



A Lesson on My Sister, the Soldier by Maxwell McClain

Grade Level: Grade 8

Subject Area: English Language Arts

Lesson Length: 2 hours

Lesson Keywords: Soldiers, Sisters, Family, Military Family, Missing Family, Language Arts, Literature

Lesson Description: The purpose of this lesson is to have students engage with their reading and connect between their readings and their writing in a way that demonstrates critical thinking skills. Students will learn new vocabulary that will enhance their knowledge of the story as well as enhance their writing. Furthermore, the goal is for students to read the story deeply and closely enough that it not only better their recall skills but have them demonstrate a level of evaluation to be able to connect what they read with what they write.

Common Core Standards Covered with This Lesson

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.3: Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.6: Analyze how differences in the points of view of the characters and the audience or reader (e.g., created through the use of dramatic irony) create such effects as suspense or humor.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.3b: Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, and reflection, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.

Lesson Content: Book/Story/Reading Passage

Instructions: Please read the following reading passage as many times as needed (aloud and silent) before starting to go through other lesson pages. Understanding the content of this passage is very important since the lesson activities will be all about this content. Feel free to print the passage if needed.

My Sister, the Soldier

by

Content: My sister is a soldier. I remember when she came home and announced to our mother that she was going to enlist in the army. My mother replied, You're terribly young. It's too difficult, challenging, and dangerous, you really should reconsider.

My sister Darlene said, I'm 18, which is old enough, and through the army I'll be able to make progress. Right now, all I can get is part-time work while I go to community college. I need to have a career, not a part-time job, I need a college education, and the army will pay for that when I've finished my tour of duty, so this is about my future.

My mother cried and said, There is a war, you will be in dangerous situations.

I said, Don't worry. They don't send women to fight on the front lines in wars, so they are not in great danger. If it was me that would be a different situation.

Darlene said, Don't worry, I'm cautious, I won't take unnecessary risks.

Despite that assurance, my mother stayed worried. My sister went to training camp for three months, and when she returned, she said, I'm glad I enlisted, it was a wise decision. Training was challenging, we have to get up at 5:00 every morning, the work was demanding, we drilled a lot, but we learned skills. You have to be on time, and you have to follow all the directions, but they keep you occupied, so you don't get bored. I like the other recruits in my platoon, we all supported each other in the exercises.

My mother said, I'm proud of you, but I'm still concerned about your safety.

Don't worry, Mom. If I do get sent to the war zone, I'll be extremely careful.

My sister did go to the war zone when her unit was sent to Iraq. I had no idea where that was, so I looked it up on the Internet. Iraq is on the other side of the world.

My sister purchased a computer before she departed, and she showed us how to use it to send email. I'm glad she did because we sent notes to her on it every day, then when she could she responded, but usually not immediately. She reported the weather and the people, but she didn't describe her activities. Here's what she wrote in one note.

It's extremely hot here, and we have to wear heavy clothes, which makes it really challenging, though, they are bulletproof for protection. Most of the local people here are supportive, and the soldiers are great companions. Don't worry, you can rely on me to be careful, I know how important it is to be cautious. See you in September.

She would end every communication that way: don't worry, see you in September. But then September came and she communicated a disappointing message, We have to stay longer; I'm not sure how soon I'll be returning. Don't be discouraged, I'll be there.

My mother checked the email every day for the next week and didn't get a message. She was increasingly concerned, and then she got a reassuring note: I'm fine, sorry I couldn't email for some time, we were on assignment. Don't worry. I'm being careful.

So it went on. We waited and waited, and I worried, too. The news reports on the war on TV looked dangerous, and my mother would cry when we saw those reports.

October went by; then November; then it was December. My mother bought some presents for my sister and dispatched them by mail. She said, I really wish Darlene could return for Christmas. Every time the phone rang or someone knocked on the door, she hoped it might be Darlene coming home by surprise. But she didn't get her wish, so Christmas was uniquely sad this year, not the holiday we had appreciated in the past.

Then on New Year's eve, the doorbell rang, and we rushed to open it. My mother said later she was a little afraid every time the doorbell rang that it might be someone to announce bad news, that there was a problem with Darlene. But this was the opposite, this was the best news we could have received. It was Darlene! We'll have a really happy new year now.

?

=====

Task 1: Vocabulary

Instructions: Please complete the following vocabulary activity by choosing the correct meaning of each word selected from the passage and use of each word correctly in a sentence.

Q: 1 WordPhrase: Enlisted **WordPhraseTier:** 3

Question: "Im glad I enlisted, it was a wise decision", what does the word enlisted mean in this sentence?

A: enroll or be enrolled in the armed services.

B: to cancel

C: to not try for

D: to separate yourself from

Question: Which sentence below uses the word "enlisted" correctly?

A: The boy enlisted his mom about his homework he had today.

B: If I would have never enlisted with the U.S. Army I would have never have had the opportunity I do today.

C: The man sat down and enlisted a bowl of cereal.

D: The girls shirt looked enlisted on her.

Q: 2 WordPhrase: Reassuring **WordPhraseTier:** 2

Question: She was increasingly concerned, and then she got a reassuring note. Im fine, sorry I couldn't email for some time, we were on assignment.

What does the word reassuring mean in this sentence?

A: To joke about

B: To upset

C: Say or do something to remove the doubts and fears of someone.

D: To discourage someone and ruin hope

Question: In which sentence below would you find the word reassuring used correctly?

A: After the storm moved through we worried that our house would not make it, but we got a reassuring phone call from our neighbors telling us everything was fine.

B: We felt reassuring about the food left over in the fridge.

C: My sister was a reassuring for Halloween this year.

D: The girl upset me so bad that I felt very reassuring.

Q: 3 WordPhrase: Discouraged **WordPhraseTier:** 2

Question: The author in our story says, "Don't be discouraged, Ill be there." What does the word discouraged mean in this sentence?

A: allow

B: make happy

C: inspirit

D: having lost confidence or enthusiasm; disheartened.

Question: Which sentence below uses the word discouraged correctly?

A: The team felt very discouraged after losing their fifth game.

B: They all felt discouraged after winning the championship.

C: Christmas is the most discouraged time of year.

D: I always love to feel discouraged.

Q: 4 WordPhrase: Dispatched **WordPhraseTier:** 3

Question: The author says, "My mother bought some presents for my sister and dispatched them by mail." What does the word dispatched mean in this sentence?

A: Intentionally slow down

B: delay

C: send off to a destination or for a purpose.

D: stop and rest for a while

Question: In what sentence below uses the word dispatched correctly

A: When the turtle ran the race he did so at a dispatched pace.

B: When the crime took place the the police were immediately dispatched to their correct position.

C: Some days I just enjoy laying around the house and being dispatched.

D: Being at the beach always makes me feel dispatched while I am there.

=====

Task 2: Forum Discussion

Instructions: This discussion forum will have questions for students to respond. Read the posted questions, and respond to each. Students are responsible for posting one initial and two peer responses for each topic.

1 - How would you feel

How would you feel if you found yourself in a situation where a loved one was being sent over to fight in a war? Draw from context clues and emotions you found within the text to support your answer.

2 - Tell about a time

Tell about a time you went through a similar situation where you felt anxious for a loved one. Draw on the emotions from the characters to support your view.

3 - Near the end

Describe how you would have felt whenever Darlen got home. Write a short excerpt explaining that interaction you might have had.

=====

=====

Task 3: Writing Activity

Instructions: You are to write and post here 500 words essay on how you would have reacted if you would have been in the mothers shoes. Compare and contrast emotions that you would have portrayed and give supportive evidence by drawing from the story. Be sure to interconnect your own personal emotion with those in the short story. Make sure to provide specific examples.

=====