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Chapter 1: Background on Stephen Crane

1. Stephen Crane and His Realistic War Fable 18
   James B. Colvert
   As a writer, Stephen Crane gravitated toward gritty, realistic topics that exposed the harsh sides of life; however, he did not agree with all the tenets of literary realism, and he eventually tried to distance himself from the novel that had both secured his fame and his rank as a master realist writer.

2. A Writer Testing His Own Courage 35
   Ken Chowder
   Although Crane had not participated in the war that he wrote about in *The Red Badge of Courage*, he did become a combat journalist covering subsequent international conflicts. In those endeavors, he earned a reputation for his adventuresome spirit and for his bravery in the midst of action.

Chapter 2: *The Red Badge of Courage* and War

1. Henry Fleming at Chancellorsville 45
   Harold Hungerford
   Clues within *The Red Badge of Courage* and another story concerning Crane’s main character, Henry Fleming, indicate that Fleming earned his “red badge” at the Battle of Chancellorsville, a bloody confrontation in Virginia during the spring of 1863.

2. Henry Fleming, the Self-Absorbed Soldier 59
   Perry Lentz
   Stephen Crane debunked the myth that soldiers in the midst of battle are concerned with the righteousness of their cause and adherence to the discipline instilled by their training. Henry Fleming thinks of neither loyalty nor commands when in battle; his mind is on self-preservation and the bruise to his ego that comes from an act of cowardice.
3. A Parody of Romanticized War Literature

Amy Kaplan

Stephen Crane undercuts the notion of a chivalrous war by defying the conventions of the war literature of his time; however, he does allow his character Henry Fleming to accept these romanticized ideals despite the fact that Crane reacts against them.


Robert M. Myers

Although Henry Fleming undergoes training as a raw recruit, he does not obtain a soldier’s true discipline until he learns to govern his fears on the battlefield and accept, at least passively, the structure of military command.

5. The Army in the New Industrial Age

Daniel Shanahan

At a time when America was experiencing the jarring effects of industrial capitalism, Crane paints the nineteenth-century army as a machine that suppresses individuality and highlights competition.

6. The Absurdity of Henry Fleming’s Courage

Weihong Julia Zhu

For some readers, Henry Fleming transforms from coward to hero over the course of The Red Badge of Courage; however, Crane’s ironic style calls into question such a reading. He deflates Fleming’s heroic aspirations and reveals that his character is often driven by irrational fear and rage rather than calm courage.

7. The Purposeful Unreality of War in The Red Badge of Courage

James B. Colvert

While many critics praised Crane for capturing the essence of battle in his Civil War novel, most tried to judge his work in terms of its realism. Forcing the novel to conform to artistic realism, though, is a mistake, Colvert argues, as Crane’s use of limited perspective and fanciful mental imagery clearly links the author to the then up-and-coming impressionist writers.
8. *Full Metal Jacket* Surpasses Crane’s War Realism

*James A. Stevenson*

Stanley Kubrick’s film about American recruits training for and fighting in the Vietnam War parodies *The Red Badge of Courage* and satirizes warfare in general. *Full Metal Jacket* goes beyond Crane’s realistic portrayal of war to capture a truer picture of the drama, brutality, and madness that mark the experiences of soldiers in battle.

**Chapter 3: Contemporary Perspectives on War**

1. War Is Not an Innate Part of Human Nature

*John Horgan*

While college students and the American public in general have an increasingly fatalistic view of war as intrinsic to human nature, historical studies show that civilization is becoming less violent and warlike. War can be eradicated from society if people are provided with the incentive to be peaceful.

2. Soldiers Have a Difficult Time Adjusting to Life After War

*Brian Mockenhaupt*

War exerts a powerful grip on those who have brandished a gun and fought for their country. Soldiers who survive their tours of duty to return to civilian life often experience a longing for the excitement the war provided and thus have a difficult time adjusting to the trivialities of normal life.

3. Robot Soldiers Can Create a More Ethical Battlefield

*Ronald C. Arkin*

Many of the ethical trespasses in war occur when soldiers find themselves in highly stressful situations in which adrenaline and fear force them to behave unethically and in ways contrary to the training they received prior to battle. These trespasses can be mitigated in the future with the development of robot soldiers programmed to act ethically in every situation without succumbing to human emotion.
4. Changes in America’s Armed Forces Make War a Less Costly Decision

Jason Royce Lindsey

Because America’s armed forces are composed of volunteer, career soldiers and because the military experiences fewer casualties than any other time in history, the American public has become more complacent about sending troops to war. American politicians are able to take advantage of this attitude to frequently and carelessly exercise the use of military force as a tool in foreign relations.

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