

# Henry Fleming against his cowardice in The Red Badge of Courage

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## Henry Fleming against his cowardice in The Red Badge of Courage

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### ABSTRACT

Language is a means of communication in Literature. People can understand and analyze any story by using language. They can also find out the content of story from different country. Readers can also compare story from one country to another country. They can also translate story from different country with their own mother tongue. One example is The Red Badge of Courage. We can get many lessons and ideas from this American novel. It is a war novel, which focus on American Civil War. Henry Fleming is one of main characters in the novel. Regarding to the history of Civil War, we still have many questions from the content of it. How about the main character's dreaming in civil war? Can his bravery influence to his friends? What is the moral value from this war novel? People can get many imaginations and lessons from the main character, Henry Fleming. Descriptive qualitative is a method in discussing this novel. Reading, understanding, and analyzing are the necessity things to do. The idea and opinions from novel and reference books are sources in getting idea. We can take this novel is as a zero to hero novel regarding to the main character's activities. All soldiers in his troop surprise when they see a brave-heart person, Henry Fleming. Furthermore, Henry shows that he can beat his cowardice to be a brave man. His wound is a proof of being a hero in his troop. His questions of being a brave soldier show up after he beats all trials in civil war. Self-confidence in Henry Fleming is a way to show that a soldier must have bravery in leading a troop.

**Keywords:** Dreaming, Bravery, Moral Value, Henry Fleming, Self-confidence.

### INTRODUCTION

War seems to be a good way to change the world and it also provides inspiration for future generations not only in our country but also in other countries. Despite the negative affect from war, war means enlighten. War against cowardice can enlighten us in being human. There is a lesson "we cannot live with cowardice, we can live without cowardice". Thomas Paines, one of the leading revolutionarist, gives his opinion that the meaning of war is contributed more to enlighten the world. It also diffuses a spirit of freedom. We can learn about war from text. How can we understand about it? Language will help us to understand the meaning of any text. In understanding many languages, we can also compare the result of war from different countries.

Stephen Crane, one of the novel authors, has a dream about war. He writes down his opinion through his writing. One of his novels is The Red Badge of Courage. His novel told about civil war in United States from 1861 to 1865. Although Crane

never experienced Civil War but his understanding asked him to write about war in his novel. Through "the war", Stephen Crane has enlightened the world from his novel. His imagination of war makes him a person who has joined in the battlefield. Maurice Bassan, an assistant professor of English at San Francisco State College considers Crane more a soldier than a writer from the results of his writings (1967: 1-2). Based on her opinion, Crane as a lonely artist has developed out of an ancestral and moral chemistry. His writing expresses that he might have become a soldier.

By using the setting of civil war, Stephen Crane creates his soldiers in The Red Badge of Courage. The major character, Henry Fleming, describes how the effect of war could influence and change "a boy" to be "the real man". This character tries to undergo his initiation into life and achieve a moral victory over him. Fleming also fights against his cowardice and show that being a soldier is not only his dream. His dream pretends to be a Greek

soldier comes up after he wins in the battle with his regime.

The Red Badge of Courage is the second book from Stephen Crane. He is shown as a writer when this book is appeared in 1895. At that time, Crane was 23 and almost unknown man. His obsession in war and other forms of physical and physic violence affected on this book. This book has been called as the first modern war novel. The beginning of creating this book is really simple. When he played football, he felt anger and insisted to achieve goals.

The story contains of a boy's dreaming. Henry Fleming would like to be a soldier because influenced of a soldier in a Greek epic. Bravery and self-confidence are characteristics he has after reading an epic. He registered to stay in a regiment and to think that he would be a hero just like an epic. The fact he faced is quite different. He saw many injured man and many corps. Suddenly, he felt that he is not a good enough for being soldier there. A wound he received from his friend rifle shows that he fought against enemies. Cowardice is one characteristic he would like to lose from himself.

## **THEORY AND RESEARCH METHOD**

### **Sociology Theory**

There is a connection between history and war. Human history is a brief spot in space and war is a part that is inside history. War can happen at present or even in the past, a few days ago. History helps us a lot to know about the life of our ancestor. Wallbank and Fletcher define history as a wonderful story of adventure and romance. There are heroes and coward, saints and villains. By knowing and understanding history, we know the people in our country and other lands. We also know what they contributed to country.

History is the way for human beings to understand and find out what happened in the past. By learning history, we know that actually history is different from the story in a legend or a myth. As the record of the past, history teaches us many things and it is very important to learn about it, although one or two people are afraid that the study of history is useless and important. It also proves that war as a part of history is the way to learn the war for human being. Stephen Crane, one of the greatest American writers, takes the war as an interesting topic to be discussed in his writing.

We can take a look at this writing from sociology theory. Based on Hartoko and Rahmanto in the book of Noor, sociology theory means a literature in a social fact. Here, there is an understanding between writer and reader. The end of this book contains many values and it can influence the youth to do a good thing from the country. On the other hand, literature entertains readers. Besides entertaining the reader, it also gives moral value to society, especially to readers.

The end of this book contains one moral value for Henry Fleming. Crane got it when he played football and there is a goal in each game. Each team will make a goal to other team in a different way. When we know that a wound is not the result of fighting against enemy, Fleming realizes that all of soldiers in his regime had the opinion that a wound can support other people to fight against enemy. Having the condition like this, Fleming suddenly thinks that cowardice is a personality he does not want to have.

The novel vividly depicts the ravaging emotions that lead Henry to abandon idealism, reevaluate his bravery and the existence of God. He learned many things in war – the death, patriotism, and the existence of God. There is no glory in war, even a hero. He just learned that there is only death, misery, and confusion. He knows that his dream is just a folk. Someone creates this and makes it famous so everybody will know about the strength. No wonder there are many suffering in his society as the effect of Civil War.

Crane's novels reflect his basic beliefs about humanity. The chronic misery of the poor aroused his sympathy, as did the plight of common soldiers in wars. Having rejected traditional theological explanations as a boy, Crane never found a philosophy that adequately explained the hardships inherent in the human condition. Since The Red Badge of Courage contains of fear and isolation common to all war, there is no names or identity in his book. Here, reader will know the influence is not only to South or North but also to all countries.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **The Center of the Story**

There are three main privates in The Red Badge of Courage who are being the center of the story. They are Henry Fleming, Jim Conklin, and Wilson. They fight bravely for their regiment until one of them is killed in the battle. The story begins

with the debate among members of a newly recruited regiment about a fresh rumor that they are finally going to move out into the battle and fight against enemy. Henry Fleming, a young soldier, who is not involved in the debate imagines that he will become when he is at the battle.

Henry Fleming, the protagonist, listed in the Union armies because he wanted to be a hero and Greek epics, which there seemed to be much glory, inspired him. Henry has thinking that war is something cannot be trusted but the spirit of Glory of Greek heroes encourages him to join army. He insists himself on joining the battle against his mother's will. His mother actually prefers him to stay and to work on the farm than join in the battle. On the other hand, the newspaper and the gossip of the village about victory in the battlefield exist.

By having this news, Henry gets more convinced about joining the regiment. Henry is a naïve one, fresh-faced soldier who is eager and frightened at the prospect of battle. His ego feels glad because he is soldier now. On the other hand, his superego feels that it is wrong step for him to be a soldier now. He avoids his frightened by having many conversation with his friends in the same regiment.

In one night, the young soldier has a conversation while he is on guard duty. Various veterans tell him tales but he does not trust them very much. However, he does not care what kind of soldiers he is going to fight and he just wants to prove that he will not run from a battle. Suddenly, it appears to him that he might run when he is the battle. He talks with other soldier and they say that they will fight as hard as they can but they are not sure whether they will not run.

### **Characterization and Setting**

Characters are a basic element in much imaginative literature, and therefore they merit the considerable attention paid to them (Potter, 1967:1). There are many characters there but the main characters are only three (3) soldiers. Fleming is the youngest soldier which listed in army because of dreaming. The last two soldiers are Jim Conklin and Wilson. Three of them gather in the same regiment and has a dream in winning the battle without looking at any difficulties. The regiment is often pictured as powerful organism breathing and shooting flames like a dragon.

The other soldiers are Jim Conklin, the tall soldier, and Wilson, the loud soldier. Both of them

are Fleming's best friends in the regiment. They think they brave enough to join the battle. They feel proud of them self that they will fight bravely although at that time the moving of the regiment has not been decided yet. Crane does not talk many about them but he just mention that they are good friend when they socialize with Fleming. Wilson is a soldier who examines Fleming assumes that he has been shot. The wound in Fleming's means he ready to fight enemy

When we discuss about character, we also discuss about characterization. Polonsky argues that a number of methods of characterization may be used in stories, poems, and plays. A person's nature may be revealed by what he says and does and by the clothes, the houses and furnishings, and the friends he chooses. As in real life, people can see what a fictional character is like from his actions, his speech, his physical appearance, and his environment; in addition, people can see the character is like (1967:4).

A basic concept of narrative is setting. Setting is also important as one element in a literary work. Through setting, we can find the place, time or even condition of life in a literary work. The setting of a story is not only the physical locale but also the time of day – may or may not be symbolic. Sylvia Barnet also tells that sometimes the setting is lightly sketched. It is presented only because the story had to take place somewhere and at some time. The place of the war is in the forest between The South and The North. In that place, not all soldiers have any choice. They just have opinion whether they will be alive or come back with name only. It goes to condition of all soldiers there. They just think whether they will be the winner and make them happy inside although they are afraid. They just wait the time when they fight and go to the battle.

### **CONCLUSION**

The Red Badge of Courage is a novel contains of Civil war in United States. Henry Fleming is the protagonist who is influenced by the glory of Greek. He enlists in the army without considering many things but the tales of Greek warrior. He does not realize that he lives in his dreaming. He never knows about war or even the result of war itself. He plunges into the battle by fantasies of adventure and

heroism. He faces many internal conflicts and one of it is cowardice. Since he lived in his dreaming, he just expresses how to act to be a hero in his life.

At first, he considers himself ready to fight bravely in the battle and he even swears himself that he will face any kinds of enemy. But he is not as brave as he thinks. He flees from the battle and breaks his own words. He is nothing but a loser. He also wants to seek prestige and come back home, known as a brave soldier. He wants to shine the people around him with the prestige of a soldier. He dares to disobey his mother who has discouraged him for going to the battle. However, his run from the battle has made him ashamed. He feels ashamed to come back to his regiment.

With this kind of panic in himself, he forces himself to have enough self-confidence to fight against the enemy. However, his self-confidence runs away when he sees “the monster” and the death of his best friend Jim Conklin. He realizes that his self-confidence does not help him to overcome his panic. He also fights against his cowardice. Despite his “red badge of courage”, Henry gets his own victory. He can gain his spirit of glory; he has renewed his understanding of war and his place in it. Crane also expects that all people especially the youth fights against any trial to make his dream come true. This situation is the same as in football game; make a goal in any condition.

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