



**BOOK REVIEW OF STEPHEN CRANE'S *THE RED BADGE OF
COURAGE***

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MOTTO AND DEDICATION

“Family is my priority. Because of them, I can be a good person like now. My purpose is to make them happy”.

This thesis is dedicated to my beloved mother.

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The writer realizes that this thesis is still far from perfect. She, therefore, will be glad to receive any constructive criticism and recommendation to make this thesis better.

Finally, the writer expects that this thesis will be useful to the reader who wishes to learn something about speech act and to understand a little bit more about Islamic religion.

Semarang, 7 December 2011

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ABSTRACT

The Red Badge of Courage merupakan buku yang menyajikan pengalaman perang kepada pembaca dan tidak berdasar pada perang secara umum dengan rancangan megah dari strategi besar, namun dari sisi terdalam dari seorang pejuang yang berada dalam peperangan. Buku ini juga merupakan cerminan perjuangan menjadi pejuang yang gagah berani melawan musuh dan juga melawan ketakutan dalam hati. Kepanikan, ketakutan, dan rasa malu menjadi faktor utama yang mendominasi karakter utama. Permasalahan lainnya adalah ketika mereka takut menghadapi permasalahan hidup dan mencoba lari darinya. Cerita *The Red Badge of Courage* diharapkan dapat menjadi inspirasi untuk menumbuhkan keberanian pembaca. Tujuan lainnya adalah untuk meningkatkan nasionalisme masyarakat sehingga mampu membela tanah air dan membela apa yang mereka percayai.

CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND OF THE WRITING

This chapter will discuss about the introduction of the review. There are three sub chapters to be discussed in this chapter, namely reasons for choosing the topic, the purpose of writing, and a brief review of the writer and the story.

1. Reasons for choosing the book

The existence of developed and developing countries in this world at the moment cannot be separated from the chaotic and miserable history of war and patriotism of the previous era. Every aspect of life that has been dealing by the people at the time being is a result of what happened in the battlefield during the war. Both of civil war and world war become the motor of the development for each country that is involved. Through war, people are motivated to be brave and patriotic. Through war people also learn about the beauty of peace and humanity, and be able to solve problems using a conscious mind rather than using violence.

The Red Badge of Courage is a book that provides the reader about the experience of war which not based on the outside war with a magnificent architecture of grand strategies, but simply about the inner feeling of a single soldier who is facing a battle. It is also a pictorial struggle of becoming a courageous soldier that fights against the enemy and also the fear inside its own heart. The panic, afraid, and ashamed feelings become the major emotions that dominate the main character. Fear of death and an unclear mind drive the soldier to become a coward, but eventually he can overcome the problem and become a great soldier. In my consideration, this book contains education that can be used in our life as a person that is fights in our own problem, our own war.

2. Purpose of the writing

As we know that nowadays people in this country become self-centered and pay little attention towards what is going on in their surroundings. The other problem occurs is that they are afraid to deal with the obstacles of life and try to run from them. *The Red Badge of Courage* hopefully can be an inspiration to grow the courage of the people that read it. The other purpose is to raise the nationalism of people, so that they can defend their nation and defend what they believe in.

The other purpose is giving the portrayal picture of the history of the Civil War in the United States of America. The story gives a simple illustration of what happened in America society in the middle of the 18th century. A war that has brought this country into a great nation, as we know it today.

3. A review of the author and his books

Born in November 1871 in Newark, New Jersey, Stephen Crane was the youngest of fourteen children. The Crane family moved to Port Jervis, New York, where Crane began his education. His father, a strict Methodist minister, died in 1880, leaving his devout, strong mother to raise the rest of the family. Mary H. P. Crane moved her family back to New Jersey, where they lived in Asbury Park. Mrs. Crane herself was an active writer who contributed to various Methodist papers. Crane attended a Methodist boarding school for two years from 1885 to 1887. Later, he attended Claverack College and the Hudson River Institute. Ultimately, Crane spent less than two years in college. After dropped out from Lafayette College and Syracuse, Crane became a journalist of the New York's Bowery and revised his first novel, *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*. The book itself is not really fit the demand of the market and it found a few readers. Nearly broke and gave up writing, Crane became motivated again after his book being praised by William Dean

Howells, the most influential literary figure of the period. Then he started his next project, *The Red Badge of Courage*.

The novel is known for its distinctive style which includes realistic battle sequences as well as the repeated use of color imagery and ironic tone. Separating itself from a traditional narrative of war, Crane's story reflects the inner experience of its protagonist, a soldier fleeing from combat, rather than the external world around him. Also notable for its use of what Crane called a "psychological portrayal of fear", the novel's allegorical and symbolic qualities are often debated by critics. Several of the themes that the story explores are maturation, heroism, cowardice, and the indifference of nature. Throughout the novel, Crane brings to bear all his skills as a reporter in order to create chaos and the dull clatter of war: the acrid smoke, the incessant rumors of coming battles, the filth and cold, the numbing monotony, the unworldly wail of the dying. Like an impressionist painter, Crane also captures the strange beauty of war: brilliant red flags against the blue sky and steel bayonets flashing in the morning sun as soldiers step off into battle. In the midst of this chaotic outer world, Crane creates an intricate inner world, as he takes us inside the head of Henry Fleming.

The Red Badge of Courage gained widespread acclaim of what Joseph Conrad called "an orgy of praise", shortly after its publication, making Crane an instant celebrity at the age of twenty-four. The novel and its author did have its initial detractors, however, including an author and veteran Ambrose Bierce. Adapted several times for the screen, the novel became a bestseller. It has never been out of print, and is now thought to be Crane's most important work and a major American text. The novel caused a sensation in England when first appeared in 1895 due to a nation increasingly ensnared of the European wars.

CHAPTER II SYNOPSIS OF THE STORY

As *The Red Badge of Courage* opens, members of a newly recruited regiment is debating a fresh rumor they are finally going to move out on the next day and engage the enemy. One young soldier, named Henry Fleming, does not engage in the debate and instead reflects on what will become of him when he gets to battle. Will he run or will he stand and fight bravely. He enlisted because he wanted to be a hero, thinking of Greek epics. His own mother, however, was not interested in such ideas, and discouraged him from enlisting. When he finally did, she did not have an impassioned speech for him. She merely says that if he is ever in a situation where he will be killed or do something wrong, he should go with his feelings. With these words, Henry left his home and entered his army duty.

The Red Badge of Courage is a fictional psychological portrait of Henry Fleming, tracing the thread of his emotions and reactions to events that transpire during an unnamed battle of the Civil War. Henry is an average farm boy from upstate New York, who dreams of the glory of battle that he has read about in school. He has enlisted in the 304th New York regiment, which fights for the Northern (Unionist) forces.

The novel opens with Henry's regiment in camp by a river where they have been for several months. Rumors of upcoming battle fly among the men but are largely unfounded, and the perpetual anticipation throws Henry into a bitter interior fight. He questions if he has the inner strength and courage to become a good soldier and is unsure whether or not it is in his realm of capability. He knows battle only through schoolbooks and soldiers' stories, and fears the possible ridicule of his peers, should he be deemed a coward by running from battle.

The northern army is finally put on the move and marched across the river, where they meet with Southern (Confederate) forces. Henry's regiment is initially put in a reserve position, and he is able to witness battle before actually coming in contact with it. Finally, his regiment successfully repels a charge by the enemy, and Henry feels relief and elation at his feeling of success. The enemy charges again, however, and Henry flees, in the belief that his regiment will be overrun. This sends Henry on a long day's journey along the battle lines, in which he bitterly reproaches himself for running, but at the same time, tries to justify what he has done. He witnesses battle, and then journeys into the surrounding woods, where he finds a decaying dead man in a clearing. Running away from the body and back to the battle, Henry takes up with the procession of wounded men trudging to the army's rear for care. There he meets his friend Jim Conklin from his regiment, who has been shot in the side. He cares for Jim with another man, called the "Tattered Soldier," until Jim dies in a field. The Tattered Soldier's repeated questions regarding Henry's supposed injuries anger and embarrass Henry until he leaves the Tattered Soldier alone to die in a field, a fact that later haunts Henry.

Leaving the Tattered Soldier, Henry witnesses the charge and subsequent retreat of a Union regiment. The men retreat right through the spot from which Henry is watching the battle, and a man that he stops to ask questions about the charge hits Henry in the head with the butt of his rifle, injuring him. Having been wounded by his own comrade, Henry is only able to stumble toward the rear. He is later helped back to his depleted regiment by a cheerful soldier whose face he never sees. Back in camp, Henry meets up with another man from his regiment named Wilson. Henry senses an incredible psychological growth and maturation in Wilson since their first days in camp, and envies him. The two become great friends.

The next day the battle continues, and Henry's regiment is placed on the edge of some woods and ordered to defend it. Here Henry achieves the classic valor for which he has sought; he fights so hard and courageously that both his comrades and his command look up to him. Later, while looking for water, both Henry and Wilson overhear a general speaking poorly of their regiment, saying he can spare them for a charge because they fight so poorly. This angers them, and creates in Henry the desire to show up the command. The regiment is sent in to charge for the first time, and amid heavy casualties, Henry saves the regiment's flag when the color bearer is shot. He becomes, along with Wilson, the noncommissioned leader of his regiment. The charge essentially fails at first and Henry's regiment is forced to retreat. Then however, they are charged by a Confederate regiment, and Henry's regiment repulses them, eventually taking their regimental flag. Even though the generals reproach the regiment's command for failing in the charge, Wilson and Henry are considered heroes in the classic sense, at least externally.

Henry undergoes countless interior changes throughout his ordeal, which offset the externally visible accolades of courage that the others shower on him. His newfound manhood at the end of the battle is described as a strong, clearheaded confidence, a sense of self-assurance that he had never before felt in his endless internal bickering. The internal peace and calm is a far cry from what had first brought him to war - the idealistic Greek-like portrayals of valor and manhood that he had been exposed to only in books.

The theme of courage in this story is vastly available for the reader's minds to understand. The whole plot is used to show courage. Here you have a young teenager who signed up for the militia and retreats, but he then gets the meaning of what he is doing. Henry understands that even if he dies, he is honorable because he is fighting for what he believes in. Without this literary device the story would be uninteresting and pointless. Steven Crane did an excellent job explaining courage for what it is. Crane shows that courage is not a medal or badge, but a feeling

you get from fighting for a cause.

CHAPTER III REVIEW OF THE BOOK

In this chapter we will discuss about the strengths and weaknesses of the novel *The Red Badge of Courage*.

The strengths of the novel are:

1. The Style

The Red Badge of Courage has a distinctive style which is often described as naturalistic, realistic, and impressionistic, or a mixture of the three. Told in a third-person limited point of view, the novel reflects the inner-experience of Henry Fleming, a young soldier who flees from combat, rather than upon the external world around him. It describe the war in the soldier's own mind about fear of death and ashamed from fleeing the battle field. In my concern, the strength of this book is that the writer can portray the real emotions of fear and puzzled, a thought of a normal person have in its mind during the experience of war and chaos. The way Crane writes the story is not typical in view of the fact that the story is about the Civil War that happened in the period, yet the main character battle is not outside war that still happening but his inner battle with his own fear. The readers are swayed with the story of a soldier dealing with his problem in the battle field, and they eventually see what is underlying ideas the story share. The essence of the story is that courage cannot be compared by a badge or medallion because it is beyond that symbol. The real courage lies beneath the real soldier that can manage itself in a chaotic situation, and can defeat its own fear.

2. The Description of Characters and Setting

The Red Badge of Courage is notable in its vivid descriptions and well-cadenced prose, both of which help create suspense within the story. Critics in particular have pointed to the repeated use of color imagery throughout the novel, both literal and figurative, as proof of the novel's use of Impressionism. Blue and gray uniforms are mentioned, as are yellow and orange sunlight, and green forests, while men's faces grow red with rage or courage, and gray with death. Crane also uses animalistic imagery to comment upon people, nature, and war itself. For example, the novel begins by portraying the army as a living entity that is "stretched out on the hills, resting."

3. Psychological Description

While the novel takes place during a series of battles, *The Red Badge of Courage* is not a traditional Civil War narrative. Focusing on the complex internal struggle of its main character, rather than on the war itself, Crane's novel often divides readers as to whether the story is intended to be either pro- or antiwar. By avoiding political, military and geographic details of the conflict between the states, the story becomes divorced from its historical context.

The weaknesses of the novel are:

1. Lack of Detailed Place of the Battle

Notably lacking are the dates in which the action takes place, and the name of the battle; these omissions effectively shift attention away from historical patterns in order to concentrate on the emotional violence of battle in general. The writer alluded to as much in a letter, in which he stated he wished to depict war through "a psychological portrayal of fear."

2. Lack of Detailed Description of the War

The description of the war such as how the war started and how did it ended. The battle just described as the chaos in the area where both sides of the army declared a war. The focus of the war is just about the terrified of the main character Henry Fleming and the detail of the war is not really mentioned clearly.

3. Lack of Detailed Times of War

The writer never mentioned about the time of the war itself. The only explanation is about the war is a Civil War. But in the sequel there is explanation about the time of the war. American Civil War was a conflict between the northern and southern American states that claimed over 600,000 lives between 1861 and 1865. It was fought to preserve the American union (the Southern Confederacy wanted to secede), and to liberate all slaves

CHAPTER IV CONCLUSION

The strengths of the novel are:

1. The writer use a good way to describe the psychological battle of the main character Henry Fleming, and also description the way which is more realistic than any other wars story.
2. The use of color imagery brings a unique sense of the situation of the war.

The weaknesses of the novel are:

1. There is no perfect writing, so in this novel there are several imperfect writings.
2. The writer puts too much concern on the inner world of the character and forgetting the detail of the war, such as the year of the war and the name of the battle field.

By reading this book, we can get the moral value of the story. The writer is giving the reader story about the development of the inner courage of the soldier, and hopefully will be able to move the courage of the readers so they can be better in dealing with the problem that occur, in their own life. The other inspiring value is that we have to be able to control our emotion and become the master of our own mind. We should not lose the battle against our own fear and should be able to overcome it. The real courage cannot be symbolized by a medal or badge, but its about how the way we solve the fears that come and all the threats in life.