

Comparative Essay

The Red Badge of Courage is a war novel that traces its setting in America during the period of constant civil war in the country in the period 1871-1900. The period was characterized by massive killings besides mental turmoil that was experienced by the nationals of the country. The author of the novel is Stephen Crane and he focused on the life of Henry Fleming. On the other hand, *The Empire of The Sun* is also a war novel that focuses on Shanghai, China in 1944. The book elucidates the events that took place during the period of unrest in the country, the author J.G. Ballard majorly emphasizes on the life of Jim, a young British boy. In attempt to vividly juxtapose the traits of these characters the essay will majorly focus on three categories of characteristics. Firstly, the essay will give an illustration on whether the characters displayed courageous act in their actions. Secondly, the determination of the characters will also be compared in connection with their actions and intentions. Finally, the essay will elucidate the envy trait of both Henry Fleming and Jim Conklin.

Jim and Henry exhibit significant similarities in their characters, but there is also some level of difference in character. This essay explicates the similar traits in the two protagonists Henry Fleming in *The Red Badge of Courage* and Jim in *The Empire of The Sun* besides elucidating their contrasting traits.

Jim displays courageous traits in his actions whereas Henry Flemings manifests cowardice tendencies. During the chaos in the country, he puts up with his parents despite the turbulence that was experienced as a result of the chaos. On the onset of the attack of the Pearl Harbor, he is forced to separate from his parents. He is forced to seek residence in dilapidated conditions that leads to devastating consequences. Owing to these poor conditions, he is not able to meet his daily requirements besides mental turmoil that he undergoes through resulting from

parental loss. Jim displays bravery act when he willingly opts to surrender to the Japanese army that are their enemies. When he finally succeeds in his attempt to secure refuge in the Japanese army's camp, Jim further manifests courage when he freely and without fear mingles with the armed officers. This is ironical since the officers had caused displacement to their family besides killing many British nationals. Contrary to these manifestations, Henry Flemings portrays cowardice during the civil war in his country. Pondering over his past romantic life, Henry Flemings, eighteen years old decides to refrain from joining the battle. This decision was also as a result of Jim Conklin advice that he should flee away from the battle field since his fellow soldiers also fled. The results of the war were discouraging to Henry because the Union's army achieved a massive victory. Due to the feeling of betraying his army he escaped in the forest to join his army men. When he joins the army, one of the soldiers asks him, 'Where have you been Henry?' He further continues to ask him, "I thought they may have been killed over?" (Crane 47) These statements illustrates further that Henry did not participate in the war due to the fear that he had. In addition, he wishes that he had better died than to live to witness the massive killings and humiliation that was evidential in the war. Similarly, it is stated that Henry Fleming watched in disdain the wounded soldiers and wished that he would be among them. The foregoing vividly gives an illustration of the fearful traits depicted by Henry Fleming in the war.

Both Jim and Henry Fleming display determination in their actions during the periods of chaos in their respective countries. Before the attack of the Pearl Harbor by the Japanese army, Jim is determined to maintain his stay with his family despite the turbulence that is witnessed in the country. However this desire unfulfilled when the continuous attacks causes their family to separate. Jim's will-power is further depicted when he strive to make a living in the hard economic situations that he experienced after the separation with the family. It is stated that he

lived in the abandoned houses besides consuming the remnants of foods. His quest to find living is also witnessed when he attempts to find sympathy from the Japanese army. Despite the barriers that Jim faced in achieving support from the army, “he persisted with the bid until he was ultimately offered an internship in the military camp” (Bryant 44). Similarly, determination is pronounced in the actions that Henry Fleming undertook. After the initial victory of the Union army, he rushes to the forest determined to achieve victory in the subsequent expeditions. It is stated that after being disappointed with his initial action to exclude himself from the first phase of the war, he was focused to realize victory. During the third expedition, when the general of their army gets wounded, Henry grabs the flag from the officer and becomes the flag bearer unarmed. This depicts the desire that he possessed to ensure victory. Similarly, it is noted that he shot rapidly and constantly reloaded his gun that made him to receive praises for his attempts. Henry and Wilson volunteered to provide various basic needs that could boost the army towards achieving victory. Towards the end of the war it is stated that Henry had a feeling that he had better died in the battle field.

Finally, both Jim and Henry depict envious characters. After Jim had achieved intern at the Japanese army’s camp, it is indicated that he felt proud to be associated with this army. He admired the way they had proper organization among the army and the determination that they had to always achieve victory in their war expeditions. This made him to freely mingle with the Japanese army. This was highly ironical since Jim was a British and the Japanese army had caused displacement to his family. Consequently, it is said that his envy for well organized Japanese army was the driving factor in his quest to get intern in the Japanese camp. Similarly, he admired the machines that they used in the war and desired that his country, British could adopt similar technologies in their operations. The envy that he had for this army made him to

feel safer in the midst of this army which was also ironical since he was a British and the Japanese were their major rivals. In his argument with Dr. Rawlins, he confesses the bravery of the Japanese when he asks Rawlins that, "They are brave, aren't they? (Ballard 59). This statement explicitly shows how much he envied the Japanese army despite being a British. Henry Fleming also displays envy during the war. After fearing to take an active role in the first phase of the war, he moves to the forest where he finds several armed officers wounded. It is stated that he envied them and remarked that he wished he had also been wounded. This was mainly because he had betrayed the army and felt dejected. This makes him to lie when asked about his whereabouts during the first conquest. He lies that he had been wounded on the head in order to feel part of the wounded officers. Henry also admires the role that Wilson played in the third expedition of the war, he provided various support to the army that made Henry to envy his actions. In the final phase of the war he also volunteered necessities to the army. Owing to the active role that he played in the war, Henry envied his actions. After the commander of the army being wounded, Henry assumed the role of being the flag bearer and led the army. Henry admired this role that he played. He is also thrilled when individuals that initially referred to him as a mule driver now considers him as the commander of the army and the embodiment of the victory. This further makes him to further admire the active role that he took in the war. The peak of his joy is when Henry and Wilson lift the enemy's flag as a sign of triumph.

In conclusion, it becomes pronounced that the civil wars in America resulted into devastating results in America that included massive loss of lives. The author of the novel, Stephen Crane achieves various themes in the novel by clearly portraying the characters of his main protagonist, Henry Flemings. Through the traits of his main character, he achieves in displaying the theme of bravery. This is evident when Henry leads the army as the flag bearer

unarmed. Similarly, the wounded officers further portray bravery and courage that was manifested in the period of civil war in America. The theme of determination is also conveyed in the novel through the traits of Henry. This is observed when he moves to the forest in order to give support to the army. On the other hand, the author of the *The Empire of The Sun* achieves to convey his desired various themes in the novel through the explanation of various traits of his main character Jim. Determination is pronounced in the novel through the trait of Jim when he consistently attempted to surrender to the Japanese army till he finally achieved it. Various themes in the novel are also portrayed through the character of Jim.

Works Cited

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