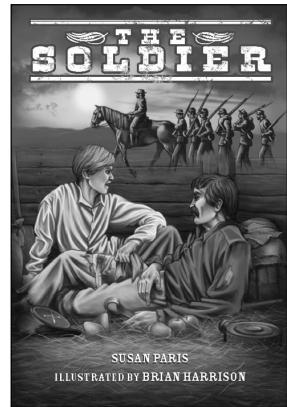


The Soldier

by Susan Paris

illustrated by Brian Harrison



Book Summary

Life is hard for Will and his mother during the Civil War. Then the war comes closer to Will when he discovers a deserter hiding in the barn. This narrative, told through Will's journal entries, looks at what life was like for the people away from the battlefield.

Features of the Book

- Historical fiction
- Preface with factual information
- Fictional journal entries

Purpose

The Soldier can be used to introduce and reinforce the following skills and understandings:

- identifying an author's purpose and point of view;
- evaluating and responding to literature;
- exploring how the path to a democratic society has involved situations that have divided communities and families.

Investigation Tools

- What's the Background? – What Is a Civil War?, Page 29
- Looking Closer – The American Civil War, pages 30–31
- Digging Deeper – Battle Wounds, page 32

The Guided Reading Lesson

- Identifying an author's purpose and point of view
- Evaluating and responding to literature
- Exploring how the path to a democratic society has involved situations that have divided communities and families

Introducing the text

Tell the students that they will be reading a story about the American Civil War. Review what they know about the Civil War, focusing on the impact it had on ordinary people.

Explain that good readers can read at different levels: they read to find out what happens, to form opinions, to find out the author's message or to gain insights into other people, places, or events. Tell the students that you will be asking them to think about the author's purpose for writing the story and whether she conveys a particular point of view. You'll also be asking them to form their own opinions of characters and events.

Reading and discussing the text

Ask the students to examine the cover and contents, then ask them to read the preface silently.

- *What is a preface?*
- *What are some features of this preface? (factual information, photograph, contemporary illustration, final sentence introduces the story)*
- *Why would the author include this?*
- *How effective is this preface in giving the historical background?*
- *Do you think Will's journal will be a true story or one that's made up? Why do you think that?*
- *Why would an author tell a story through a fictional journal?*

The students can read the first chapter, then discuss what they have learnt.

- By telling a story through a journal, the author is able to use the boy's voice. Why would the author do this? Who do you think the author expected to read this book?
- Why did people have different opinions about boys and men going to war? What would you have thought?
- What does "patriotic" mean? Why would selling vegetables not be patriotic?
- What do you think Will's mother meant when she said "There are many ways to be a man"?

Ask the students to read page 10, then discuss the tone of the writing.

- What is the author showing by the way it's written?
- What does this entry tell us about Will?

The students can read to the end of Chapter 2.

- On page 12, what was the soldier's meaning?
- What do you learn about Will's situation?
- Why hasn't he told his mother? What would you do?
- Are there any clues to the author's point of view?

Ask the students to read Chapter 3, thinking about the author's purpose. The students could pause at the end of page 18 and discuss how this entry uses the characters to express opposing opinions.

- How do Will's feelings about Joe change?
- How does the author convey a sense of personal conflict about by the war?
- Which words and phrases show this?
(ashamed, angry, pass judgment, justify it)

As the students read the final two chapters, ask them to think about their personal responses. Encourage them to read at two levels: you can model this by reading a paragraph aloud, telling the students what it means on a literal level, then expressing your response. The first paragraph of the chapter can be used in this way.

- What is your overall response to this story?
- How would you have acted in Will's place?
- What can you say about the author's purpose?
Was she successful? How?

Revisiting the Text

The activities below can be used immediately after the guided reading lesson, during later reading sessions as mini-lessons, or as independent activities.

S Exploring how the path to a democratic society has involved situations that have divided communities and families

Ask the students to read the information on the last pages and think about the impacts of civil wars on ordinary people and soldiers.

» The students can use the blackline master to chart the reasons for the American Civil War and the effects it had on different people.

S Evaluating and responding to literature

The students can read the title *North and South: The American Civil War*, then write a review of *The Soldier*. In the review, they should evaluate how a fictional story can help readers understand more about events in the past.

S Identifying an author's purpose and point of view

Remind the students that this story was a fictional account of one boy's experiences. Discuss how the story would have been different if it had been told through the soldier's journal. The students could write several entries for the same events that express different points of view.

The students can study the information on pages 29 to 31, then research and record information about another civil war.