



A Lesson on My Sister, the Soldier by Hope Fudenski

Grade Level: Grade 8

Subject Area: English Language Arts

Lesson Length: 2 hours 15 minutes

Lesson Keywords: Soldiers, Family, Army, Military, War

Lesson Description: The purpose of this lesson is to get students to think critically about the assigned reading. It allows the students to create a connection between their reading and their writing. By the end of the lesson the students should have acquired new critical thinking skills, vocabulary, and have used their newly received knowledge from the story to make their own thoughts that they will support in their writing assignment through details and specific examples.

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.8.1: Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant 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.8.2: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.3: Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words or phrases based on grade 8 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

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 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.

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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: In this story the author says, "Darlene said, 'Don't worry, I'm cautious, I won't take unnecessary risks.'" What does the word "cautious" mean in this sentence

- A: Reckless
- B: Careful
- C: Smart
- D: Prepared

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

- A: The girl was cautious when she ran into the busy street to get her ball back.
- B: Cautious students never study and just wing it on their tests.
- C: He was very cautious when he left his laptop and phone in the coffee shop.
- D: Dr. Daniel took his time completing his surgery, being cautious and thorough.

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

Question: The author uses the word assurance in the following sentence, "Despite that assurance, my mother stayed worried." What does the word assurance mean in this context?

- A: Uncertainty
- B: Suggestion
- C: Plan
- D: Guarantee

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

- A: My teacher had the my assurance that I would definitely pass his test!
- B: She understood the assurance and confusion Sam felt.
- C: No one had an assurance for the next task but Tommy was intent on finding one.
- D: Soon enough the heroine realized that the dastardly villain had an assurance for that night.

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

Question: In the following sentence what does the word "Enlist" mean: "I remember when she came home and announced to our mother that she was going to enlist in the army."

- A: Leave
- B: Enroll or join the armed forces
- C: Quit the armed forces
- D: Sprint

Question: Out of the sentences below, which one uses the word "Enlist" correctly?

- A: The girl selling lemonade had to enlist her friends to join her because she needed the help.
- B: As soon as he was 18, he had to enlist in the air force.
- C: The door was closing, so Joshua had to enlist with all his might.
- D: It was raining and because she did not want to enlist, she decided to wait until it cleared up to leave.

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

Question: What does the word "dispatched" mean in the sentence that follows, "My mother bought some presents for my sister and dispatched them by mail"?

- A: Recieved
- B: Gave
- C: Sent
- D: Collected

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

- A: Jason dispatched several cookies once his mother put them down in front of him.
- B: The teacher dispatched all of the crayons and markers around the classroom after her students had left for the day.
- C: Jasmine dispatched a balloon to her sick cousin at the hospital.
- D: The little girl dispatched several postcards out to her friends while she was on vacation.

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 - Mother knows best?

?In the beginning of the story the mother tells Darlene that she is too young among other reasons not to join the military. Why do you think she did that? Do you think that she actually knew that her daughter was too young or was there something more emotional in her intentions?

2 - Concerned brother?

?The narrator of the story mentions that when his sister went to the front lines that he looked up where she went and even went as far as to state Iraq is on the other side of the world. Do you think the last sentence was included out of concern for his sister? Explain why or why not and if not then explain why you think he included it.

3 - Worried by association

The narrator of the story mentions that his mother would cry when she saw the news and that as time went on We waited and waited, and I worried, too. Do you think that he was genuine in his worry for his sister's well being? or do you think he became worried because his mother was worried too? Explain your reasoning.

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Task 3: Writing Activity

Instructions: You are to write and post here 500 words essay on ?what it might be like if you were the one who enlisted in the military and knew that your family was at home worrying about you. Also write on how the it must feel to be the family?waiting at home and compare and contrast the differing viewpoints. Make sure to be as specific and detailed as possible.

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