



## A Lesson on Soldier's Letter by James Sellers

**Grade Level:** Grade 5

**Subject Area:** English Language Arts

**Lesson Length:** 2 hours

**Lesson Keywords:** reading, writing, Soldier's Letter

**Lesson Description:** The objective of this lesson is to have fifth grade students use the skills they have developed and practiced in reading and writing to think about and understand what the soldier in The Soldier's Letter was experiencing while he was fighting and away from his family. The students will read the passage several times and then begin working to develop a deeper understanding of the text using vocabulary, discussion and writing.

### Common Core Standards Covered with This Lesson

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

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.W.5.1: Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

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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:** beg **WordPhraseTier:** 2

**Question:** The author in our story says "But the farmer shouted at us to leave"...What does the word "shouted" mean in this sentence?

- A: whispered
- B: yelled
- C: spoke
- D: whimpered

**Question:** Which of the sentences below uses the word "shouted" correctly?

- A: I shouted to keep my baby brother asleep during his nap time.
  - B: My parents shouted at me for getting good grades.
  - C: My mom shouted at the top of her lungs with excitement when I hit my first home run!
  - D: Fred shouted at his boss because he wanted to keep his job.
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**Q: 2 WordPhrase:** expert **WordPhraseTier:** 2

**Question:** The author in our story says "His name is Von Steuben, and they say he is an expert at fighting a war"...What does the word "expert" mean in this sentence?

- A: a person who is very skillful and knowledgeable
- B: a person who is unskilled
- C: inexperienced
- D: amateur

**Question:** Which one of the sentences below uses the word "expert" correctly?

- A: It was her first day of teaching school so she was an expert.
  - B: I have never tried to swim but I am considered an expert.
  - C: An expert is known as a beginner.
  - D: The surgeon had completed thousands of surgeries so he is considered an expert in his field.
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**Q: 3 WordPhrase:** battlefield **WordPhraseTier:** 3

**Question:** The author in our story says "I never knew much about fighting and I assumed you just ran across the battlefield"...What does the word "battlefield" mean?

- A: a place where you find peace
- B: a place where you buy groceries
- C: a place you fight
- D: a place where you eat

**Question:** Which one of the sentences below uses the word "battlefield" correctly?

- A: We ate our family dinner on the battlefield.
  - B: The soldiers used the battlefield to find peace among one another.
  - C: The soldiers used the battlefield as their fighting grounds.
  - D: Mom and dad go to the battlefield to buy our food.
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**Q: 4 WordPhrase:** huddled **WordPhraseTier:** 3

**Question:** The author in our story says "I sit huddled under it in the very cold snow and ice"...What does the word "huddled" mean in this sentence?

- A: to crowd together closely
- B: a gathering of a football team
- C: a conference
- D: crouched or curled up

**Question:** Which one of the sentences below uses the word "huddled" correctly?

- A: We huddled to the restaurant.
  - B: I huddled behind the rock so that nobody could see me.
  - C: Tom and Jerry huddled up because they were hot.
  - D: Some of the players huddled so the other team could hear their play.
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## 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 does George Washington come to talk to each of the soldiers one by one?

In the text it says, And George Washington comes to talk with us one by one every day. ?Why do you think it is important for the soldiers that George Washington did this?

### 2 - Do you think it was a good idea to bring Von Steuben to help?

In the text, George Washington brought in a new man, Von Steuben, to help. ?Do you think this was a good idea by Washington? ?Why or why not? ?Use clues from the text to support your answer.?

### 3 - Why does Tom pray that they will win the war?

In the text it says that Every day I pray that we will win the war. ?Why do you think he does this?

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Task 3: Writing Activity

**Instructions:** In your opinion, based on the letter that Tom wrote to his mother, how do you think she is going to feel when she reads his letter? Use details and evidence from the letter to support your response. You must use at least 250 words.

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