

# Soldier's Heart



By

Gary Paulsen

A Novel Study  
by Nat Reed

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**About the author:** Nat Reed was a member of the teaching profession for more than 35 years. He was a full-time instructor at Trent University in the Teacher Education Program for nine years. For more information on his work and literature, visit [novelstudies.org](http://novelstudies.org).

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## Suggestions and Expectations

This curriculum unit can be used in a variety of ways. Each chapter of the novel study focuses on one chapter of *Soldier's Heart* and is comprised of five of the following activities:

1. Before You Read
2. Vocabulary Building
3. Comprehension Questions
4. Language and Extension Activities

A **portfolio cover** (p.7) as well as a **Checklist** (p.6) are included so that students may track of their completed work.

**Every activity need not be completed by all students.**

### Links with the Common Core Standards (U.S.)

Many of the activities included in this curriculum unit are supported by the Common Core Standards. For instance the *Reading Standards for Literature, Grade 5*, makes reference to:

- a) determining the meaning of words and phrases. . . including figurative language;
- b) explaining how a series of chapters fits together to provide the overall structure;
- c) compare and contrast two characters;
- d) determine how characters ... respond to challenges;
- e) drawing inferences from the text;
- f) determining a theme of a story . . . **and many others.**

**Themes** which may be taught in conjunction with the novel include the horrors of war, American Civil War, military life, patriotism, courage and sacrifice, coming of age, personal growth, and much more.

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## List of Skills

### Vocabulary Development

1. Locating descriptive words/phrases
2. Listing synonyms/homophones
3. Identifying/creating *alliteration*
4. Use of capitals and punctuation
5. Identifying syllables
6. Identify *personification*.
7. Identify *anagrams*
8. Listing compound words
9. Identifying parts of speech
10. Identify/create *similes*
11. Identification of root words

### Setting Activities

1. Summarize the details of a setting

### Plot Activities

1. Complete a *time line* of events
2. Identify conflict in the story
3. Complete Five W's Chart
4. Identify *cliffhangers*
5. Identify the climax of the novel.
6. Complete a Story Pyramid

### Character Activities

1. Determine character traits
2. Identify the protagonist
3. Relating personal experiences
4. Compare characters

### Creative and Critical Thinking

1. Research
2. Write a newspaper story
3. Conduct an interview
4. Create a poem
5. Write about personal feelings
6. Write a book review
7. Complete an Observation Chart
8. Complete a KWS Chart

### Art Activities

1. Design a cover for the novel

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## Synopsis

Gary Paulsen introduces readers to Charley Goddard in his novel, *Soldier's Heart*. Charley goes to war a boy, and returns a changed man, crippled by what he has seen. In this captivating tale Paulsen vividly shows readers the turmoil of war through one boy's eyes and one boy's heart, and gives a voice to all the anonymous young men who fought in the Civil War. [Courtesy of the publisher]

## Author Biography

### Gary Paulsen

Gary Paulsen, was a renowned author of novels for young people (May 17, 1939 – Oct 13, 2021). Three of Gary Paulsen's novels have been acclaimed as Newbery Honor Books: *Hatchet*, *Dogsong*, and *The Winter Room*. His other novels include: *Brian's Winter*, *The River*, *Brian's Return*, *Canyons*, *The Crossing*, *Dancing Carl*, *The Island*, *Popcorn Days and Buttermilk Nights*, *Sentries*, *Tracker*, *Woodsong*, *The Legend of Red Horse Canyon*,



*Escape From Fire Mountain*, *Danger on Midnight River*. Gary Paulsen was an avid outdoors-man who competed in the Iditarod, a dog sled race across Alaska. He also frequently sailed the Pacific Ocean. [Biography courtesy of the publisher]

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## Student Checklist

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

Assignment	Grade / Level	Comments

# Soldier's Heart



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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Chapter 1



### Before you read the chapter:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or “good guy”. The main character of *Soldier's Heart* is Charley a fifteen year old boy who lives in Winona, Minnesota in 1861, at the start of the American Civil War. Think back on some of your favorite characters from past novels you have read or movies you've seen. Who would you say is your *most favorite* character ever? What made you select this character?




### Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

violate	regiments	cowlick	slogan
federal	assemble	hullabaloo	politician

1. The soldiers were awakened by a loud \_\_\_\_\_ out in the courtyard.
2. The regiment's \_\_\_\_\_ was *Death Before Dishonor*.
3. “Please do not \_\_\_\_\_ the code of the army,” the sergeant pleaded.
4. The \_\_\_\_\_ government passed a law enforcing all young men to join the army.
5. My cousin decided to become a \_\_\_\_\_ and run in the next election.
6. It is not lawful to \_\_\_\_\_ in large crowds before that government building.
7. He swiped the \_\_\_\_\_ away from his forehead.
8. A battalion in the Union army usually consisted of five \_\_\_\_\_.



# Questions



1. Describe the **setting** of the story at the beginning of Chapter One.


2. What motivated Charley to join the army?


3. Why didn't Charley join up locally.


4. There were about \_\_\_\_\_ men in a regiment and from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ in a company. This would mean that there would be about how many companies in a regiment?

- a) 11                      b) 8                      c) 15                      d) 13

5. All the companies would assemble at Fort Sumter before going off to fight.

True or False

6. Why didn't his mother put up much of a fight when told by Charley that he was joining the army?


7. Even if you didn't know how long this war would last, what is there about the conclusion of this chapter which hints that it will be a long war? (This is an example of the literary device called **foreshadowing**.)


## Language Activities



### A. Anagrams

An **anagram** is a word that is formed by changing the order of the letters of another word. For example, the letters in the word **WAS** can also form the word **SAW**. Follow these directions to form the anagrams:



a) read the clue in the right-hand column.

b) Using the word in the left-hand column move the letters around in any order, but you must use all the letters. All of the words in the left-hand column can be found in the first chapter of *Soldier's Heart*.

Word	Anagram	Clue
death		Despised.
north		Ouch!
steel		Places where roads meet.
respect		Ghost.
spill		Medication.
bread		Abraham Lincoln had one.
swarm		Heats up.

Now find two additional words from the first chapter which have interesting anagrams to see if you can stump a classmate.

Word	Anagram	Clue

### Good to Know ~ The American Civil War

As mentioned in our story, the Civil War began with the attack on Fort Sumter (April 12, 1861). Eleven southern states left the Union around this time and were faced down by twenty northern states. This war would last four long, bloody years and would go down in history as the bloodiest war in American history. The conflict claimed more than 620,000 casualties (an average of about 500 per day) with countless others injured. It is likely that the majority of these casualties were young men like Charley.

## B. A Quatrain Poem of the Civil War.

The **quatrain** is a popular form of rhymed verse. It is a poem of four lines, is usually light and can be humorous. The following quatrain is actually the first four lines of the popular American Civil War song, *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*. There were a number of songs like this which were popular with soldiers on both side of the conflict.

*Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord;  
He is trampling out the vintage where grapes of wrath are stored;  
He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword,  
His truth is marching on.*



Various rhyming schemes make up a quatrain poem. As you can see, the above four lines have a rhyming scheme of **A - A - A - B** Other rhyming schemes include: ABAB, AAAA, AABA, ABBA, ABBB, and AABB.

Your task is to write your own quatrain poem. You may choose a rhyming scheme that fits with your own personal creation. The theme should have something to do with the themes established in the first chapter of our novel (like *patriotism or courage*).

### The Quatrain Poem

Now create your own Quatrain Poem. Your poem must follow the format of a quatrain poem described above (and must rhyme).

Title: \_\_\_\_\_


### Bonus Question.

Judging from the first four lines of these lyrics, why do you think this song was so popular with the soldiers of the north?


### C. Army Ranks.

Using resources in your school library or on the Internet, arrange the following ranks in the army in order beginning with the highest (1 to 10).



	Lieutenant		Private
	Major General		Sergeant
	Major		Corporal
	Colonel		Brigadier General
	Captain		Lieutenant Colonel

**D.** A **simile** is a comparison using the words “like” or “as”. An example from Chapter Two is: . . . *those shirts were as hot as original sin* . . .



What is being compared in this example?

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Invent your own **similes** comparing the following items with something from your own imagination:

a) a man startled from his sleep


b) a bullfrog's croak


c) your choice


## E. 5 Ws and an H.

Choose an event from this section that you thought was really important and/or exciting. Using facts that you gleaned from reading about this event, fill in the balloons below, summarizing what you learned.



***WHO?***



***WHAT?***



***WHEN?***



***WHERE?***



***WHY?***



***HOW?***

## F. My 02¢ About Chapter 1.

What I Liked Best:

I Didn't Like The Part:

I Didn't Like It Because:

## G. Caviar Words

The author of this novel is noted for his use of elegant, tasteful words. Someone once stated that some words have the sound of **caviar** (rich and elegant) and others are more are common (**peanut butter** words). With a colleague come up with 6 examples of each type of word. You may use any chapter of the novel to find these words.



Caviar Words	Peanut Butter Words