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TEACHER'S GUIDE

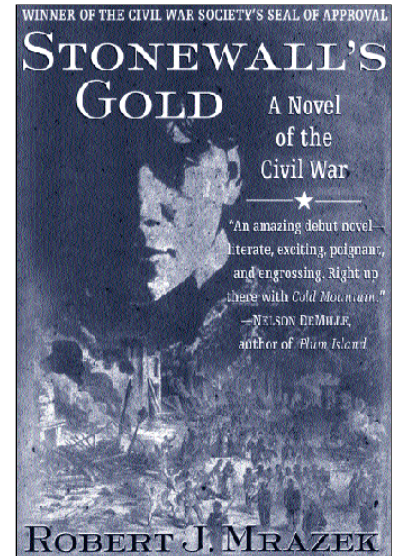
Stonewall's Gold

A Novel of the Civil War

by Robert J. Mrazek

“A superb piece of literature, rich in texture and of surpassing literary merit. This book is destined to become one of the great classics of Civil War literature.”

—Robert K. Krick, author of *Stonewall Jackson at Cedar Mountain* and *Lee's Colonel*



240 pages • 978-0-312-25422-3



WINNER of
THE CIVIL WAR
SOCIETY'S SEAL OF
APPROVAL

TO THE TEACHER

Stonewall's Gold is an adventure story for readers of all ages in the classic tradition of *Treasure Island* and *The Red Badge of Courage*. Combining a fascinating and gripping narrative with a portrait of life in the Civil War-era South, it is also the moving story of a boy on the edge of manhood, taking on difficult challenges that force him to confront the world for the first time.

1864 is a difficult time to be living in the Appalachian Mountains of Virginia. The Civil War is drawing to a close and, under the orders of General Sheridan, Union troops have laid waste to the countryside. Against this bleak backdrop, Jamie Lockhart's mother takes on a boarder to help her eke out a living until her husband returns from the war.

Soon, someone begins desecrating local soldier's graves, and Jamie, an intrepid fifteen-year-old, discovers that their boarder is the culprit. Confronted, the boarder assaults Jamie's mother; defending her, Jamie kills him. In his personal effects Jamie discovers the item he was looking for in the graveyard, a cryptic map to Stonewall's gold. Thus begins Jamie's quest.

Along the way, Jamie is faced with the best and the worst in human nature, and

PRAISE FOR
STONEWALL'S GOLD

meets a young girl and falls in love for the first time. He becomes privy to the hidden politics behind the war when he stumbles upon escaped slaves on the Underground Railroad, and he is also forced to confront the ugly realities of war and the absurdity of the lost cause in the final days of the conflict.

A ripping adventure yarn, a moving coming-of-age tale, and a fascinating portrait of the difficulty of life in the Appalachians at the end of the Civil War, *Stonewall's Gold* is a compelling novel that is certain to appeal to teacher and student alike.

“Tailor-made for Young Adults who enjoy historical adventures.”—*Booklist*

“A priceless novel . . . Mrazek joins a handful of writers who have mined the vast field of the Civil War to produce a must-read book. . . . A great tale.”—*The Washington Times*

“More than a fast-paced adventure story; it also a tale of the horrors of war, and of the last days of the Confederacy.”—*School Library Journal*

“Mrazek’s exceptional coming-of-age tale will equally delight young adult and adult readers. . . . Echoing *The Red Badge of Courage*, *Treasure Island*, and *Morte d’Arthur*, this tenderly rendered first novel . . . irresistibly combines the classic motifs of Civil War, buried treasure, and romantic heroism, [and] . . . possesses a compelling narrative drive.”—*Publishers Weekly*

“A gripping, well-researched, and vivid debut.”—*Kirkus Reviews*

“*Stonewall’s Gold* hits paydirt. . . . A novel of suspense and intrigue woven into the fabric of Civil War history.”—*Atlanta Journal-Constitution*

“A simple tale almost magically rendered. . . . On the surface it is a whopping good adventure yarn, but Mrazek’s attention to detail and research of the era turn the story into a beguiling sketch of the lives average Americans during our nation’s saddest period.”—*The Denver Post*

“A remarkable book that is a welcome addition to the huge ever-growing body of Civil War literature. . . . The twists and turns in the plot are enough to keep you turning the pages, but it’s the author’s ability to recreate the haunting sights and sounds of war-torn Virginia in the midst of the Confederacy’s death throes that lifts this book to the level of literature. Indeed, it evokes the sense of the young man rising to a new level of maturity through a trial by fire, like Stephen Crane’s classic Civil War novel *The Red Badge of Courage*.”—*The Hill*

The questions, discussion topics, assignments, and suggested reading list that follow are designed to guide students in reading this great adventure tale that is rich in historical insights. They are divided into questions entitled “Understanding the Story,” which focuses on comprehension, and “Expanding Your Knowledge,” which addresses larger issues. *Stonewall’s Gold* does a subtle and impressive job of creating a sense of what life was like during the difficult period that preceded the end of the war. Familiarizing your students with Civil War history will greatly enhance their understanding of the book and the insight they can acquire while reading it.

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The author opens the novel by saying this manuscript was found in the archives of the Rockingham County courthouse in Harrisonburg, Virginia. Why does he create this fictional frame? Why does he choose this location? (p. ix)

The author follows with a brief history of the Civil War. What purpose does this serve? Does it help to locate the story? (pp. ix-xi)

CHAPTERS ONE THROUGH FIVE

What sort of boy is Jamie Lockhart? What are your impressions of him? What do we actually know about him? (pp. 1–7)

Why do you think the author choose to begin the tale with Sheridan’s burning of Jamie’s family home? (p. 2)

What is Jamie’s relationship with his mother? (pp. 1–7)

What is your impression of the stranger who comes looking for a room? How does Jamie view him? What do we actually know about him? (pp. 3–7)

How does Jamie feel about the war?

What do you learn about the Civil War and Virginia in the first chapter?

How does Jamie feel about his horse, Jupiter? (p. 8)

What do you think of Jamie's reading tastes? What books does he like? What books does he dislike? (pp. 9, 11)

What are the attitudes toward slavery expressed by the characters in *Stonewall's Gold*?

Why do you suppose Corporal Blewitt never leaves his room? (p. 18)

Why do you believe Jamie follows Corporal Blewitt to the graveyard? (p. 20)

Why is the corporal exhuming, or digging up, the bodies? (p. 22)

When Jamie threatens to expose the corporal, he says, "That's when anger caused me to blunder," (p. 27) . What does he mean by this? How is it a blunder?

Why does Jamie kill the corporal? Does he have any choice? (p. 29)

Why does Jamie's mother try to cover up the death? (p. 30)

Why does Jamie think to look in the tobacco pouch? What does he find there? Do you believe it's strange for the corporal to have the pouch? Why is the tobacco stale?

Why does Jamie pursue the mystery of the map? (p. 36)

What transpires in Ike Trumbo's bar? Why does it occur? (pp. 40–44)

CHAPTERS SIX THROUGH TWELVE

Why does Jamie trust Major de Monfort? Is he wise to do so? (p. 46)

What do you think the major's cryptic message about Calvary means? (p. 50)

How do McQuade's men find Jamie? (p. 58)

What advice does the major give Jamie? Does Jamie heed that advice? What happens to the map? (pp. 50, 58, 62)

Do you believe Captain McQuade's story about the origins of the gold and the map? What do you suppose Jamie believes?

"Captain McQuade never talked about his own plans" for the gold (p. 74). Why is this and what do you imagine the Captain's plans were?

How does Jamie respond to Jupiter's death? (p. 79) Why does he respond so strongly? What does it tell you about his relationship with his horse? What does it tell you about Jamie? Why does he retract his oath not to escape?

How would you describe Captain McQuade's men? What about Claude Moomaw? What about Laddy and Thurman? What about Dex? (pp. 79–85)

What are your first impressions of Kate Dandridge? (pp. 84–85, 88–92)

How do Kate and Jamie escape from the cellar?

CHAPTERS THIRTEEN THROUGH SEVENTEEN

What do we learn from Royal Bevinger on his deathbed? (pp. 102–104) Does it change your impression of Captain McQuade?

What is Helen Kerfoot like? Who are all the people who crowd her household? (p. 110)

What route do Kate and Jamie take to Sudley Springs? (pp. 112–113)

Once Jamie and Kate have escaped Captain McQuade's men and reprovisioned at Helen Kerfoot's house, Jamie's attitude changes tremendously. How does the author communicate this? (p. 118)

Why do you think the author tells the story of the hanging of Johnny Bellayne? What does the story teach us? (pp. 119–124)

What transpires at the inn at Sperryville? Does it alter your impression of the war? (pp. 126–128)

CHAPTERS EIGHTEEN THROUGH TWENTY-ONE

What is Mr. Gamage like? Who does he quote? Why? What does this say about him? What about the password "Montague"? (pp. 132–134)

What is Jamie's attitude toward Kate? What do you believe is Kate's attitude toward Jamie? (p. 137)

Why does Mr. Gamage detain Jamie and Kate? (pp. 139–140)

What is Major de Monfort's condition when Jamie is reunited with him? (pp. 144–145)

Why do you imagine Major de Monfort denies being in Mr. Gamage's house while Jamie and Kate were detained? (p. 149)

How do Alain de Monfort and Katherine get along? What is Jamie's reaction to it and why? (p. 154)

How does Major de Monfort help Jamie reconstruct the map? (pp. 157–158)

How do they decode the map? (pp. 158–160) How effective is it in practice?

How does Jamie feel about leaving the shack that they occupy during the snow-storm? (pp. 162–163)

CHAPTERS TWENTY-TWO THROUGH TWENTY-SEVEN

What convinces Jamie the war is over and why? (p. 166)

Who makes the decisions for the trio as they scout for the gold and why? (pp. 172–173)

Where do they find the gold? How does it resemble the "Mouth of the Devil"? (p. 178)

What are the major's plans for the gold? Why? (p. 183)

What do we learn about Gamage and James Donaldson? (pp. 184–186)

How do you suppose Jamie feels about the major's plan and his personal revelations? (p. 185)

What happens during the gun battle between Captain McQuade's men and the major and Kate? (p. 189)

Who kills Dex and why? (p. 189)

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT THROUGH EDITOR'S POSTSCRIPT

Why does the captain join Jamie and Kate rather than trying to take the gold? (p. 191)

How do Jamie, Kate, and the captain elude the Yankees on their way to Richmond? (pp. 191–196)

What do the Confederate soldiers think of New Yorkers? (p. 197)

Why do you suppose Captain McQuade decides to lead the Confederate soldiers into battle against the Yankees? What are the ramifications of that decision? How do we feel about McQuade in the wake of this? (pp. 199–200)

Why do the Confederate soldiers charge the Yankee line? Why do you think the author includes this scene?

How is the skirmish between the Southern soldiers and the Union Army indicative of the modern view of the Civil War?

How does Colonel Twombly react to the shipment Kate and Jamie are carrying? Does he believe them? What changes his mind? (pp. 205–206)

What did Colonel Twombly do before the war? Does his life story mirror that of the author's? What is the point of the statement, "He told us what it was but I can't remember now"? (p. 207)

In the end, what happens to the gold? (pp. 208–209, 214)

Why do you think Jamie's mother doesn't recognize him? How is Jamie different at the end of the story? (p. 212)

What do we know of Captain McQuade's plans for the gold? (p. 215) What do you imagine they were?

Why does Jamie want to find Frederick Douglass? (p. 215)

What do we learn in the Editor's Postscript? Do you imagine Jamie and Kate saw each other again after the conclusion of Jamie's narrative?

Why do you think the author included the Editor's Postscript? What purpose does it serve? One reviewer believed the Editor's Postscript was real—does it seem real to you?

HISTORY

What do we learn about the Civil War from *Stonewall's Gold*? What did you learn about Southern culture at the time of the Civil War? Has this book changed your impression of the war? Research the period to expand your knowledge of the time period in which the book is set.

What impression are you given of Civil War soldiers in the book? We are privy to many scenes of violence and bloodshed. Do they seem justified? Why or why not? Do they seem inevitable or do they instead appear random? Are the soldiers killed in battle or are their deaths not directly related to the struggle at hand? What point is the author trying to make?

Mrazek states that many Southerners thought the Civil War would be brief. Why do you believe they held this illusion? Why was the Civil War so protracted? Does *Stonewall's Gold* address this?

Read other novels based on the Civil War and compare and contrast the portraits of life in the period that they present.

One of the most important goals of an historical novel is to re-create the world in which the characters live, so that the past is brought back to life for the reader. How does the author of *Stonewall's Gold* accomplish this? Does this world come to life for you? Which of the author's techniques are most effective in making the time and place come alive for you? Compare this novel to other works of historical fiction you have read.

FRIENDSHIP AND LOYALTY

What effect do you think Jamie's experiences with the major have on him? Do you believe they alter Jamie's attitude toward slavery? What do you imagine Kate's attitudes toward slavery are, both before and after this adventure?

At the outset Jamie is alone in his quest. But as it develops he both finds friends who aid him and enemies who hinder and harm him. What do you suppose Jamie learns in the course of this quest? Even his closest allies have different goals. How does this affect the narrative? What impact do you think it has on Jamie?

Jamie learns a great deal about friendship in the course of this narrative. What do you believe Jamie learns and from whom? What is the author trying to teach us about the true meaning of friendship? Does the major consider Jamie a friend?

CHARACTER

How does a sense of honor play a roll in this tale? Do any of McQuade's men have a sense of honor?

We learn about a number of disparate characters. Who are the heroes and who are the villains? Who is simply misguided? Do those people who are misguided return to their true natures? Look at Captain McQuade and Royal Bevinger. On his deathbed Bevinger tells Jamie, "Captain McQuade is a good man." Are their fates somehow tied? Both Captain McQuade and Royal Bevinger seek redemption in the end. How is a desire for redemption played out in the course of the story?

Jamie's world is very different from our own. How does this influence Jamie and his beliefs? How do his beliefs translate to the modern world? Would Jamie have difficulty getting along if he were to suddenly find himself in the modern world? What about Kate and the Major? How would they fare in the modern world?

NARRATIVE

Stonewall's Gold falls into the great tradition of coming-of-age novels. What other novels in this genre have you read? How is this book similar to them? How is it different? Coming-of-age novels focus on the character development of the subject or narrator, in this case Jamie. What are some of the changes Jamie goes through? How do you suppose they will impact his life? We learn a little about Jamie's later life in the Editor's Postscript. Discuss what we learn and try to extrapolate further into Jamie's future.

In an adventure tale it is important for the author to carefully control the narrative in order to maintain and build suspense. Discuss how the author of *Stonewall's Gold* accomplishes this. You will notice that, far from being unremitting, the narrative varies between passages of great action and suspense and periods of relative calm. What purpose do these periods of calm serve in furthering the narrative and in developing the characters and their relationships? Would the story function as well without these periods of calm? In the story these periods of calm are often juxtaposed with stormy weather. Why do you suppose this is?

Read other classic adventure stories and compare and contrast how the action is revealed. Do they use a similar or different pacing?

Stonewall's Gold is a frame tale because it opens and closes with a different narrator than exists in the bulk of the text (i.e. The Explanatory Note and Editor's Postscript). Why do you think Mrazek uses this device? What purpose does it serve? Are you familiar with other frame tales? If so, compare and contrast them.

OTHER RESOURCES

Robert Louis Stevenson, *Treasure Island*; Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, and *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*; Stephen Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage*; Ambrose Bierce, "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge," "One of the Missing"; Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*; Charles Frazier, *Cold Mountain*; Michael Shaara, *The Killer Angels*; Jeff Shaara, *Gods and Generals* and *The Last Full Measure*; Jeffrey Lent, *In the Fall*; Jim Harrison, *Legends of the Fall*; J. D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Robert J. Mrazek lives and writes in Washington, D.C., and Maine. A former member of Congress, he coauthored the law that saved the Manassas battlefield from being bulldozed into a giant shopping center. Mrazek is also the author of *Unholy Fire*.

This teacher's guide was written by Edward Kastenmeier. He is an editor at Vintage Books in New York City.

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