Soldier’s Heart Study Guide

DIRECTIONS: As you read Soldier’s Heart by Gary Paulsen, answer the following questions.

- You must answer in complete sentences and fully address each question.
- Write your answers to the questions in your spiral notebook. Write on blank pages so that you can tear them out and turn them in.
- Clearly label your answers with the headings in bold for each chapter of the novel.

Foreword:
Describe, in your own words, what “soldier’s heart” was.

Chapter 1: June 1861
1. Where was Charlie from?
2. What was the big news at the beginning of the novel and how were people reacting?
3. How old was Charley? Why did he consider himself a man even if he wasn’t old enough to technically be considered one?
4. Who was Orren, and what had happened to Charley’s father?
5. Why did Charley decide if he wanted to join the Army, he’d have to walk to Fort Snelling?
6. What 3 reasons did Charley give his mother for going to the war?
7. How do Charley and his mother come to terms with his going to war?
8. Why didn’t Charley’s mother try and stop him? Choose a quote from the novel to support your answer. Be sure to explain how your quote supports your answer and include the page number.
9. What do you think about Charley’s decision to join the volunteer regiment?

Chapter 2: Fort Snelling
1. What did Charley receive for a uniform? What does this say to you about the military organization at that time? Explain.
2. What 4 things did Charley have to agree to before signing his name to enlist? List the 4 things and then write what you believe each means.
3. Write a few (2-3) sentences describing Charley’s training. Choose a quote from the novel to support your answer. Be sure to explain how your quote supports your answer and include the page number.
4. Why didn’t Charley have a lot of confidence in his officers? Do you tend to agree with him? Why or why not?
5. What did Charley’s mother encourage him to do when she wrote to him? Why did Charley almost follow through with his mother’s request? What stopped him?
6. What did Charley think about the send off and travel accommodations?
7. What was Charley’s experience with rifles? How did he feel about them before practicing drills for the war and how does he feel now?

Chapter 3: Toward Manassas
1. What did Charley think about slavery?
2. A woman of color came up to Charley in Maryland and thanked him for what he was doing. Since she was technically part of the South why was she glad he was going to fight the South?
3. How did Charley’s farm compare to the farms he was seeing on the train ride into the South?
4. What did Charley and Private Swenson think about how difficult the fight against the Rebels would be based upon the farmers and their families they’d seen from the train? Would you have agreed with Charley?
5. What did a surgeon tell Charley about why he should keep his uniform clean?
6. How did Charley relate immoral thinking to an unclean uniform? Choose a quote from the novel to support your answer. Be sure to explain how your quote supports your answer and include the page number.
7. Even before his first battle, Charley writes a letter to his mother stating that he is a man now although he is still just a boy. Why do you think Charley views himself as a man?
Chapter 4: Bull Run
1. What are two things Charley saw in his first battle?
2. Charley has now experienced death all around him. How does he feel about war at this point?
3. Give examples of imagery used in this chapter. Why is this effective imagery? Choose a quote from the novel to support your answer. Be sure to explain how your quote supports your answer and include the page number.
4. Why do you think Charley did not turn and run, but instead marched back “In Good Order”? Do you imagine that you would have done that? Why or why not?

Chapter 5: Night
1. What did Charley think to himself when the officers told him “to rest because they would have to go back tomorrow, would regroup and move against the Rebels in the morning”?
2. What were the “fireflies” that Charley saw in the fields? Why didn’t he go out to join them?
3. When the officer told Charley to fill his canteen, what did Charley discover about the stream?
4. Although Charley knew if he entered the meadow again in an attempt to cross it, he would join the dead and dying there, why didn’t he run?
5. When the Sergeant ordered, “Forward!” (page 36 at the top), how do you think you would have responded if you were in Charley’s situation? Why?
6. What did Charley realize about the training he had received?
7. Who watched the battle the day before? What does this indicate to you about their initial opinion about the war? Choose a quote from the novel to support your answer. Be sure to explain how your quote supports your answer and include the page number.
8. What was it like for Charley to march through the dead and across the field?
9. Why didn’t Charley and his fellow soldiers have to fight their way across the field?
10. What did Charley discover he did while marching across the field? Why wasn’t he embarrassed?
11. Charley struggles with the fact that the soldiers have to go out on the field again despite what happened during the previous battle. How would you be able to cope with the idea of knowing that you could very well die this time?

Chapter 6: Farming
1. What did Charley receive in addition to his uniform?
2. Why didn’t Charley spend all of his money on himself or keep it with him?
3. What was Charley confident would happen when he stood to battle again? Why do you think he felt this way? Choose a quote from the novel to support your answer. Be sure to explain how your quote supports your answer and include the page number.
4. What was “farming”? Why did Union Soldiers feel it was all right to “farm”?
5. What was as deadly to the soldiers as the bullets?
6. Why did Charley feel older than Nelson? Why didn’t he try to explain things to Nelson? (your opinion)
7. When the rebels retreated, why did Charley chase after them so hard?
8. When Nelson is wounded in the stomach and faces a lingering death, he asks Charley to load his rifle for him and remove his shoe. Why?
9. Why was Charley crying as he talked to Nelson?
10. What was the shot that Charley heard?
11. Does Charley understand what Nelson planned to do? If so, do you think he is responsible for his death? What would you have done if you were in Charley’s position?

Chapter 7: Town Life
1. What did Charley think of General McClellan and what did he think of President Lincoln? Choose a quote from the novel to support your answer. Be sure to explain how your quote supports your answer and include the page number.
2. What ran through the camp during the cold months?
3. What happened to the men from New York who had deserted? Do you agree with this action? Why or why not?
4. How did the men from the country differ in their habits than the men from the cities? Why?
5. Why didn’t Charley like to talk to people and get to know them?
6. Who did Charley trade with and what did he trade? Why did he trade?
7. After trading with the Rebel soldier, do you think Charley’s view of the enemy changed? How would you be able to deal with shooting at other people your age who are just like you?
Chapter 8: Winter
1. What did Charley have to do that he hated to help feed the ill soldiers?
2. How could Charley and the other men tell that the meat was horse and not beef?
3. How far did Charley and the men march in one day?
4. How did Charley know he was nearing battle, a large engagement? Choose a quote from the novel to support your answer. Be sure to explain how your quote supports your answer and include the page number.
5. What did Charley see in the smoke raised by artillery fire?
6. What type of soldiers came out of the trees at Charley’s battalion? How were they armed?
7. Why did it bother Charley to fire on the horses more than at the men upon them?
8. After stopping the cavalry, what did Charley’s battalion (600 men) face?
9. What was one common mistake of soldiers when firing at advancing infantry?
10. How did Charley respond to close combat with bayonets?
11. Where did Charley go after the combat? Why?
12. When the man with the bloody apron asked Charley removed his coat, what did he discover?
13. What did Charley see before he fell asleep near the surgeon’s tent? Why? Would you have done the same as Charley or responded differently? Explain.
14. Do you think this disrespects the dead soldiers? Why/why not?

Chapter 9: Gettysburg
1. Where was Charley? What did he note was always the same about every battle he’d been in? What impressed Charley about the Rebels as they marched across the field toward his position? Choose a quote from the novel to support your answer. Be sure to explain how your quote supports your answer and include the page number.
2. What happened when Charley, with the rest of the Minnesota Volunteers, charged the Rebels who’d made it to the Union line?
3. In his last battle, how would you describe the change in Charley’s mentality about the war and fighting? Choose a quote from the novel to support your answer. Be sure to explain how your quote supports your answer and include the page number.

Chapter 10: June 1867
1. In the last chapter, Charley has returned to Winona after the war, but he is living alone in a shack by the river. Why wasn’t Charley interested in looking for a wife and starting a family? Choose a quote from the novel to support your answer. Be sure to explain how your quote supports your answer and include the page number.
2. What hinted that Charley was in bad shape and knew he would not probably live long?
3. Charley was sad in some ways, and glad in some ways. Why do you think he was sad and why do you think he was glad? Explain.
4. What did Charley think about instead of eating when he went on picnics? Why do you think he considered this?
5. Where did Charley get his ball and cap revolver?
6. What happens or is about to happen with the revolver in the end? What clues does Paulsen give us?
7. Do you think Charley followed through with discharging the revolver? Why or why not?

Author’s Note
1. Although Soldier’s Heart is a work of fiction, much of it is historically accurate. What parts of the novel are true, according to Gary Paulsen?
2. Of the original 1,000 men of the First Minnesota Volunteers, how many were left standing after Gettysburg? What percentage is that?
3. What did Charley accomplish after returning home?
4. According to the novel, what finally killed Charley? How old was he at the time of his death?
Soldier’s Heart Final Discussion Questions

DIRECTIONS: Now that you have finished reading the novel, Soldier’s Heart, answer the following questions.

- Each response must be a full paragraph (4-6 sentences). Write complete sentences and fully address each question.
- Choose at least one quote from the novel to support each answer. Be sure to explain how your quote supports your answer and include the page number(s).
- Write your answers to the questions in your spiral notebook. Write on blank pages so that you can tear them out and turn them in.

FINAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Throughout the novel, how did Charley believe his life would end? How did it actually end?

2. How does the author describe the destruction of Gettysburg? Why do you think he described it that way?

3. What kind of wounds did Charley receive from combat and did they ever heal?


5. Talk about how Charley makes up his mind to go to war. He and his mother both had been to meetings, seen parades, and heard slogans and songs that drum up support for the war. Do you think that this kind of rallying for war exists today? Where do you find it, and what is it like?

6. Charley wants to go to war because he believes it will make him a man. Do you think he would have wanted to go if he’d known what lay ahead of him? Do you think that "becoming a man" was worth it for Charley? Why or why not?

7. One of the ways the author makes the conditions of war immediate to us is to describe what the soldiers have to eat and drink. Imagine what it would be like to drink water that tasted of the blood of wounded men. Find other examples where Paulsen describes such appalling conditions in vivid terms. Do you think you could survive under such conditions?

8. In the last chapter of the book, Charley thinks about "all the pretty things." He begins by thinking about "all the sweet things when it had started; waving pretty girls, Southern summer mornings, cheering children, dew on a leaf . . ." Later in the chapter, Charley thinks about his Confederate revolver. "It was a pretty thing, he thought. The revolver was as pretty as anything he'd seen . . ." Why do you think Charley thinks of the revolver as "pretty”? What can this revolver do for Charley?