

TEACHER'S GUIDE

The Shadow of My Father's Hand: *A Boy's Civil War Journal*



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Introduction

The Shadow of My Father's Hand: A Boy's Civil War Journal gives students an opportunity to interact with literature, art and the newspaper through this story by Craig Crist-Evans. The illustrations are provided by Anna Rich.

The Shadow of My Father's Hand is a story about a young boy who assumes responsibility for his family and their farm after his father is killed at Gettysburg. The boy's best friend is a former slave. The boy's family and the former slave's family share a friendship that has violent repercussions in the community. The story is told through the boy's recounting of events in his journal. His feelings, hopes, dreams and fears are also recorded in his journal.

A Note to Teachers

This guide contains background material, lesson plans, additional activities, and puzzles.

Background Material

Three background resources are included to help you prepare your discussions with the students:

- Poetry Primer – definitions of poetic elements you'll find in the story.
- Poetic Language in *The Shadow of My Father's Hand* – a chart providing specific examples of similes, metaphors, and personification in the story.
- Tennessee and the Civil War – a timeline of battles that took place in Tennessee, along with websites that provide additional information about the Civil War.

Lesson Plans

The lesson plans for each chapter are divided into these parts:

- *Vocabulary* identifies important vocabulary words in the chapter. These are words that are defined directly or by example in the story.
- *Let's Discuss* questions provide an opportunity to discuss the story with students. Most of the questions require students to obtain *meaning* across text and to think critically.
- *Exploring Poetry* directs students to a specific poetic element in each lesson.

Additional Activities

These activities help students explore topics and literacy elements in the story. Several instructional handouts are provided.

Puzzles

A crossword puzzle and a word search are provided.

For more information, contact:

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Poetry Primer

The Shadow of My Father's Hand is a narrative poem. Narration refers to any writing that tells a story. This story is written in a poem format from a first person point of view. The entire story is made up of the thoughts and experiences of the narrator, who is never named. This allows the reader to identify more closely with the narrator.

The story of the narrator is made more compelling by the use of poetic language. This teacher's guide includes a section in each lesson plan called "Exploring Poetry," which encourages students to explore a specific example of figurative language in the chapter.

Here are some poetry definitions you might find useful as you share the story with your students:

Poetry	There is not universal agreement about what makes poetry "poetry." There are many definitions. Here, however, are some of the characteristics of poetry: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A rhythmic or metric composition• Intricate structure• Often serious subject matter• Rich interplay of words and sounds• Words used economically• Figurative language and symbolism: metaphor, simile, and personification• Unique and very personal
Rhythm	A measured flow of words, established by line length. The words create the beat of patterns in the language – a pattern of stressed syllables, unstressed syllables and pauses.
Meter	The more or less regular pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in poetry.
Free verse	Poetry that lacks a regular meter, does not rhyme, and uses irregular line lengths. The writer uses the ordinary cadences of everyday speech.
Imagery	The language a writer uses to convey a visual picture; using figures of speech to express an abstract idea in a vivid or innovative way. The title of the story, The Shadow of My Father's Hand, creates an image that represents many layers of meaning.
Figurative language	Language that uses figures of speech to add richness to the literal meanings of words.
Figure of speech	A device that employs unusual use of language to associate and compare distinct things. Examples of figures of speech are metaphor, simile and personification.
Metaphor	A metaphor associates two distinct things; one term represents another term, for example, a garden is described as "a green quilt."
Simile	A simile associates two distinct things with expressions connected by "like" or "as," for example, "the horses stand as still as trees."
Personification	An expression that gives human characteristics to non-human objects, such as an abstract idea, physical force, inanimate object, or living organism; for example, "the midday sun dances on the weather railing."

Poetic Language

The writer makes great use of imagery in this story. Here are some examples of the figurative language you will find in each chapter of the story. You may use these examples to discuss the pictures students create in their own minds as they read the words.

Chapter	Simile	Metaphor	Personification
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sunlight, like a halo, circling • The shadows swallowing her like silence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Garden) a green quilt of twisting vines and creepers • (Hayrick Mountain) gray ghost of stone and leafy notches • The shadow of his hand, all the things he left undone, fall on me now 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Across the valley looms Hayrick Mountain • Midday sun dances on the weathered railing
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The field lies open like a prayer • Riders move like shadows in the noonday sun • (The horses') breath like raspy bellows • Like a lightning strike he swings the butt of his Rigdon-Ansley 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The narrow ribbon rushing down from Hayrick Mountain (a stream) • The dark fan of trees • The lot of them are tiny dots 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our barn, sagged at the center, gray with age • (The narrow ribbon) runs along and picks up the tang of minerals before it scrambles quickly through our bottomland
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let the evening settle down around us like a glove • Steady as a summer storm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blanket of gray mist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The fields wake beneath a blanket of gray mist • Moon still a ghost • Work of living • Sweat of crops
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stiff like soldiers in a pew • Makes a huffing sound like a horse that doesn't want to take the bit • A shadow, like a wave of sadness, crosses Ma's blue eyes • Preacher rises like a vision at his pulpit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Days of thunder and annihilation • Words become the cadenced drumbeat of the match 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evil of the world

Chapter	Simile	Metaphor	Personification
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curled like brown cotton in the grass • White spots as soft as feathers • Sun spills across the water like someone tossed a pocketful of diamonds • She arcs and disappears beneath the surface like a beautiful sleek fish 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brambles and cat briar confuse the edges of the trail • Gum trees spread canopies of new green leaves • A granite outcropping dressed in trailing moss
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Corn is like a child” 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sun is booming in a big sky
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sorghum waving like a flag • Something sharp like a knife • The last three words are spit, one at a time, like watermelon seeds • Slow heat rising from the fields grips me like a strong, clenched hand • The horses stand as still as trees • His voice as steady as the midday sun • Awkward as a mule stuck to his belly in deep mud • A faceless voice haunting your pine brake like a ghost 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The welcome shade of pines a whisper 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The still sun standing in the sky
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faint like thunder in the distance, I hear a kind of pounding • Betty runs like a demon yoked to hellfire and damnation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The street is dust • Dark night opening before us, then closing up the space behind us as we go • They’s a story lodged in every one (life) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flowers raise their husky colors • Until darkness swallows her entire • The hunched shoulders of Hayrick Mountain
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I’m grinning like a clown • We throw ourselves like stones skipping on the surface of the cool, dark pond • The heat like something you can touch 		

Chapter	Simile	Metaphor	Personification
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exhaustion heavy in my eyes like something I can touch • Like a wind come thrashing through the valley, a sudden suck of fire • Fire lights the yard like noon • Ettie's crouched against the earthen wall, shaking, crying like a child • A flood of tears like Noah must have seen • Breath coming like mud, impossible to breathe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A drum of horses • The pain is starburst • Her voice a mask of pain • The volume of my voice a whisper in the raging flames 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Last light paints the hills with golden mist • The earl moon peeks over Hayrick Mountain • The valley is alive with crickets • Their light eternal in the valley's breath • Like a wind come thrashing through the valley, a sudden suck of fire
11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Like a bubble underwater rising from the depths of sleep, my mind drifts up toward consciousness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My friend a blink of memory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Like a bubble underwater rising from the depths of sleep • Death: endless in its silence, its hungry, awful absence • The crops push up and blossom in a cage of sun and rain • Sunshine through the curtains throws lacy patterns on the bedspread • Fields budding thick with upspread arms of leaf and grain
12		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sun a blast of fire • Clouds thicken into knots • An angry funnel drops from boiling cloud 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sky is black, crouching on the back of Hayrick Mountain • Lightning rips the belly of the sky • The wind by now a thing of force and fury

Chapter	Simile	Metaphor	Personification
13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The moon drifts up above the mountain like a dream • (The light) still as death in its dim glow 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This pendant like a drop of precious blood hanging loosely from her hand • The moon shines through in waves of silver fog 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sun's warm hand pressed against my face • She has grown more still as if the crops were draining her, sucking out her life as the corn grew tall • The fish with faces of real people • Faint light whispers from the parlor window
14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A buzz of energy like bees around a hive • These men.... distant like the thoughts of war • Her voice like the buzz of hummingbirds • The shadow of the barn, like a skeleton, grows across the yard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These men are the world where I live 	
15			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early sun creeps across the broad pine boards
16			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I let my mind range out over the fields
17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ma moves slowly, as if an age has traveled through her bones • (Betty) her big head like a child's in my lap • The sun lifts up erasing clouds of mist like dreams of a long time past 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autumn starts its long cool sweep toward snow • The sun lifts up erasing clouds of mist like dreams of a long time past

Tennessee in the Civil War

Many skirmishes and battles took place in Tennessee. Here is a list of the major battles:

February 6, 1862	Fort Henry
February 11-16, 1862	Fort Donelson
April 6-7, 1862	Shiloh / Pittsburg Landing
June 6, 1862	Memphis
June 7-8, 1862	Chattanooga
July 13, 1862	Murfreesboro
October 5, 1862	Hatchie's Bridge / Davis Bridge / Matamora
December 7, 1862	Hartsville
December 19, 1862	Jackson
December 31, 1862– January 2, 1863	Stones River / Murfreesboro
December 31, 1862	Parker's Cross Roads
February 3, 1863	Dover / Fort Donelson
March 5, 1863	Thompson's Station
March 20, 1863	Vaught's Hill / Milton
March 25, 1863	Brentwood
April 10, 1863	Franklin
June 24-26, 1863	Hoover's Gap
August 21, 1863	Chattanooga
September 22, 1863	Blountsville
October 10, 1863	Blue Springs
October 28-29, 1863	Wauhatchie / Brown's Ferry
November 3, 1863	Collierville
November 16, 1863	Campbell's Station
November 23-25, 1863	Chattanooga
November 29, 1863	Fort Sanders / Fort Loudon
December 14, 1863	Bean's Station
December 29, 1863	Mossy Creek
January 17, 1864	Dandridge
January 27, 1864	Fair Garden
April 12, 1864	Fort Pillow
August 21, 1864	Memphis
November 4-5, 1864	Johnsonville
November 11-13, 1864	Bull's Gap
November 24-29, 1864	Columbia
November 29, 1864	Spring Hill
November 30, 1864	Franklin
December 5-7, 1864	Murfreesboro / Wilkinson Pike / Cedars
December 15-16, 1864	Nashville

Learn More About Tennessee in the Civil War

These websites provide a wealth of information about Tennessee's role in the Civil War:

Tennessee Historical Commission: A Path Divided
<http://www.state.tn.us/environment/hist/PathDivided/home.htm>

Tennessee Map of Battles in the Civil War
<http://americancivilwar.com/statepic/tn.html>

Tennessee and the Civil War
<http://www.tngenweb.org/civilwar/>

TNGenWeb Civil War Resource Page
<http://www.tngennet.org/civilwar/cwsources.htm>

Civil War Sites in Tennessee
<http://www2.cr.nps.gov/abpp/battles/TNmap.htm>



Let's Discuss

1. What is a journal? What do you think you would write in a journal?
2. Describe the farm the narrator's family owns.
3. What does the family grow on the farm?
4. What do you know about the geography of the farm?
5. Why have the responsibilities for running the farm fallen to the young narrator?
6. Why is this an important time of year for the family?
7. Why do you think the narrator says he is "ages older" than he was a year ago?
8. Why do you think the narrator went to Gettysburg with his father?
9. What does it mean to live or work in someone's shadow? How does this relate to the title of the story?
10. Make a prediction: What will the narrator do to get the crops in?

Exploring Poetry

What language does the author use to describe Hayrick Mountain? What image or feeling does that create in your mind?

Vocabulary

blue gentian, n

an herb with smooth leaves and showy flowers

bosom, n

chest

gunny sack, n

a sack made of a coarse heavy material, usually jute

sorghum, n

a grass grown for the sweet juice in its stem, sorghum is used to make syrup and for livestock feed

NEWSPAPER ACTIVITY

Look in the classified ads of the newspaper. Make a list of the jobs a 14-year-old could do today. How much responsibility is required on those jobs?

Preparing the Earth



Let's Discuss

1. What farm work is the narrator doing in this chapter? Why is it important?
2. What information about the horse Jed does the author give you?
3. What simple pleasures at home is the narrator looking forward to?
4. What does the narrator do to refresh himself in the field?
5. How does the author give you a picture of John's personality?
6. What is your impression of the riders who appear in the field?
7. What does one of the riders do to John?
8. How does the narrator react to this treatment of John?
9. What do you think the rider means when he says "you be careful who you choose as friends"?
10. Make a prediction: What does the rider's action suggest might happen later in the story?

Exploring Poetry

Why do you think the author staggers some of the lines on the page?

Vocabulary

brake, n

a marshy land overgrown with one kind of plant

reverie, n

a daydream

traces, n

straps of a harness used to attach a horse to a cart or vehicle

withers, n

the ridge between the shoulder bones of a horse

NEWSPAPER ACTIVITY

Find a newspaper story about someone who has been treated unfairly. What is the situation? What do you think should be done to improve the situation?

Planting and a Prayer



Let's Discuss

1. What is John's reaction to his attack?
2. How is the narrator's mother adjusting to her husband's death?
3. How do you know that the narrator is very aware of the planting he has ahead of him?
4. What reminders of the father do family members encounter?
5. How does the narrator interpret his mother's actions?
6. Why do you think the narrator carved his father's name in a tree in northern Virginia?
7. What mementos did the narrator take with him after his father died?
8. Why do you think the narrator kept the hair instead of giving it to his mother?
9. Why do you think the author chose to set the scene of the father's death in the rain?
10. Make a prediction: How will the narrator deal with his father's death in the future?

Exploring Poetry

What image does the author create when he uses the phrase "let the evening settle down around us like a glove"?

Vocabulary

chicory, n

dried, ground root of a leafy plant used to make a hot drink like coffee

mussed, adj

untidy, messed up

musty, adj

smelling damp and moldy

rutted, adj

grooved, with tracks made by wheels

NEWSPAPER ACTIVITY

Find a news story about someone who does good works in your community. Why is that individual important? What values does the person demonstrate?