



A Lesson on My Sister, the Soldier by Taylor Moore

Grade Level: Grade 8

Subject Area: English Language Arts

Lesson Length: 1 hour 45 minutes

Lesson Keywords: Reading, writing, soldiers, missing family, armed services

Lesson Description: The purpose of this lesson is to allow students a chance to think more critically about their reading. It will allow them to create a bridge between their reading and their writing, and then allow them to use one to enhance the other. As the students closely read and reread the passage, they will be able to draw more than simple recall facts from the story. They will be able to understand new words, ideas, and use the newly acquired knowledge to create their own thoughts and ideas which can be supported through text analysis.

Common Core Standards Covered with This Lesson

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.8.1b: Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.1c: Use words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.4: Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with relevant evidence, sound valid reasoning, and well-chosen details; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.1: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.4a: Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence or paragraph; a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.

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 bullet-proof 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.

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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: Cautious **WordPhraseTier:** 2

Question: ?Don?t worry, I?m cautious, I won?t take unnecessary risks?, what is the meaning of the word "cautious" in this sentence?

A: Don't care

B: Fast

C: Careful

D: Quiet

Question: Which of the following sentences properly uses the word "cautious"?

A: The man was very cautious, keeping his eyes on the road, while driving in traffic.

B: The young boy was cautious, riding his bike in the street and doing tricks.

C: She was cautious, she left her unlocked diary full of secrets out in the open

D: Cautious drivers always speed and never pay attention to the other drivers on the road.

Q: 2 WordPhrase: Enlist **WordPhraseTier:** 3

Question: What does "enlist" mean in the sentence, ?I remember when she came home and announced to our mother that she was going to enlist in the army.??

A: To get someone's help

B: To join the armed forces

C: To run

D: To quit

Question: Which of the following sentences correctly uses the word "enlist"?

A: The mother would enlist the help of her children in the yard sale.

B: The sad commercial tried to enlist my emotions, so I would donate money.

C: I enlist my dog to the vet.

D: The two best friends decided to enlist in the navy together.

Q: 3 WordPhrase: Assurance **WordPhraseTier:** 2

Question: In the sentence, ?Despite that assurance, my mother stayed worried.?, what did the word "assurance" mean?

A: Promise

B: Lie

C: Story

D: Present

Question: Which sentence below has the word "assurance" used correctly?

A: The babysitter gave her assurance that the children would be in bed on time.

B: My parents bought assurance on our house.

C: I gave my parents assurance when I lied to them.

D: Assurance can be bought online.

Q: 4 WordPhrase: Platoon **WordPhraseTier:** 3

Question: What is the meaning of the word "platoon" in the following sentence, ?I like the other recruits in my platoon, we all supported each other in the exercises??

A: A type of animal

B: A military unit

C: Family

D: Classroom

Question: Choose the sentence from below which properly uses the word "platoon".

A: My family saw a wide platoon at the zoo.

B: All the children in the platoon sat around the rug for storytime.

C: The platoon was brown with fury hair all over.

D: There were ten other soliders in my platoon.

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 - Why would the narrator's mother....

Why do you think the narrator's mother would feel scared and nervous whenever she received a phone call or a knock at the door? What prior knowledge and context clues would cause you to think this?

2 - Stressing the Stressing

Why does the author continually mention how worried the mother was throughout the text? Does the constant worrying of the mother cause the narrator to begin to worry at the end of the story, or do you think that was caused by something else? If so, what?

3 - The Suspense

Toward the end of the story the author says "The news reports on the war on TV looked dangerous, and my mother would cry when we saw those reports.. Why do you think the author included this when nothing else about the state of the war had been included before? Could the story have done without this sentence, or was it important to the build of the story?"

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Task 3: Writing Activity

Instructions: You are to write and post here a 500 word essay on how you and your family would feel if a member of your family were to enlist in the army. Compare and contrast what your thoughts and feelings would be with that of the narrator in the story. Make sure to provide specific examples.

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