



A Lesson on Soldier's Letter by Kristen Smith

Grade Level: Grade 5

Subject Area: English Language Arts

Lesson Length: 2 hours

Lesson Keywords: reading, writing, discussion, soldier, life of a soldier, soldier's perspective

Lesson Description: The goal of this lesson is for students to be able to use the reading and writing skills that they have been practicing through both verbal and written expression. This text aligns perfectly with their study of the various wars in Social Studies and allows them to truly see life from a soldier's perspective. Students will be able to closely read this letter, while focusing their reading on a series of both written and discussion questions. As they complete this activity, they will make gains in their reading and writing skills and also discover the heart of a soldier through his own eyes. They will be able to better understand the historical events due to the deep perspective that this text gives them.

Common Core Standards Covered with This Lesson

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.1: Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.10: By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poetry, at the high end of the grades 4-5 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.4: Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases in a text relevant to a grade 5 topic or subject area.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF.5.3: Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF.5.3a: Use combined knowledge of all letter-sound correspondences, syllabication patterns, and

morphology (e.g., roots and affixes) to read accurately unfamiliar multisyllabic words in context and out of context.

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CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF.5.4: Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.

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CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.10: Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

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CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.5.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 5 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

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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.

Soldier's Letter

by

Content: My dear Mother,

It is a very hard time we are having here at Valley Forge. We have little food. I am so glad you made me take the blanket with me when I left. It was a lot of trouble carrying it with me, but every day I use it. I sit huddled under it in the very cold snow and ice. I have two friends that I often share it with. I cut it into three pieces, and each of us has one part. They thank you, too.

When we first came here, George Washington told us it would be hard. But I had not idea it would be so very difficult. There are not many people around to help us. We went to a farm yesterday to beg for food. But the farmer shouted at us to leave. He said he hoped we would just go home and stop this fighting. He does not understand that we are fighting for his freedom, too.

Every day I pray that we will win the war. But every day I get discouraged. My friends and I try to stay hopeful. And George Washington comes to talk with us one by one every day. He says to stay hopeful.

He brought a new man to help us a man from another country. The man is from Germany, and does not speak English very well. A few people who know German tell him what we are saying, and they translate his words for us, too. His name is Von Steuben, and they say he is an expert at fighting a war.

George Washington says that we will do better if we learn from Von Steuben. The German is very clever, and he shows us how to fight better. I never knew much about fighting and I assumed you just ran across the battlefield. But, he reminds us that we must have a plan for each fight. I think George Washington has found us the help we need to win the war.

I will write to you again next week. We do not have much paper, so I have to stop my letter now. I hope the family is well and I hope I see you soon.

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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: discouraged **WordPhraseTier:** 2

Question: The author in the text says, "Every day I pray that we will win the war. But every day I get discouraged." What does the word "discouraged" mean in this sentence?

- A: to become happy or excited
- B: to become angry
- C: to lose confidence or enthusiasm
- D: to wish for something

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

- A: My mom was discouraged when she found out that I made all A's.
- B: My teacher was discouraged when all of the students turned their project in on time.
- C: The girl discouraged lots of presents on her birthday.
- D: The boy was discouraged after he studied for five hours and then made a D on his test.

Q: 2 WordPhrase: hopeful **WordPhraseTier:** 2

Question: The text says, "My friends and I try to stay hopeful." What does the word "hopeful" mean in this sentence?

- A: feeling of sadness
- B: feeling of confidence that something is going to happen
- C: feeling of anger
- D: feeling of excitement because something good has already happened

Question: Which one of the following sentence uses the word "hopeful" correctly?

- A: I was hopeful that it would not rain, so I could play my baseball game.
- B: The boy was hopeful when he scored a hole in one at the golf tournament.
- C: My teacher was hopeful when no one turned in their homework.
- D: My dog was hopeful when I did not give him a bone.

Q: 3 WordPhrase: battlefield **WordPhraseTier:** 3

Question: In the text, it says, "I never knew much about fighting and I assumed you just ran across the battlefield." What does the word "battlefield" mean in this sentence?

- A: a place where groceries can be purchased
- B: a tent where people sleep
- C: a field where a sports game is played
- D: a piece of ground where a battle or fight takes place

Question: Which sentence uses the word "battlefield" correctly?

- A: My sister and I cheer at a battlefield on Saturdays.
- B: Can you put up our battlefield in the backyard?
- C: The Civil War took place on several different battlefields in both the Northern and Southern states.
- D: My mom went to the battlefield to get something to cook for dinner.

Q: 4 WordPhrase: war **WordPhraseTier:** 3

Question: In the text, it says, "I think George Washington has found us the help we need to win the war." What does the word "war" mean in this sentence?

- A: a nice conversation between two people
- B: an armed conflict between two nations or states
- C: a sports game played between two teams
- D: a card game played between two or more people

Question: Which sentences uses the word "war" correctly?

- A: The two states fought a war when they could not agree on the laws of the nation.
- B: My dad is coming to my war on Thursday evening.
- C: At Thanksgiving, my family always plays a game of war.
- D: My teacher said we could have war at our tables as long as we stayed quiet.

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 - Blanket from Home

Why did the soldier's mother let him take his blanket from home? Wasn't she worried that it would get dirty or lost? Why do you think the soldier says that he is glad he has the blanket?

2 - Farmer's Home

Why do you think the farmer turned the soldiers away and did not give them a place to stay? What would you have done if you were the farmer??

3 - "Fighting for his freedom, too"

But the farmer shouted at us to leave. He said he hoped we would just go home and stop this fighting. He does not understand that we are fighting for his freedom, too.

What did the soldier mean by, we are fighting for his freedom, too? How was he fighting for the soldier??

4 - Little Paper

Why do you think the soldier quits writing and says that they do not have much paper? Why do they not have a lot of paper? Can you think of anything else he could have written on??

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Task 3: Writing Activity

Instructions: Extend on the discussion question, Farmer's Home. In Social Studies, you have learned there is an amendment that states that the public does not have to house soldiers in their home. In the letter, you read that the farmer refused to let the soldiers stay and the soldier thought that this was wrong. Do you agree or disagree with the farmer's decision? State your opinion on this topic. Do you agree with the farmer or soldier? Do you think that people should be made to house soldiers today? Why or why not??

Your discussion should be 2-3 paragraphs (minimum of 250 words). Please submit your response in the box below.?

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