



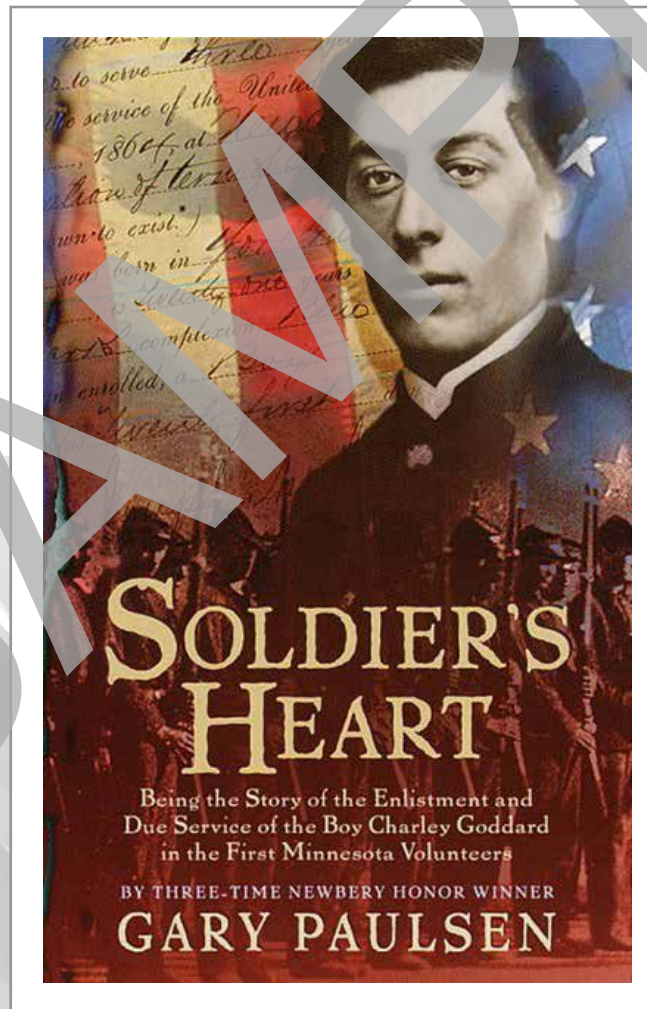
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 9-12

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

Soldier's Heart

Gary Paulsen



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

Soldier's Heart

Gary Paulsen

TEACHER GUIDE

NOTE:

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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Skills and Strategies

Critical Thinking

Prediction, identifying main ideas, themes, summarizing, interpreting

Comprehension

Compare/contrast, evaluating and supporting judgments, research, identifying attributes

Writing

Creative, expository, dramatic, poetry

Vocabulary

Context clues, synonyms, antonyms, definitions

Literary Elements

Metaphors and similes, literal and figurative language, point of view

Across the Curriculum

Art—scenery design; Math—graphing; Social Studies—Civil War era (particularly Gettysburg); Film—making a video; Music—composition and song interpretation; Geography; Science

Genre: historical fiction (partially biographic)

Setting: Minnesota and the mid-Atlantic States during the Civil War

Point of View: third person

Themes: the horrors of war, the emotional scars of war, the dehumanizing effects of war

Conflict: person vs. person, person vs. self, person vs. nature

Style: narrative

Tone: initially upbeat and optimistic; increasingly dark and foreboding

Date of First Publication: 1998

Summary

Soldier's Heart follows the story of Charley Goddard, a 15-year-old boy from Minnesota, who joins the First Minnesota Volunteers. His dreams of glory and heroism soon disintegrate as he confronts the harsh realities of war in some of the Civil War's deadliest battles. The reader witnesses the steady metamorphosis of Charley from an eager young boy to a soldier who fights in a robotic fashion, not caring if he lives or dies.

About the Author

Gary Paulsen, one of America's best-loved writers for young people, was born in 1939. Though never a serious student, Paulsen fed his appetite for adventure with books, spending hours reading alone in his basement. At the age of 14, he ran away from home to join a carnival. The years to come found Paulsen doing many things, from working as a farm hand to racing the Iditarod in Alaska. When health problems forced him to give up racing dogs, he turned to writing as a full-time profession. A prodigious writer, Paulsen has authored more than 175 books, three of which are Newbery Honor books, as well as numerous short stories and articles. Paulsen and his wife, the artist Ruth Wright Paulsen, divide their time between their homes in New Mexico and on the Pacific Ocean.

Background Information

1. **First Minnesota Volunteers:** the first regiment to offer its services to President Lincoln after the fall of Fort Sumter and the subsequent start of the Civil War in 1861; They fought in virtually every major eastern battle during the first three years of the war, including Gettysburg, in which they played a crucial role.
2. **The Battle of Bull Run (aka Manassas Junction):** Fought on July 21, 1861, this battle was the earliest major land battle of the Civil War. The Confederate Army, under the leadership of General Irvin McDowell, defeated the Union Army, which fought under General P.G.T. Beauregard.
3. **The Battle of Gettysburg:** Generally considered the greatest battle of the Civil War, this battle marked a turning point in the war. General George Meade led the Union Army, while Robert E. Lee led the Confederacy. Three days of fighting (July 1–July 3, 1863) eventually resulted in a Confederate retreat following "Pickett's Charge" in which General George Pickett of the Confederacy failed in his assault against the Union Army. More men were killed at Gettysburg than in all the previous American wars *combined*.

Getting the “Lay of the Land”

Directions: Prepare for reading by answering the following short-answer questions.

1. Who is the author?

2. What does the title suggest to you about the book?

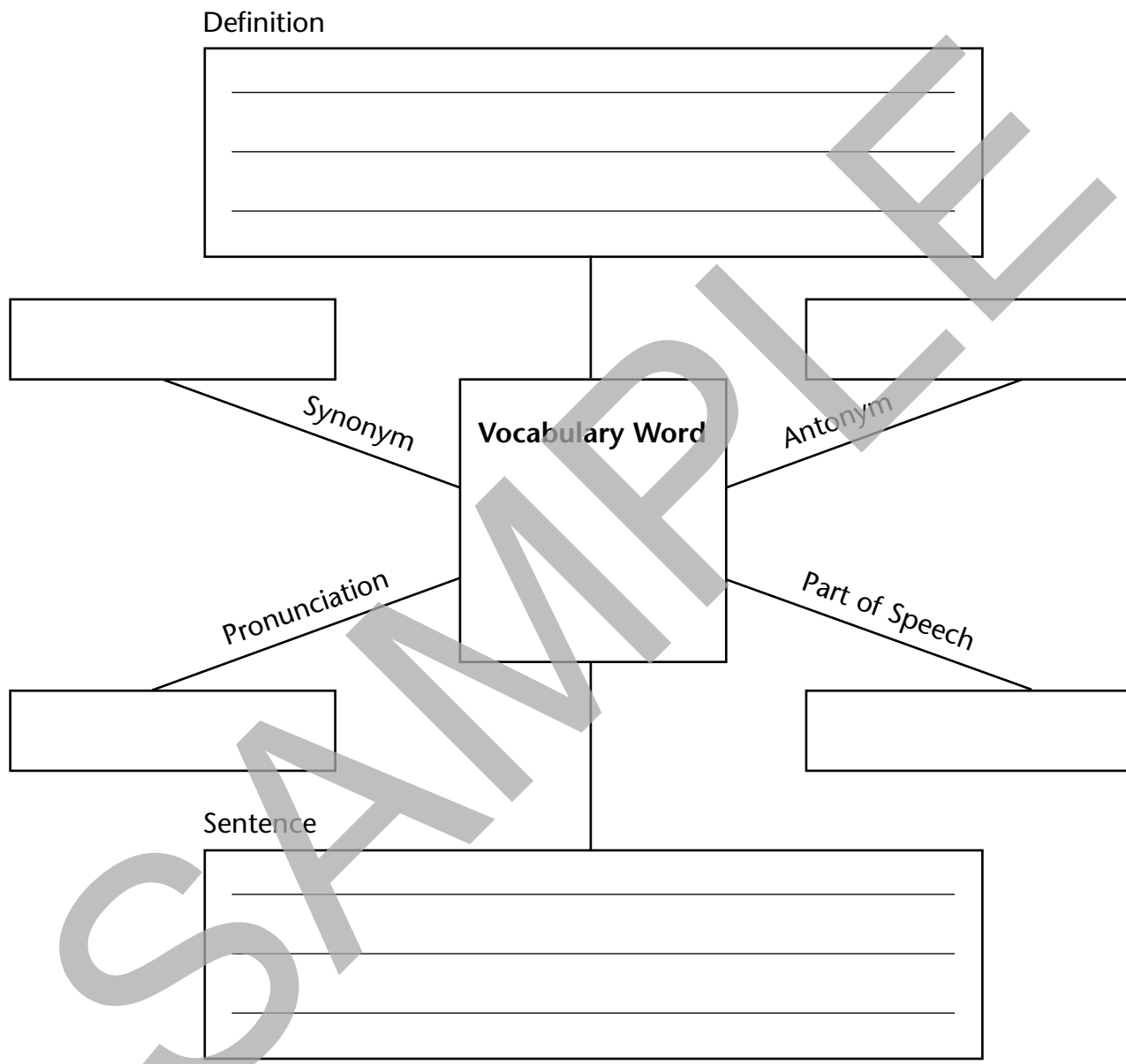
3. When was the book first copyrighted?

4. How many pages are there in the book?

5. Thumb through the book. Read three pages—one from near the beginning, one from near the middle, and one from near the end. What predictions can you make about the book?

6. What does the cover suggest to you about the book?

Word Map



Chapters Seven–Eight, pp. 58–89

General McClellan’s Union forces spend the winter in camp. The soldiers pass their time cooking and cleaning. Charley believes it is pointless to make friends since they are all doomed to die in battle. While on guard duty, Charley makes a truce with a Rebel soldier across the river. The two trade coffee and tobacco. Eventually, Charley’s superior puts a stop to it.

Charley’s commander orders him to kill horses to feed the wounded men. Soon, with little warning, the men are ordered to march. Another battle ensues in which the Rebel forces once again defeat the Union Army. Charley is further disheartened when he is ordered to stack the bodies of dead soldiers to provide a windbreak for the camp surgeon.

Vocabulary

shanties (58)
morale (60)
latrines (60)
dire (62)
mutiny (62)
ague (63)
hunkered (65)
commandeered (71)
impending (73)
dappled (75)
foliage (76)
inferno (76)
oblique (81)
rabid (84)

Discussion Questions

1. Why is there so much disease in the camp? (*Conditions are very unsanitary; open toilets, ill soldiers without medical treatment, bad weather, p. 61*)
2. Does the camp experience bring Charley closer to his fellow soldiers? Explain. (*No. On the contrary, Charley concludes it’s every man for himself. He believes the system of privileges separates rather than unites the men. pp. 62–63*)
3. How do the scenes in which Charley trades coffee and tobacco with the Rebel soldier across the river represent a different side of war? (*These scenes show that war often makes enemies of people who would not be so in a regular environment. Men with basically the same needs and desires are made to hate each other while on the battlefield when they might otherwise be friends. pp. 65–70*)
4. Why does it make Charley sick to kill horses for food? (*He grew up around horses and loves them. He may also feel guilty because horses have no choice but to go to war. pp. 72–73*)
5. Why don’t the soldiers fighting for either side know who is winning the war? (*Technology and communication weren’t what they are today. There was not immediate reporting on events, so there was much confusion. p. 73*)
6. What is significant about Charley not noticing any of the beauty around him? (*This is one more example of how war strips the soldier of his ability to experience beauty and goodness. p. 75*)
7. How is Charley’s reaction to the dead falling around him contrary to what we read in many war novels? (*We often read about war heroes who are self-sacrificing, brave, and noble. Charley’s reaction is a brutal desire for self-preservation. pp. 76–77*)
8. Read aloud the second paragraph on page 84 of the novel. Discuss the emotions and primal reactions conveyed in this paragraph. What does this passage reveal about the author’s attitude toward war? (*Answers will vary.*)
9. What does the author mean when he writes, “[Charley] didn’t feel the cold. He didn’t feel anything” (p. 85)? (*Answers will vary.*)

Supplementary Activities

1. Literary Devices: **Simile**—“stacking them [bodies] like bricks” (p. 89); **Metaphors**—camp: pigsty (p. 60), battle: inferno (p. 76), Charley: madman (p. 84)

2. Social Studies: Research General George McClellan. Make a list of ways that he is like and unlike the description of him on page 59 of the novel.
3. Science: Research one of the following diseases: dysentery, malaria, typhoid, typhus, yellow fever. Prepare a brief presentation for the class in which you answer the following questions: What causes the disease? How was it treated during the Civil War? What is the modern cure and when was it discovered?
4. Music: Compose a piece of appropriate background music for the battle described on pages 75–85 of the novel.

Chapters Nine–Ten and Author’s Note, pp. 90–104

The First Minnesota Volunteers find themselves in the thick of the Battle of Gettysburg. For the first time, Charley and his regiment fight from a protected position on a hilltop. The battle is the worst Charley has experienced, and he believes he has been mortally wounded. Charley returns to Minnesota after the war. He feels aged beyond his years and is suffering badly, both physically and mentally, as a result of the war. Charley lives in a shack, dreams of his own death, and contemplates suicide. Unable to live a fully functioning life or to shake the memories of what he has experienced, Charley dies at the age of 23.

Vocabulary	
skirmishes	(90)
barrage	(92)
tapered	(93)
tableau	(93)
corrosion	(101)
liberties	(103)
anguish	(104)

Discussion Questions

1. Compare and contrast Gettysburg with the other battles in which Charley has participated. (*Answers will vary. Suggestions: Charley sees a forest and a meadow, just as he’s seen in every other battle. Charley’s regiment is now fighting from a protected vantage point, rather than out in the open. pp. 90–91*)
2. Why does Charley describe the Rebel soldiers as “foolish”? (*They continue to advance on the Union Army even as they are being massacred. p. 93*)
3. Why does Charley still remember “all the sweet things” and “all the pretty things” about his war experience? (*Answers will vary.*

Suggestions: It is a survival mechanism; if he only recalled the misery, he could not live. Perhaps it shows how he is thinking like an old man, nostalgic for things of the past. p. 97)

4. Briefly describe Charley upon his return to Minnesota. (*He is badly aged, both physically and mentally. He is sick, depressed, disconnected from reality, and seems a bit mentally ill. pp. 97–102*)
5. What does the author mean when he writes that Charley is “old from too much life, old from seeing too much, old from knowing too much” (p. 98)? (*He has experienced too much ugliness in life to ever fully recover. He has lost his childhood and is unable to appreciate beauty and goodness in the world. He can’t vanquish all the horrible images from his mind.*)
6. Contrast the author’s images of nature with Charley’s mental state. (*The author describes “a soft breeze,” “the sun [warming] the grass and dirt,” and “the river [making] rippling sounds.” Charley doesn’t appear to notice these things. His senses are numb. pp. 99–100*)
7. What bothers Charley about people wanting a Confederate revolver? (*It reminds him that many people still think of war as a romantic, noble venture; they have no appreciation for its reality. p. 101*)