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## **Family Plays**



# The Red Badge of Courage

Adapted by  
Kathryn Schultz Miller

Based on the novel by  
Stephen Crane

# The Red Badge of Courage

Originally produced by ArtReach Touring Theatre of Cincinnati.

*Drama with music. Adapted by Kathryn Schultz Miller. Based on the novel by Stephen Crane. Cast: 1m., 1w., with doubling, or up to 11 (9m., 1w., 1 either gender).* This coming-of-age play is a riveting battlefield drama that follows Henry's emotional journey to the meaning of courage. Henry's glamorous image of war leads him to enlist with excited anticipation. He soon finds himself engrossed in a very real conversation with the other young recruits about whether they each will run or stand and fight when faced with an actual conflict. The first battle proves too frightening for Henry, driving him to escape to the woods. After rationalizing his self-preservation, he encounters a fatal wounding of his new friend, Jim. Devastated, he vows to take care of Jim, and grants his dying wish to be moved away from the threat of trampling hooves. Returning to his regiment, Henry finds his comrades unaware that he ran, and decides to preserve his pride by fabricating a story of battle survival. He then redeems himself in the ensuing battle. Henry and his comrade, Wilson, overhear their general speaking highly of their regiment, and revealing a plan to order a charge of the Rebel flag. Henry and Wilson decide it is their destiny to carry out the plan, and after much bloody fighting, Henry manages to take the Confederate flag. Together they celebrate victory, finding that although shortly before this day they had joined the army as boys, they have finished as men. *Production notes are available in the script containing details on costume and set design. Simple set. Suitable for touring. Costumes: Yankee military uniforms and other simple period costumes. Approximate running time: 50 minutes. Music in book. Code: R93.*

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The Red Badge of Courage

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A play based on the Novel by Stephen Crane by

KATHRYN SCHULTZ MILLER

**Family Plays**

311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098

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**TO BRIAN**

## THE RED BADGE OF COURAGE

The original production of THE RED BADGE OF COURAGE was produced by ArtReach Touring Theatre in Cincinnati, Ohio. The first performances took place at Gabriel's Corner Arts Center on September 27, 1988. It was directed by Kathryn Schultz Miller and Dahn Schwarz. The play was double cast:

JIM, WILSON & OTHERS .....Eric Weisheit  
HENRY.....Patrick McRoberts  
MOTHER, NARRATOR & OTHERS...Jeanne Blessings

JIM, WILSON & OTHERS.....Dahn Schwarz  
HENRY.....William Peters  
MOTHER, NARRATOR & OTHERS...Shelley Gilbert

Set Design by Dahn Schwarz, Costumes by Kathie Brookfield, Music and Sound by Roman ("Howie") Tarnawsky. Photographs, by Barry Miller are of this production.



## THE RED BADGE OF COURAGE

### NOTES

The set for **THE RED BADGE OF COURAGE** will consist of two large flags, one Confederate and one Union, sometimes crossed in the middle upstage and sometimes placed in holders to the sides of the stage. There will be one or two free standing, folding screens. These may be painted in black and white with pictures on fronts and backs. The pictures will be of various settings in the play: battle, camps, forest. The pictures should be accomplished in large, artistic black and white brush strokes. The author suggests the paintings and drawings of Winslow Homer be used as the basis for these pictures. In any case, all should be in black or dark blue and white. The red of blood and red in flags should be the only color on stage.

**HENRY** and **SOLDIERS** will be dressed in typical Yankee uniforms. They should have the necessary accouterments such as guns, canteens, sleeping bags, tin mess kits. If possible, distressed pieces (such as torn shirt, dirty cap) can replace new pieces after the key battle scenes. White bandages and handkerchiefs dyed with red for blood should be worn when appropriate. **MOTHER** and **NARRATOR** will wear a simple dark blue dress (same color as the uniforms). The dress should have some detailing to indicate the period.

Throughout the script there will be indications of necessary sounds and music. These sounds should be timed so that they can easily be turned on at the appropriate times. If lights are to be used they should suggest a kind of impressionistic feeling, red indicating the fire and excitement of battle, greens and blues to indicate passivity. At some times music cues will be very long, spanning several scenes. At many times the sound track will be continuous.

KSM  
6/20/89

## THE RED BADGE OF COURAGE

**SETTING:** The Battle of Chancellorsville, the American Civil War, 1861

**CHARACTERS:** (9 males, 1 female, 1 male or female)

**NARRATOR** (male or female)

**HENRY**

**MOTHER**

**JIM CONKLIN**

**SOLDIER 1**

**SOLDIER 2**

**SOLDIER 3**

**WILSON**

**GENERAL**

**TATTERED SOLDIER**

**CHEERFUL SOLDIER**

**SONGS:** The Battle Cry of Freedom  
Tenting on the Old Camp Ground  
Tramp, Tramp, Tramp  
Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child  
When Johnny Comes Marching Home

Recommended Musical Score for the production  
Available from Anchorage Press

## THE RED BADGE OF COURAGE

AT RISE: (MUSIC CUE #1) We hear rolling drums, softly at first, then building in intensity. SOLDIERS 1 and 2 enter marching, from opposite sides and carrying flags. They meet center, then march to either side of the stage and solemnly place flags in stands. NARRATOR enters. HENRY runs in as we hear "The Battle Cry of Freedom". He reveres each flag with boyish awe.

### MUSIC

Yes, we'll rally round the flag, boys,  
We'll rally once again,  
Shouting the battle cry of freedom,

NARRATOR: *(Over following music)* In the troubled times of the American Civil War there was a youthful private who had dreamed of battles all his life.

### MUSIC

We will rally from the hillside,  
We'll gather from the plain,  
Shouting the battle cry of freedom.

*(During following music, SOLDIER 1 marches onto higher level. HENRY watches HIM put on jacket and cap. SOLDIER 2 ceremoniously hands him jacket, hat, then rifle. SOLDIER 1 stands at attention. HENRY is thrilled.)*

### MUSIC

We are springing to the call,  
of the loyal, true and brave,  
Shouting the battle cry of freedom,  
And our battle cry shall be,  
"Not one man shall be a slave!"  
Shouting the battle cry of freedom.

*(During following music, SOLDIER 1 begins marching in place on the cubes. HENRY, filled with childish enthusiasm, begins to mimic the soldier's movements, marching awkwardly by his side. HENRY marches down center, then turns up, facing SOLDIER 1.)*

MUSIC

Our country forever,  
Hurrah, boys, hurrah!  
Down with the traitor,  
Up with the star!

NARRATOR: *(Over following music)* He dreamed of vague and bloody conflicts which had thrilled him with their sweep and fire. In visions he had seen himself in many struggles.

*(MOTHER enters. Stands watching HENRY.)*

MUSIC

While we rally round the flag, boys,  
Let's rally once again,  
Shouting the battle cry of freedom.

HENRY: *(Turning out, on pause in Music)* Ma, I'm going to enlist!

MOTHER: *(Putting on shawl)* Don't be a fool, Henry! *(Turns away.)*

*(HENRY'S high spirits are not to be dampened. During following verse, SOLDIER 1 begins to march out, SOLDIER 2 in line behind him. HENRY ceremoniously dons his jacket and cap, awkwardly following soldiers offstage.)*

MUSIC

Our country forever!  
Hurrah, boys, hurrah!  
Down with the traitor,  
Up with the star!  
While we rally round the flag, boys,  
Let's rally once again,  
Shouting the battle cry of freedom!

*(Drum rolls, slowly fading. MOTHER watches men march off, waving. SHE picks up bowl of potatoes and sits.)*

- HENRY: *(Entering after drums, frightened but firm)* Ma, I did it. I enlisted.
- MOTHER: *(Shocked, prays, accepts)* The Lord's will be done, Henry. Now, you watch out in this here fighting business—you watch out and take good care of yourself. Don't go a-thinking you can lick the whole rebel army at the start because you can't.
- HENRY: *(Anxious and excited)* I know, I know.
- MOTHER: You are just one little fellow amongst a whole lot of others, and you've got to keep quiet and do what they tell. I know how you are, Henry.
- HENRY: Aw, Ma...
- MOTHER: Now I've knit you eight pairs of socks, Henry, and I've put in all your shirts, because I want my boy to be just as warm and comfortable as any in the army.
- HENRY: It's getting late...
- MOTHER: And always be careful and choose your company. There's lots of bad men in the army, Henry. Now, I don't want you to ever do anything, Henry, that you would be ashamed to let me know about. Just think as if I was watching you. If you keep that in your mind always, I guess you'll come out about right. *(Turning away as if done, then remembers)* You must remember your father, too, child and remember he never drunk a drop of liquor in his life and seldom swore a cross oath.
- HENRY: Ma, I gotta go...
- (MUSIC CUE #2—"Tenting Tonight".)*
- MOTHER: *(Sudden tears, trying to hold them back)* I don't know what else to tell you, Henry, except that you should never do no shirking on my account. If so be a time comes when you have to be kilt... *(tears)* or do a mean thing, why, Henry, don't think of anything except what's right.

**HENRY:** *(Finally taking notice of her pain)* I won't, Ma.

**MOTHER:** *(Picking herself up, recovering)* Now, I've put a cup of blackberry jam with your bundle...*(Smiles as she hands this to him)* because I know you love it above all things.

*(MOTHER pulls HENRY to her and holds him in her embrace firmly, then pulls away.)*

**MOTHER:** Good-bye, Henry. Watch out and be a good boy.

*(HENRY turns, starts to go. NARRATOR enters.)*

**NARRATOR:** When the youth looked back from the gate he could see his mother's brown face, upraised and stained with tears. He bowed his head and went on, feeling suddenly ashamed of his purposes.

*(HENRY exits as music swells. MOTHER exits. SOLDIER 3 enters—sets set pieces for camp scene. Other SOLDIERS and WILSON saunter in one by one, JIM CONKLIN enters and sits down center.)*

The cold passed reluctantly from the earth and the retiring fogs revealed an army out on the hills, resting. Slowly Henry's regiment awakened and began to tremble with the eagerness of rumors.

**JIM:** *(As HENRY enters)* We're going to move tomorrow, sure! We're going way up the river, cut across, and around behind them.

**HENRY:** *(Good naturedly)* Aw, that's a lie.

**JIM:** I tell you, the army's going to move.

**SOLDIER 3:** Well, you don't know everything in the world, do you?

**JIM:** Didn't say I knew everything in the world.

**HENRY:** Aw, what are you talking about; how do you know this?

JIM: *(Cocky)* I heard it from a very reliable friend.

NARRATOR: *(Smiling)* Who had heard it from a cavalryman, who had heard it from his brother, who had heard it from an orderly at division headquarters.

JIM: You can believe it or not, just as you like. I don't care a hang.

SOLDIER 1: It's a lie! I don't believe this old army's ever going to move.

SOLDIER 2: I've got ready to move eight times in the last two weeks and we ain't moved yet.

JIM: *(Superior)* All you got to do is sit down and wait as quiet as you can. Then pretty soon you'll find out I was right.

HENRY: Good Lord!

NARRATOR: So they were going to move at last.

HENRY: *(In a quiet fear)* Thunder!

SOLDIER 2: Like as not this story will turn out just like the others did.  
*(SOLDIERS move away, talk silently holding coffee tin cups.)*

JIM: *(Dead serious)* Not much it won't. Not much it won't.

HENRY: Shucks.

JIM: *(Almost cheerful)* Oh, you'll see fighting this time, my boy, what'll be regular out and out fighting. They're saying everybody's taking off for Richmond and they're leaving us here to fight all the Johnnies. They're raising blazes all over the camp.

HENRY: *(Panic)* Jim!

JIM: What?

HENRY: *(Trying to hide his panic)* How do you think the regiment will do?

JIM: *(Cocky)* Oh, they'll fight all right, I guess, after they once get used to it.

NARRATOR: *(Smiling)* He made fine use of the third person.

JIM: There's been heaps of fun poked at them because they're new, of course. Hardly any of them done real fighting before, like me. Most of them younger than me. *(Friendly)* But most of 'em are like you. *(Assuring)* They'll fight all right I guess.

HENRY: Think any of the boys will run?

JIM: *(Playing experienced)* Oh, there may be a few of 'em run, but there's them kind in every regiment, especially when they first goes under fire. They call the regiment "fresh fish" and "mule drivers" but the boys come from good stock and most of 'em will fight like fun after they once get shootin'.

WILSON: Oh, you think you know everything!

JIM: *(Standing for confrontation)* You know, I don't give a good hoot what you think...  
*(JIM moves to fight. WILSON taunts, "Yeah? Yeah?")*

HENRY: *(Holding him back)* Hey, Jim...

JIM: Never said I know everything.

HENRY: No, you never did.

JIM: Did I, Henry?

HENRY: No, sir.

JIM: You hear me say I know everything?



HENRY: Sit down, Jim.

JIM: So why's this lunk-head saying it?

HENRY: *(Calming)* Jim...

*(WILSON backs off, goes back to other soldiers.)*

JIM: *(Cooling)* That's what I'd like to know.

HENRY: Jim. Did you ever think you might run yourself, Jim?

JIM: *(Laughs to show how ludicrous it would be)* Me? Run?

*(JIM thinks, looks around, then confides, speaking quietly and honestly to HENRY, who appreciates his candor.)*

Well, I've thought it might get too hot for Jim Conklin in some of them scrimmages and if a whole lot of boys started to run, why, I suppose I'd start and run.

HENRY: No...

JIM: Yes, yes, I would.

HENRY: *(Poking him in the arm)* Oh, come on...

JIM: And I'll tell you, if I once started to run, I'd run like the devil and make no mistake.

HENRY: You mean it?

JIM: Sure shootin'.

NARRATOR: The youth felt the gratitude for these words from his friend.

JIM: *(Looks around, as if to set the record straight, boastful, loud so all can hear)* But if everyone was standing and a fighting, why, I'd stand and fight. By jiminey, I would.

*(SOLDIERS move away, JIM trails behind, nudges HENRY goodnight, exits. MUSIC CUE #3-“Henry’s Theme”.)*

**NARRATOR:** Henry had a serious problem. He lay in his bunk pondering upon it. He tried to mathematically prove to himself that he would not run from battle. A little panic-fear grew in his mind.

**HENRY:** *(To himself)* Good Lord! What’s the matter with me?

*(WILSON and SOLDIERS 2 & 3 are huddled over a game of dice.)*

**NARRATOR:** He told himself that he was not formed for a soldier. That he was different from the rest. He heard his friend, Wilson, bragging and boasting.

**SOLDIER 1:** *(Breaking from huddle, accusing WILSON)* Oh, you’re going to do great things, I suppose, Wilson!

**WILSON:** I s’pose I’ll do like the rest. I’m going to try like thunder.

**SOLDIER 2:** How do you know you won’t run when the time comes?

**WILSON:** Run? Run? The man that bets on my running will lose his money, that’s all!

**SOLDIER 3:** Oh, shucks! You ain’t the bravest man in the world, are you?

**WILSON:** I said I was going to do my share of the fighting—that’s what I said. Who are you anyhow? You talk as if you thought you was Napoleon Bonaparte.

**HENRY:** What’s the matter with me?

**NARRATOR:** As he sweated in the pain of these thoughts, he could hear the men in the next tent, betting on the outcome of the battle.

*(Lonely sad music, and with the music we hear the sounds of men betting.)*

SOLDIER 2: "I'll bid five."

SOLDIER 3: "Make it six."

WILSON: "Seven."

SOLDIER 2: "Seven goes."

*(All sounds fade.)*

NARRATOR: *(Rushing forward)* The next morning, Jim woke Henry up.

JIM: *(Rushing in)* Come on, Henry.

HENRY: What? What's going on?

JIM: You'll see soon enough. *(Exits.)*

NARRATOR: Before he was entirely awake, he found himself running down the road to a battlefield.

*(Loud triumphant brass sounds, a call to war. Then the sounds of guns firing. These sounds build. JIM moves cubes downstage to form bunkers. HENRY runs off, returning with guns. Other SOLDIERS enter.)*

HENRY: *(Running)* You hear that firing, Jim?

NARRATOR: Henry was frightened. As he ran with his comrades he tried to think.

HENRY: *(Speaking his thoughts.)* I didn't want to do this! The government forced me to come here! They're taking us out to be slaughtered. This is a trap. They don't know what they're doing. The generals are stupid!

NARRATOR: Shrill and passionate words came to his lips. But he gripped his outcry at his throat.

HENRY: *(Stops running.)* It's no use. Even if the men were more scared than me they would just laugh at my warning.

**NARRATOR:** The brigade was halted in the fringe of a grove. The men crouched among the trees and pointed their restless guns.

*(JIM, HENRY and SOLDIERS do as described.)*

A shell like the devil went over the heads of the reserves.

**JIM:** Here they come! HERE THEY COME !!

**SOLDIERS 1, 2 & 3:** Here they come! Here they come!

*(Sounds of galloping horses, louder firing of approaching enemy, cries of battle from men. Music expressing excitement and fury. GENERAL enters.)*

**NARRATOR:** The enemy ran forward, giving shrill yells, stooping and swinging their rifles! A hatless general shook his fist and shouted...

**GENERAL:** *(Stands on high level away from them)* You've got to hold them back! You've got to hold them back!

**JIM:** Oh, we're in for it now! Oh, we're in for it now!

**GENERAL:** Reserve your fire, boys! Don't shoot till I tell you! Wait till they get close up! Don't be fools!

*(On tape we hear excited cries, "Fire! Fire!".)*

**FIRE! FIRE!**

**NARRATOR:** Henry suddenly lost concern for himself. A burning roar filled his ears. He became consumed by a red rage.

*(HENRY is furiously loading his gun and shooting.)*

**JIM:** *(In a kind of daze)* Well, why don't they support us? Why don't they send us supports? What do they think?

*(Fighting continues for several seconds.)*