

Bull Run

Synopsis: Paul Fleischman's *Bull Run* is a multifaceted look at the first major land battle of the Civil War. The author introduces sixteen characters who tell how their lives, in one way or another, intersect with the battle of Bull Run, an area west of Washington and across the Potomac River in Virginia. It is difficult to remember that all but one of these characters are fictional because the author brings them to life with such great skill. Each character represents hundreds or even thousands whose stories were never told.

Introduction: Explore Historical Fiction

Explain to students that this book is historical fiction, that is, a story that is set in the past. Say, *The setting of this historical fiction title is the United States at the very beginning of the Civil War. It is the only war in which Americans fought against Americans on American soil. The story is about events leading up to and including the first major land battle of the war fought at a place called Bull Run. It is told by sixteen people whose lives were changed forever by what happened there. This book is probably unlike any book you have ever read. The chapters are very short, and in each one, you will meet a character who will tell you his or her story. The characters are from the North and the South, male and female, black and white. As you read, notice how the characters change throughout the book and how the author uses words to paint vivid pictures in your mind.*

Vocabulary

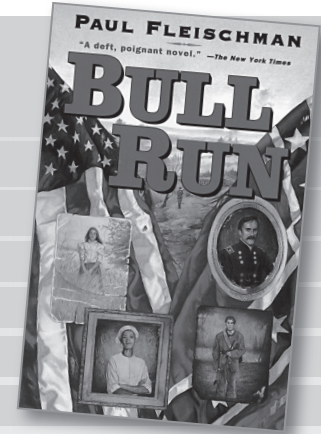
Tier Two: clamoring (8), fife (13), foreboding (32), mayhem (31), penchant (31), synchronized (32)

Tier Three: artillery (77), bayonets (11), cavalry (5), Confederate (30), dysentery (26), Fort Sumter (1), infantry (80), Rebels (4), regiment (84), scurvy (26), secede (6), shrapnel (37), secession (34), Yankees (5), Union (3)

Vocabulary Acquisition

Introduce vocabulary in context as it appears within the book before or during reading. Call attention to characteristics of the author's style in *Bull Run*. Examples include short sentences; a more formal, varied vocabulary realistic for the time; many poetic examples of figurative language; realistic descriptions full of imagery; and brief flashes of sardonic humor. All of this is projected through the personalities of the characters. Have students reread pages 43–44 to find some examples of the author's style.

In addition, review with students the meaning of *tone* in writing. Tone is the overall feeling or attitude that comes across in a piece of writing. Tone is revealed by word choice, characters, and the general writing style. The tone may be funny, serious, mock-serious, sarcastic, etc. Discuss with students the tone of *Bull Run*.



Author: Paul Fleischman

Genre: Historical Fiction

Guided Reading Level: Y

English Language Support

Offer realia, gestures, or photos to support the introduction of the new vocabulary. Make use of the maps at the beginning of the book to point out Fort Sumter and Bull Run as well as other important areas. Make use of several Web sites about the battle of Bull Run and share photographs of artillery, bayonets, cavalry, and Confederate and Union soldiers.

Understanding the Text

Literal: How did Toby Boyce get into Georgia's army? (He got in by pretending that he could play a fife. The recruiter was impressed not by his playing but by his "spirit and boldness" and let him sign up.)

Interpretive: Have students do a close reading of pages 1–2, paying special attention to the last seven lines on page 2. *What did Colonel Brattle notice about the African Americans? What did he notice about Vernon? What was that smile about? Why did it disappear so quickly? Use evidence from the book.*

Applied: Explain that often the anticipation of something is quite different from actually experiencing it. This was certainly true for most of the characters in *Bull Run*. Discuss with students what caused most of the characters to be so wrong about what they thought they had all figured out. (Possible answers: *A total lack of reliable factual information about what war was really like; romantic ideas about what it means to be a hero and to be brave.*)

Grammar and Usage

Review with students the meaning of *pronoun* (a word that takes the place of a noun, a group of words acting like a noun, or another pronoun) and *antecedent* (the word or group of words to which a pronoun refers).

Write the following list of pronouns on the board: *this, that, which, it, any, and one*. Explain that these words should not be used without a clearly stated antecedent. Have students read the first paragraph on page 5. Then ask them to reread the second sentence and determine the antecedent for the pronoun *one*. (horse) Point out that even though the antecedent isn't in the same sentence, it is clear what the pronoun refers to.

Then discuss the following sentences. Ask students to say or rewrite the sentences so that they have a clearly stated antecedent.

1. *Last night the old house burned because it started from a lightning strike. (change it to a fire)*

2. *The candidate enjoyed public speaking, and that added greatly to her popularity. (change that to her speeches)*

3. *The School Board is deliberating on the question of a 12-month school year, and this may affect families' vacation schedules. (change this to their decision)*

Literary Analysis

Review the term *hyperbole* (an extreme exaggeration or overstatement used by a writer to emphasize a point). Have students do a close reading of the last paragraph on page 1, locate the hyperbole, and explain why it is an exaggeration. (*"The cannons rattled the very constellations."* *The exaggeration is that the cannons were so loud that they rattled the constellations of stars in the sky.*) Then have students do a close reading of the first paragraph of page 3 and locate and explain the hyperbole. (*"Rise on your toes and you can see across the state."* *The exaggeration is to emphasize how flat the state's terrain is.*)

Reading Literature

Discuss how the author develops the point of view of Flora Wheelworth from what she said on pages 9, 37, 56, and 99. Ask, *How did her point of view about the war change from page 9 to page 99?* (At the beginning of Flora's story, the women were carefully preparing clothes and accessories for their men. Neither the women nor the men had any idea what the actual experience of the war would be like. All they knew was that it would all be over soon and that the Union was the enemy. At the end of Flora's story, the women cared for all the soldiers who came through Virginia, Confederate and Union.)

Writing

Have students write a paragraph that shows how the author develops the point of view of Toby Boyce from pages 13, 29, 63, 83, and 96. How does Toby's point of view change from page 13 to page 96? Encourage students to include evidence from the book to support their opinions.