific versions of course goals outlined by the Virginia Standards of Learning for English 11. Three of these course goals are that students' "appreciation for literature will be enhanced by the study of American literature, both classic and contemporary"; students "will develop expository and persuasive compositions by locating, evaluating, synthesizing, and citing applicable information with careful attention to organization and accuracy"; and students "will write in a variety of forms".

In addition to being anchored by state standards, this unit is grounded in current language arts scholarship. Daily journal writing in which students explore their own opinions and experiences is consistent with Elbow's insistence that nonacademic writing be included in curricula. The grammar mini-lessons in this unit are manifestations of Dornan, et al.'s recommendation to teach grammar in context. Flower and Hayes' Cognitive Process Theory of Writing is the basis for the Day 8 assignment which asks students to reflect through writing on decisions made during revision. In designing the unit's final project, a publishing venture, I drew on Soven, who believes that the opportunity to publish is one of the most valuable techniques for encouraging good writing.

It is my personal belief that the language arts teacher should help students connect literature to their own lives. This unit builds on that belief through daily expressive writing activities which call attention to commonalities between literature and life and, in doing so, open up personal points of entry to the text. The text's importance is different for each student and journaling allows students to identify this personal importance and explore it. I also believe that the language arts teacher should give students opportunities to work collaboratively with their peers and publish their writing. These beliefs are evident in the culmination of this unit when students work together to produce, refine, and publish an e-anthology of collected essays.

UNIT PLAN

The following is a four-week section of a nine-week unit built around the novel, *The Red Badge of Courage*, by Stephen Crane. *A description of the last five weeks of the unit is offered as well, but in less detail. The plan is designed for a school using a block schedule consisting of 90-minute classes.

Week 1

Day 1: For a **journal entry** students will explore the term “civil war” and why it has often been referred to as an oxymoron. We will discuss the opinions of the class and then I will segue into an **introduction of the unit**, providing students with an overview of the goals, the work required, and the grading. A PowerPoint presentation will follow to more specifically **introduce *The Red Badge of Courage*, Realism, the Civil War context for the novel and a brief bio of Stephen Crane.** (The journal entry - which will be completed in class - will get students thinking about their own notions of war before we enter into the text and its context. In this way students can begin to develop their own points of entry into the text. The presentation will give students a clear idea of what it to come).

Day 2: Students should have read through chapter 4. Random students will be called upon to summarize what’s happened in the novel thus far. For **journal entries** students will explore who they would choose as their protagonist if they were to tell a war story; they’ll write about whose point of view would they tap and why and will choose from a list of possibilities on the board (General, Private, Medic, Bugler, etc.) A **class discussion** will follow **on Crane’s choice of protagonist** and how this choice adds to the novel’s Realistic qualities. Students will **view selected parts of Ken Burns’ Civil War documentary.** Differences in storytelling techniques and style between *Red Badge* and the documentary will be discussed afterward. (By calling on random students to give summaries, I am challenging them to be prepared for each class session. I want students to understand the importance of Crane’s choices of point-of-view and protagonist and be aware of the implications and effectiveness of this choice as compared to Burns’ documentary style. Also, I want students to see how genre considerations affect storytelling).

Day 3: Review the last 2 days. Students will take a 10-question multiple choice/short answer **quiz on chapters 1-4 and Realism.** On the quiz, students will be asked to recall significant actions or dialogue from the stated chapters. They will also be asked to briefly identify and explain the Realistic aspects of a given passage from the novel. I will conduct **journal check #1.** A **class discussion on conflict**, its various forms, and how it

frames the novel will follow. **Students will work in groups to explore conflict.** In groups of 3-4 students will discuss the differences between internal/external conflicts and come up with scenarios, either real or imagined, which, as a group, they will dramatize in front of the class. They will act out two different scenarios illustrating the distinctions between internal and external conflict for a class participation grade. (The purpose for the quizzes in this unit is to make sure students are reading and paying attention to lecture and class discussions. Each of the successive quizzes in the unit will follow the same format: 8 multiple-choice “recall” questions and 2 short answer questions about a given passage from the text. The journal check is to make sure students are writing something each day. They receive daily participation grades if they address the prompt in any way. I am exploring conflict because it is both a fiction writer’s tool and the framing context for the novel. It also gives students another opportunity to personally enter into the text).

Week 2

Day 4: Review the previous week’s work. Students should have chapters 5-8 read. Students will summarize chapters 5-8 for the class. For a **journal entry** students will be asked to respond to some of Matthew Brady’s famous Civil War photographs. I will use the photographs as a springboard for a **lecture on imagery** in *Red Badge*. **Students will read two Walt Whitman poems, *A March in the Ranks Hard-Prest, and the Road Unknown*, and *Reconciliation*. We will discuss Whitman’s poems as a class, and then start group work.** Groups of four will be assigned an image from one of the two poems for which they will be responsible. They will then find a comparable passage in selected chapters of *Red Badge* to either compare or contrast to the assigned image. After the comparison/contrast is complete, students will revisit Brady’s photographs and select one to compare/contrast to either Whitman’s or Crane’s image (or both). Each group will report back to the class on their findings. (The journal activity will expose students to battle images and prime them to transfer that to the analysis of imagery in text. Students will understand imagery more fully by viewing its manifestation in different forms – in photographs, in fiction and in poetry. This will also serve to reinforce the previous lesson on authorial choice with regard to genre (see Day 2). During group work students will have assigned roles (e.g., recorder, researcher, reporter, etc); this will begin preparing them to work cooperatively, as they will be required to do for the e-anthology (see *The last five weeks...*).

Day 5: Quiz on chapters 5-8 and imagery. For a **journal entry** students will write three paragraphs. Each paragraph will have the same purpose (to inform the reader as to what *Red Badge* is about), but the audience will change for each. The first paragraph will be written to a friend, sibling,

cousin or peer; the second paragraph to grandmother, grandfather, aunt, or uncle; third paragraph to a college professor who is an expert on the book and the writer. A **discussion of audience consideration** will follow and segue into an **introduction to a letter writing assignment**. **Students will read letters home from soldiers in Vietnam and Iraq as models.** (By switching audiences, students will become more conscious of how they communicate with various readers/audiences. This will help warm students up for the coming assignment – the letter writing assignment – which asks them to address a pen pal. Reading the model letters will reinforce this consideration of audience as well as reinforce genre).

Week 3

Day 6: Review previous two weeks. Students should have chapters 9-12 read. Students will summarize chapters 9-12 for the class. A brief definition and explanation of irony will be given to the class and for a **journal entry** students will write about a time when something ironic occurred in their lives. I will then **lecture on characterization and irony** in the context of *Red Badge*. A short **mini-lesson on active vs. passive voice** will follow. The lesson will consist of a candy toss demonstration, student-led sentence construction, a PowerPoint presentation, and a synthesizing worksheet. (The journal entry allows students another opportunity to personally enter into the text by making connections between irony in their lives and irony in the novel. The lecture will build on this journal entry. For the mini-lesson, the candy toss and student-led sentence construction are designed simply to get students attention and actively involve them in the lesson. I will throw a piece of candy to a student and ask another student to compose a sentence describing the action. The PowerPoint presentation will flesh out the details and prepare students for the upcoming practice. The mini-lesson is situated here to prime students for peer revising on Day 7. This also gives them the opportunity to look at the use of active and passive voice in their letter writing assignment before it is peer reviewed).

Day 7: For a **journal entry** students will explore whether being anti-war is the same as being unpatriotic and we will discuss this in the context of the Iraq war, the Vietnam War, and then relate it to *Red Badge*. **Two copies of the first draft of the letter writing assignment are due.** I will give an **Introduction to the peer review process**. I will **model the peer review process for students** on the overhead using a soldier's letter home (one of the examples that we read in class on Day 5). **Students will exchange papers and complete a peer revision worksheet.** (The journal entry will allow students to evaluate the protagonist and explore characterization. The discussion of wars present and past will help make the material relevant. When modeling the peer review process I will give students a

clear idea of what higher order concerns and lower order concerns are and how and when to move from one to the next. On the peer revision worksheet, those who are revising are asked to answer given questions about their peer's content and use of convention, to pose questions to the writer, and to make suggestions and offer rationale for those suggestions. The questions on the peer revision worksheet will be broken into two groups; one group will address higher order concerns, the other will address lower order concerns. A higher order question might be: Has the writer cited the text as support for each of his answers? A lower order question might be: Has the writer used the passive voice in situations where active voice would be more appropriate?).

Day 8: Meet in **computer lab**. I will conduct **journal check 2** while students take a **quiz on chaps 9-12 and characterization and irony**. Students will be given class time to **use the computers and revise the letter writing assignment**. As students work, I will hold **informal conferences** for those wanting to discuss their papers. At the end of class **students will turn in a one-page write-up explaining the revisions they made**. (By giving class time for writing and revising, I am reinforcing the value of the process. The conferences will allow for individual guidance and attention for students who feel they need it. For the one-page write-up I will advise students to focus on one or two specific changes and direct them to explain why the new version is better or more effective than the old. When students write about the revision process they become more aware of the decisions they are making with their writing and, as a result, more conscious about the process.)

Week 4

Day 9: Review previous three weeks. Students should have chapters 13-16 read. Students will summarize these chapters for the class. For a **journal entry** students will address how they feel about war (Is it necessary? Why or why not? Why would someone volunteer for war?), and if they themselves would volunteer for war and why. I will conduct a **grammar mini-lesson** (or a couple of mini-lessons, depending on the number of problems that students are experiencing with their writing). (The grammar mini-lesson(s) will be the product of my setting up a grammar question drop box in class. Any questions students have regarding grammar, usage or Standard English can be written on a slip of paper and dropped in the box. This gives students the opportunity to look at their own usage critically and understand where they are experiencing problems. I will go through the questions and look for areas of overlap and base mini-lessons on those areas. If I notice areas of weakness that students aren't seeing, then I will incorporate a mini-lesson to address that particular weakness.

The lessons will be carried out using the students' own writing or text from the novel).

Day 10: Letter writing assignment due. Students will take a **quiz on chapters 13-16**. The class will **watch some of the film adaptation of *Red Badge***. A **class discussion** will follow the film during which we will readdress the concept of genre choice and discuss similarities and differences between the novel and the film (considering imagery, narration, characterization, etc.) Students will be asked to retrieve their journal entries from Day 2 when they wrote about who they would choose as their protagonist. Their responses will be weaved into the discussion. We will also introduce Ken Burns' documentary, Matthew Brady's photographs, and Walt Whitman's poetry back into the discussion. For a **journal entry** students will be asked to imagine how the novel will end and to explain why they believe this ending would be appropriate. (Watching some but not all of the film will encourage students to reflect solely on the first half of the unit. We will watch the rest of the film upon completion of the reading. The class discussion will reinforce this reflection and tie in the various themes and concepts discussed during the previous three weeks. The journal entry will challenge students to consider authorial choice and the progression of the events in the novel).

Weeks 5-9

*The last five weeks of the unit will consist of continued reading (students will finish the novel during week six), and more journal writing and group work, both anchored to the text of *Red Badge*. During week five students will be introduced to the unit's major writing assignment – the critical essay. As support for the completion of this essay, I will devote an entire class period to each “phase” of the writing process and at the end of each of those periods students will do write-ups to reflect on the writing process. I will give more grammar mini-lessons when and where necessary and a full class period will be dedicated to helping students locate, incorporate and cite literary criticism. Two peer revising sessions will also be completed in this five-week span. The essay will be due week 8 and the final week of the unit will be devoted to students working collaboratively both in class and in the computer lab to produce, refine, and publish an e-anthology of their collected critical essays. The students will retain two pieces of writing – the letter writing assignment and the critical essay – from this unit for the final portfolio.