



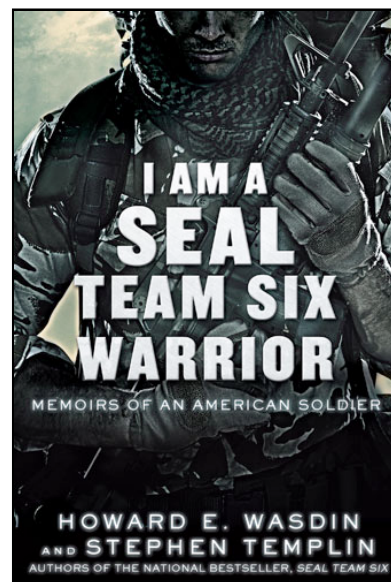
ST. MARTIN'S GRIFFIN

TEACHER'S GUIDE

I Am a SEAL Team Six Warrior

Memoirs of an American Soldier

by Howard E. Wasdin & Stephen Templin



192 pages • ISBN 978-1-250-01643-0

“This young-readers version of an ex-SEAL sniper’s account of his training and combat experiences . . . makes colorful, often compelling reading.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*

*YALSA
Quick Picks for
Reluctant Young Adult
Readers Nominee*

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Taybas Reading List
Nominee*

ABOUT THE BOOK

When the Navy sends their elite, they send the SEALs. When the SEALs send their elite, they send SEAL Team Six—a once-secret unit, now famous for its dramatic attack on Osama Bin Laden’s compound.

In this young reader’s edition of the *New York Times* bestseller *Seal Team Six*, Howard Wasdin tells how he overcame a grueling childhood to live his dream and enter the exciting and dangerous world of Navy SEALs and Special Forces snipers.

After escaping an abusive father, Howard joined the Navy so he could complete his college education. Always driven to master the next challenge, he quickly moved through the best units in the military, eventually joining the legendary SEAL Team Six. Soon he was fighting for his life in the Battle of Mogadishu, when his small band of soldiers found themselves cut off from help and desperately trying to rescue downed comrades.

For Howard, the result of that battle was a series of new and unexpected challenges, with surprising changes in his life and beliefs.

This young reader’s edition tells the entire story from the adult edition in a slightly condensed form.

This guide has three main sections:

- A chapter-by-chapter Teacher’s Summary
- Questions for Class
- Suggestions for Individual Study, to help students who have chosen this book for a book report.

There’s also a Teacher and Student Resources section to help plan enriched study of the background of the historical events described in the book.

“Mr. Wasdin’s narrative is visceral and as active as a Tom Clancy novel . . . [it] will also leave readers with a new appreciation of the training that enabled SEAL Team Six to pull off the bin Laden raid with such precision . . . adrenaline-laced.”—*The New York Times*

“*SEAL Team Six* pulses with the grit of a Jerry Bruckheimer production . . . On his journey to becoming a member of the Navy’s best of the best, Wasdin proved his mettle in Operation Desert Storm and endured training that would break the back of most mortal men.”—*The Washington Post*

“[Wasdin] describes the harrowing ops he undertook as part of the elite Seal Team Six squadron, including the 1993 Battle of Mogadishu that almost killed him . . . Reveals an intimate look at the rigorous training and perilous missions of the best of the Navy’s best.”—*Time*

“*SEAL Team Six* is a masterful blend of one man’s—Waz-Man’s—journey from hard knocks to hard corps. Even better, Waz-Man and Templin can actually write as good as they can shoot. They capture your attention at every turn—not knowing if you’re about to take a bullet to the head from a SEAL sniper or get hit in the gut with a punch line.”
—Dalton Fury, former Delta Force Commander and *New York Times* bestselling author of *Kill Bin Laden*

In a mostly chronological manner, Howard tells his story from his childhood to his life after the Navy. Throughout, he’s learning—not just the technical details of SEAL training, but also about himself and the political and emotional complexities his of life as a SEAL sniper. After barely escaping death in the Battle of Mogadishu, the shootout made famous by the book and film “Black Hawk Down,” he’s forced to face the conflict between the person he has was when he joined the Navy and the person he had become as a result of his experiences. The difficult path to settling that inner conflict first takes him back to the troubling details of his childhood, and then to a courageous and inspirational decision.

Chapter 1: Reach Out and Touch Someone

In this introductory chapter, Howard gives a small taste of the work of a SEAL Team Six sniper. He describes a complicated operation in the middle of Mogadishu, about two weeks before his final battle there. The humanitarian nature of the Somalian mission and Howard's close focus on his role as a sniper are both evident.

Chapter 2: Hell Is for Children

Howard's early childhood is chaotic and marked by his mother's poverty and the alcoholism of his stepfather. According to his mother, his biological father had abandoned them. His stepfather is physically abusive, leading Howard to compensate with strict self-discipline and superhuman standards for himself. Fortunately, an uncle and Howard's pastor offer positive influence. Howard goes to college. However, his money runs out. He then joins the Navy, expecting a short career before finishing college. He pushes himself to take on the toughest challenge available to him, becoming a Navy Search and Rescue swimmer, then discovers that his childhood prepared him better for that challenge than he'd realized. He marries and has a son.

Chapter 3: Russian Sub and Green Hero

On his first rescue mission, Howard has to rescue the crew of his helicopter, which has gone down in the open sea while tracking a Russian submarine. It's a difficult rescue, but he distinguishes himself. On his ship, he meets Navy SEALs and learn about their unit, the history of which he recounts. Joining the SEALs presents another challenge, so he pushes the Navy to let him try out for the unit.

Chapter 4: The Only Easy Day Was Yesterday

Howard goes to Coronado, California, for the famously difficult SEAL training. He details the rigors of the tests the unit uses to weed out candidates, especially the final "Hell Week" tests. He also recounts the heroism of individual SEALs he learned about, and explains the SEAL ethos of excellence and hard work and endurance.

Chapter 5: SEAL Team Two

Howard joins his first SEAL unit, SEAL Team Two. He's given more training, including sessions abroad with international commando squads. He also begins to hear about a special, secret unit, SEAL Team Six. It piques his interest. Sadly, his excitement about his career is offset by the death of the uncle who'd been a mentor to him. Howard is crushed. Yet, at the funeral, something positive happens: his stepfather takes a first step toward reconciliation.

Chapter 6: Desert Storm

In the 1991 Gulf War, Howard takes part in several missions. The three he recounts take him close to enemy soldiers for the first time. He learns the difficulties of operating in a place where loyalties are unclear, and is forced to recognize the humanity of the enemy soldiers he's been trained to keep at an emotional distance.

Chapter 7: SEAL Team Six

Having earned the chance to try out for SEAL Team Six, Howard learns what it means to be part of the most elite team within an elite corps. The training is more extreme, physically and mentally. The standards are higher—so high that many SEALs can't pass. However, there are also perks, which come in the form of more advanced equipment and better training opportunities.

Chapter 8: Born-Again Sniper

While Howard and his fellow SEAL Team Six members are satisfied with their

achievements, it turns out the highest level of Army command is not. The SEALs can do nearly anything, but they can't work well with the other elite forces, Delta Force and the Army Rangers. Delta and the Rangers have the same problem. The military command, aware of the increasing complexity of Special Operations missions, is determined to bring all the teams in sync. Howard has to learn to balance his pride in his own unit with pride in something larger.

Chapter 9: CIA Safe House—Hunting for Aidid

In 1992, the United States sends troops on a humanitarian mission to Somalia, to help citizens who are starving because of the civil war there. By 1993, that has turned into a military mission. Howard is part of an international peacekeeping operation, and an effort to catch the Somali warlord responsible for much of the suffering. In this chapter, a day-by-day account reveals Howard's growing understanding of the political complexity of the mission. Some of the allied countries don't want the mission to succeed. U.S. commanders are at the mercy of political decisions that are influenced by the American media. While struggling to make sense of this confusion so he can complete his mission, Howard takes on the simpler, more satisfying task of treating a wounded Somali boy, despite direct orders to ignore the boy's desperation.

Chapter 10: Capturing Aidid's Evil Genius

Coming back to the mission partially described in the introductory chapter, Howard is given the focused task of capturing the warlord's chief colleague, his tactical and financial planner.

Chapter 11: Eyes over Mogadishu Mission

Back on the trail of the warlord, Howard notices disturbing signs of information leaks and tactical responses, which suggest to him that the allied forces are underestimating the Somalis—and the danger of the Mogadishu effort.

Chapter 12: Battle of Mogadishu

In this detailed account of the Battle of Mogadishu, Howard's worst fears about the mission are realized. He and his colleagues in Delta Force and the Rangers, along with soldiers from other countries in the allied forces, are led into a trap in the center of Mogadishu. They're forced to fight their way out. Not all survive. Howard is gravely wounded.

Chapter 13: From the Ashes

Evacuated first to a hospital in Germany and then to the United States, Howard feels anger and self-pity—and at the same time hates himself for having those natural feelings, because he knows his suffering, though intolerable, isn't as great a sacrifice the one made by the men who died in the battle, or even by some of the other wounded. He's also cut-off from the surrogate family he has created, his SEAL team. During his recovery and physical therapy he's at home, but he doesn't feel he fits in there. He and his wife divorce. He contemplates suicide. He pulls himself together by focusing on returning to his SEAL team, only to see, after rejoining them, that he simply can't contribute physically as he had in the past. He has also lost his will to kill. He realizes he has to become a civilian. For the first time in his adult life, he's frightened.

Chapter 14: Fish out of Water

Hoping to help others the way a policeman had once helped him, Howard devotes a lot of time and effort to becoming a police officer. He finds, however, that modern policing doesn't give him the opportunity to be a mentor. A variety of other jobs earn money, but leave him feeling empty. Then he unexpectedly meets a woman who becomes his wife.

She pushes him to do something he'd been avoiding: becoming a chiropractor. After so many years a soldier, he didn't trust something that seemed to be all about healing. He was also concerned about being able to handle the schooling. He hadn't put together the pieces of his own story—how important it was to him to help the wounded boy in Somalia, and how much detailed intellectual effort went into each mission as a sniper. He takes on the challenge.

Chapter 15: Healing

While Howard is at chiropractic school, his stepfather dies. Fortunately, they'd resolved many of their differences. His father had become able to express his love and admiration for Howard, and eventually Howard was able to say that despite everything that had occurred between them, he felt the same. Still, the death brings up a lot of emotion. Howard's son, sensing something, asks a question of Howard out of the blue: Would you like to meet your biological father? They track him down and get a shock: he hadn't abandoned Howard. He'd spent years looking for them after Howard's mother ran away with him. Meeting his father gives Howard a better understanding of his affectionate side, his ability to feel compassion, which had seemed alien in his family and which he'd suppressed for nearly his entire adult life. Howard becomes a chiropractor and feels blessed. "I understand better why God spared me," he concludes. "He really did have a purpose for me after my life as a SEAL. I truly feel that this is the path God intended for me when he spared my life in Somalia."

QUESTIONS FOR CLASS

Chapter 1:

- Where is Howard—which continent and country? Why? (Page 3)
- Howard says, "The words drilled into our heads since SEAL training were, 'The more you sweat in peacetime, the less you bleed in war.'" (Page 4) What does he mean?

Chapter 2:

- Why does Howard run away from home when he's five years old? (Page 8)
- Howard says he felt it was his "duty" to agree to be adopted by his stepfather. (Page 9) Why does he say this? Is this the same as the duty he later felt as a soldier?
- Howard says that when a junior high school football coach discovered Howard was being physically abused, the coach told no one. "In those days, whatever happened in the home stayed in the home." (Page 11) What was different about those days? Is it certain the coach remained completely silent, or is it possible he told adults who made some effort on Howard's behalf? If he did, were those efforts enough? Would you break a confidence to help someone in Howard's situation? What if that meant breaking a law?
- Howard says that when the coach saw the bruises, "I remember feeling so embarrassed that someone had discovered my secret." (Page 11) Why might Howard have felt embarrassed instead of relieved? Why might he have kept the beatings a secret? Why didn't he just tell another adult? If you were Howard's friend then, and you had discovered his secret, what would you say to him?

Chapter 3:

- Where does Howard first meet and speak with SEALs? (Page 19)
- Where does he learn more about them? (Page 20)
- Howard says about the stories he heard from the SEALs when he was still a Search and Rescue swimmer: “They worked hard and played hard. Lots of camaraderie. I thought I’d joined an elite unit before, but now I knew about a unit that was more elite. There would be no satisfaction staying where I was. I wanted what they had.” (Page 20) Why does Howard feel the need to take on the toughest challenges he sees?

Chapter 4:

- Where is the main training location for SEALs? (Page 23)
- How does Howard feel about his chances when he first arrives? (Page 23) What about after he has attempted some tests alongside the other candidates? (Page 25)
- Speaking of the training, Howard says, “Of course, my tough childhood had prepared me for this moment.” What exactly did he mean? How did it prepare him? (Page 27)

Chapter 5:

- One of Howard’s toughest SEAL instructors was later a contestant on which reality TV show? (Page 39)
- What were some of the countries where Howard trained? Why would it be important to train with commandos from other armies? (Page 40)
- What happens to make Howard return home during this part of his training? (Page 40) What has happened to Howard’s relationship with his stepfather? (Page 41) Do you think this is right?

Chapter 6:

- Where does this chapter primarily take place? Why is the United States fighting there? (Page 43)
- Howard says “The amount of intel and planning that goes into a mission is mind-boggling.” (Page 45) What are some of the school courses that relate directly to the kind of planning Howard and his teammates had to do?
- During a mission, fourteen enemy Iraqis surrendered to Howard unexpectedly. He says, “I realized they weren’t bad guys . . . They were human beings just like me. I discovered my humanity and the humanity in others. It was a turning point for me—it was when I matured.” (Page 60) Why did Howard have a sudden change of heart? Why does he consider it a sign of maturity? Do you think he should have fed the Iraqis and helped them, even though his mission wasn’t over? Have you ever had a sudden change of heart in the middle of a conflict with someone? Did you consider it a sign of maturity?
- Returning from Iraq, Howard to face the fact that he’d taken a human life. What was his feeling about that? (Page 61)

Chapter 7:

- Howard says of SEAL Team Six, “We practiced land warfare, parachuting, and diving—all taken to a whole new level.” (Page 65) Why a whole new level?
- What are some of the mental exercises included in sniper training? (Page 71)
- What’s the name of the kind of suit snipers wear? Why is Howard required to make his own? (Page 72)

Chapter 8:

- Where in the United States was Howard stationed as a member of SEAL Team Six? (Page 79)
- Howard says, “Working with foreign units like the Australian SAS was often easier than working with U.S. counterparts like Delta Force. Rivalry between U.S. units was a problem.” (Page 79) Why would this be a problem? Why would it be easier to work with foreign units?
- All of the Joint Special Operations Command’s (JSOC) snipers, both SEAL and Delta operators, saw the light. (Page 83) Saw the light about what? What does Howard mean about becoming “realistic?” (Page 83) How important is that? But isn’t it the opposite of believing a SEAL can do anything, which Howard says is also important?

Chapter 9:

- Where is Howard, and why? (Page 85)
- Can you name a country working with the United States? (Pages 85, 87)
- Is the rivalry between the Special Forces units completely gone? What evidence is there? (Pages 87, 89)
- Italy has a long history in Somalia. What is Howard’s understanding of it, and of its effect on the operation? (Page 92)
- Howard called the medical help he gave a wounded Somali teenager (pages 95–97, 100–102) “my most successful op in Somalia.” (Page 103) Yet he had to disobey a direct order not to help, and then was reprimanded for his disobedience. Do you think he should have disobeyed? What risks did he take? Was he only risking himself, or was he risking the safety of teammates? Would you make the same decision? Why?

Chapter 10:

- What does Howard call “one of the best moves JSOC [Joint Special Operations Command] ever made”? (Page 111)
- Why does Howard believe it is important to capture Atto? (Page 113)
- Howard points out that, “Although SEALs are known for their small numbers and efficiency, the military as a whole is huge and cumbersome.” What does he say is required of SEALs as a result? (Page 120)

Chapter 11:

- What are some of the internal conflicts the U.S. military showed during the mission? How did this affect Howard? (Pages 123–124) Do you think this is inevitable?

Chapter 12:

- What was the goal of the allied forces in the operation that turned into the Battle of Mogadishu? (Page 131)
- How many troops were involved? What kind of equipment did they have? (Page 132)
- What were Howard's feelings as the operation began? (Page 132)
- What did Howard first notice was wrong? (Page 134)
- What does Howard describe as the difference between his training and the training of the Rangers? (Pages 136–137)
- Towards whom does Howard begin to feel anger during the battle? Why? (Page 138)
- What were the immediate personal and political results of the battle? (Pages 146–147)

Chapter 13:

- Where is Howard flown after being evacuated from Somalia? (Page 148)
- Howard says, "Sitting at home in my wheelchair, I committed one of the Team's gravest sins . . ." (Page 152) What was that "sin"? Do you think Howard could have done otherwise? If not, why is it a sin? Was that extreme attitude helpful to Howard?
- What does Howard say was God's message to him? (Pages 153–152)
- What does Howard learn when he does hunting? (Pages 154–155)
- Earlier in the book, Howard says that SEALs endure so much extreme training, "Often we think we're indestructible. Forever the optimists, even when we're outnumbered and outgunned, we still tend to think we have a chance to make it out alive—and be home in time for dinner." (Page 37) However, after leaving the SEALs, Howard was so pessimistic he considered suicide. (Page 157) Why did his thinking change so much?

Chapter 14:

- Why does Howard become a police officer? (Page 159)
- Why does Howard consider becoming a chiropractor? (Page 160)
- Why does he resist this desire? (Page 160) Do his reasons make sense to you?

Chapter 15:

- Who dies when Howard is in chiropractor school? (Page 162)

- Prior to Howard’s stepfather’s death, Howard reconciled with him. (Page 162) Would it have been okay if Howard hadn’t?
- Who does Howard meet after his stepfather dies? (Page 163)
- What fact of family history does Howard learn from his biological father? How does that change Howard’s relationship with his mother? How does that change Howard’s understanding of himself? (Page 163)
- How does Howard feel about his new life as a doctor, compared to the heroic life he led as a SEAL Team warrior? (Pages 164–165)

ACTIVITIES

1. As part of his training, Howard and his colleagues played “Keep in Memory” games: “The instructor would pull back a tarp on a table and expose ten to twelve small items: spent 9 mm cartridge, pencil flare, Ziploc bag, pen, broken pair of glasses, photograph of someone, acorn, and other items that could fit on the tabletop. In ten to fifteen seconds, we had to memorize everything. Then we went into the classroom, grabbed a piece of paper, and drew everything we had seen.” (Page 79) Play a “Keep in Memory” game with the class, using objects you consider appropriate to their age level, then break them into groups of two to repeat the exercise themselves.
2. Howard’s career took him all over the world. Have the students make maps of where he was stationed and worked, with explanations for why, and a numbered legend of each location showing its place in the chronology of Howard’s life.
3. Throughout his missions, Howard shows signs of compassion that he didn’t understand or always trust, but which he came to rely on later. Have the students make a chart of his missions that compares his official goal with the compassionate personal goal that Howard found within it.
4. Throughout the memoir, Howard offers SEAL motivational sayings such as the SEAL motto, “The only easy day was yesterday.” Have students find the sayings they like the best, offering personal explanations of them.
5. Howard writes, “Deprived of support in our environment and the support of our own bodies, the only thing propping us up was our belief in accomplishing the mission—complete Hell Week . . . Believing allows us to see the goal (complete Hell Week) and break the goal down into more manageable objectives (one evolution at a time). If the evolution is a boat race, it can be broken down into even smaller objectives such as paddling. Thinking too much about what happened and what is about to happen will wear you down. Live in the moment and take it one step at a time.” (Pages 30–31) Ask the students to choose the task or goal this year that they consider their most challenging, and then have them break down that goal into smaller goals to come up with a measurable plan.
6. Howard’s career after the SEALs seems at first to be the opposite of his role in the military. Yet Howard discovers that he loves it just as much. Have the students describe the career they most want, and then ask them to imagine what might be the opposite of it. Have them explain whether or not they feel they could make the switch that Howard made.

Teacher and Student Resources

Navy Seals

<http://www.sealswcc.com/>

The U.S. Navy's official site for the SEALs offers a wealth of information and resources for classroom use or individual study: a history of the unit, a community forum where specific questions can be answered, public domain photos and videos, and public domain audio interviews with SEALs. *Ethos*, the official SEAL magazine, is also in the public domain, and all issues are available as downloads. The site also offers an extensive reading list for further study.

Operation Desert Storm

<http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=45404>

From the United States Department of Defense, a timeline and fact sheet about the first Gulf War.

Operation Restore Hope

<http://www.history.army.mil/brochures/Somalia/Somalia.htm#p9>

From the U.S. Army's Center for Military History, this section of the army's official history of operations in Somalia from 1992–1994 offers background on the humanitarian effort that preceded military operations.

Battle of Mogadishu

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/ambush/>

This site, based on a PBS "Frontline" documentary, includes a historical perspective, a timeline, interviews with eyewitnesses, a transcript of the entire program, and its own teacher's guide.

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