

# The Finish of Patsy Barnes

Paul Laurence Dunbar

**H**is name was Patsy Barnes, and he was a denizen of Little Africa.<sup>1</sup> In fact, he lived on Douglass Street. By all the laws governing the relations between people and their names, he should have been Irish—but he was not. He was colored, and very much so. That was the reason he lived on Douglass Street. The Negro has very strong within him the instinct of colonization and it was in accordance with this that Patsy’s mother had found her way to Little Africa when she had come North from Kentucky.

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1. **denizen of Little Africa** someone who lives in an area heavily populated by African Americans.

Patsy was incorrigible.<sup>2</sup> Even into the confines of Little Africa had penetrated the truant officer<sup>3</sup> and the terrible penalty of the **compulsory** education law. Time and time again had poor Eliza Barnes been brought up on account of the shortcomings of that son of hers. She was a hard-working, honest woman, and day by day bent over her tub, scrubbing away to keep Patsy in shoes and jackets, that would wear out so much faster than they could be bought. But she never murmured, for she loved the boy with a deep affection, though his misdeeds were a sore thorn in her side.

She wanted him to go to school. She wanted him to learn. She had the notion that he might become something better, something higher than she had been. But for him school had no charms; his school was the cool stalls in the big livery stable near at hand; the arena of his pursuits its sawdust floor; the height of his ambition, to be a horseman. Either here or in the racing stables at the Fair-grounds he spent his truant hours. It was a school that taught much, and Patsy was as apt a pupil as he was a constant attendant. He learned strange things about horses, and fine, sonorous oaths that sounded eerie on his young lips, for he had only turned into his fourteenth year.

A man goes where he is appreciated; then could this slim black boy be blamed for doing the same thing? He was a great favorite with the horsemen, and picked up many a dime or nickel for dancing or singing, or even a quarter for warming up a horse for its owner. He was not to be blamed for this, for, first of all, he was born in Kentucky, and had spent the very days of his infancy about the paddocks<sup>4</sup> near Lexington, where his father had sacrificed his life on account of his love for horses. The little fellow had shed no tears when he looked at his father's bleeding body, bruised and broken

2. **incorrigible** (in kôr' ə jə bəl) *adj.* unable to be corrected or improved because of bad habits.

3. **truant** (trōō' ənt) **officer** *n.* person whose job is to make sure children attend school.

4. **paddocks** (pad' əks) *n.* enclosed areas near a stable in which horses are exercised.

#### ◀ Vocabulary

**compulsory** (kəm pul' sə rē) *adj.* required

*Farm Boy*, 1941, Charles Alston, Courtesy of Clark Atlanta University



#### ▲ Critical Viewing

How might growing up on a farm leave a boy like the one in this painting unprepared for city life?

#### Comprehension

Where does Patsy spend his time?

## Character

What is unusual about Patsy's reaction to his father's death?

## Vocabulary ►

**meager** (mē' gər) *adj.*  
small in amount

## Character

What does this exchange between Eliza and the doctor reveal about the difficulties Patsy and his mother face?

by the fiery young two-year-old he was trying to subdue. Patsy did not sob or whimper, though his heart ached, for over all the feeling of his grief was a mad, burning desire to ride that horse.

His tears were shed, however, when, actuated by the idea that times would be easier up North, they moved to Dalesford. Then, when he learned that he must leave his old friends, the horses and their masters, whom he had known, he wept. The comparatively **meager** appointments of the Fair-grounds at Dalesford proved a poor compensation for all these. For the first few weeks Patsy had dreams of running away—back to Kentucky and the horses and stables. Then after a while he settled himself with heroic resolution to make the best of what he had, and with a mighty effort took up the burden of life away from his beloved home.

Eliza Barnes, older and more experienced though she was, took up her burden with a less cheerful philosophy than her son. She worked hard, and made a scanty livelihood, it is true, but she did not make the best of what she had. Her complainings were loud in the land, and her wailings for her old home smote the ears of any who would listen to her.

They had been living in Dalesford for a year nearly, when hard work and exposure brought the woman down to bed with pneumonia.<sup>5</sup> They were very poor—too poor even to call in a doctor, so there was nothing to do but to call in the city physician. Now this medical man had too frequent calls into Little Africa, and he did not like to go there. So he was very gruff when any of its denizens called him, and it was even said that he was careless of his patients.

Patsy's heart bled as he heard the doctor talking to his mother:

"Now, there can't be any foolishness about this," he said. "You've got to stay in bed and not get yourself damp."

"How long you think I got to lay hyeah, doctah?" she asked.

"I'm a doctor, not a fortune-teller," was the reply. "You'll lie there as long as the disease holds you."

"But I can't lay hyeah long, doctah, case I ain't got nuffin' to go on."

"Well, take your choice: the bed or the boneyard."

Eliza began to cry.

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5. **pneumonia** (nōō mōn' yə) *n.* potentially deadly infection that causes swelling in the lungs, making it difficult to breathe.

“You needn’t sniffle,” said the doctor; “I don’t see what you people want to come up here for anyhow. Why don’t you stay down South where you belong? You come up here and you’re just a burden and a trouble to the city. The South deals with all of you better, both in poverty and crime.” He knew that these people did not understand him, but he wanted an outlet for the heat within him.

There was another angry being in the room, and that was Patsy. His eyes were full of tears that scorched him and would not fall. The memory of many beautiful and appropriate oaths came to him; but he dared not let his mother hear him swear. Oh! to have a stone—to be across the street from that man!

When the physician walked out, Patsy went to the bed, took his mother’s hand, and bent over shamefacedly to kiss her.

The little mark of affection comforted Eliza unspeakably. The mother-feeling overwhelmed her in one burst of tears. Then she dried her eyes and smiled at him.

“Honey,” she said; “mammy ain’ gwine lay hyeah long. She be all right putty soon.”

“Nevah you min’,” said Patsy with a choke in his voice. “I can do somep’n’, an’ we’ll have anotheah doctah.”

“La, listen at de chile; what kin you do?”

“I’m goin’ down to McCarthy’s stable and see if I kin git some horses to exercise.”

A sad look came into Eliza’s eyes as she said: “You’d bettah not go, Patsy; dem hosses’ll kill you yit, des lak dey did yo’ pappy.”

But the boy, used to doing pretty much as he pleased, was obdurate, and even while she was talking, put on his ragged jacket and left the room.

Patsy was not wise enough to be **diplomatic**. He went right to the point with McCarthy, the liveryman.

The big red-faced fellow slapped him until he spun round and round. Then he said, “Ye little devil, ye, I’ve a mind to knock the whole head off o’ ye. Ye want harses to exercise, do ye? Well git on that un, ’an’ see what ye kin do with him.”

The boy’s honest desire to be helpful had tickled the big, generous Irishman’s peculiar sense of humor, and from now on, instead of giving Patsy a horse to ride now and then as he had formerly done, he put into his charge all the animals that



### Character

How does the doctor’s attitude toward the poor affect the mood of this scene?

### ◀ Vocabulary **diplomatic**

(dip’ lə mat’ ik) *adj.*  
showing skill in dealing with people

### Comprehension

How does the doctor make Patsy angry?

### Character

What challenge does Patsy face as he watches his mother's condition worsen?

### ▼ Critical Viewing

What qualities would someone need to be able to ride a stallion like this one?



needed exercise.

It was with a king's pride that Patsy marched home with his first considerable earnings.

They were small yet, and would go for food rather than a doctor, but Eliza was inordinately proud, and it was this pride that gave her strength and the desire of life to carry her through the days approaching the crisis of her disease.

As Patsy saw his mother growing worse, saw her gasping for breath, heard the rattling as she drew in the little air that kept going her clogged lungs, felt the heat of her burning hands, and saw the pitiful appeal in her poor eyes, he became convinced that the city doctor was not helping her. She must have another. But the money?

That afternoon, after his work with McCarthy, found him at the Fair-grounds. The spring races were on, and he thought he might get a job warming up the horse of some independent jockey. He hung around the stables, listening to the talk of men he knew and some he had never seen before. Among the latter was a tall, lanky man, holding forth to a group of men.

"No, suh," he was saying to them generally, "I'm goin' to withdraw my hoss, because thaih ain't nobody to ride him as he ought to be rode. I haven't brought a jockey along with me, so I've got to depend on pick-ups. Now, the talent's set again my hoss, Black Boy, because he's been losin' regular, but that hoss has lost for the want of ridin', that's all."

The crowd looked in at the slim-legged, raw-boned horse, and walked away laughing.

"The fools!" muttered the stranger. "If I could ride myself I'd show 'em!"

Patsy was gazing into the stall at the horse.

"What are you doing thaih?" called the owner to him.

"Look hyeah, mistah," said Patsy, "ain't that a bluegrass hoss?"

"Of co'se it is, an' one o' the fastest that evah grazed."

"I'll ride that hoss, mistah."

"What do you know bout ridin'?"

"I used to gin'ally be' roun' Mistah Boone's paddock in Lexington, an'—"

"Aroun' Boone's paddock—what! Look here, if you can ride that hoss to a winnin' I'll give you more money than you ever seen before."

"I'll ride him."

Patsy's heart was beating very wildly beneath his jacket. That horse. He knew that glossy coat. He knew that raw-boned frame and those flashing nostrils. That black horse there owed something to the orphan he had made.

The horse was to ride in the race before the last. Somehow out of odds and ends, his owner scraped together a suit and colors for Patsy. The colors were maroon and green, a curious combination. But then it was a curious horse, a curious rider, and a more curious combination that brought the two together.

Long before the time for the race Patsy went into the stall to become better acquainted with his horse. The animal turned its wild eyes upon him and neighed. He patted the long, slender head, and grinned as the horse stepped aside as gently as a lady.

"He sholy is full o' ginger," he said to the owner, whose name he had found to be Brackett.

"He'll show 'em a thing or two," laughed Brackett.

"His dam<sup>6</sup> was a fast one," said Patsy, unconsciously.

Brackett whirled on him in a flash. "What do you know about his dam?" he asked.

The boy would have retracted, but it was too late. Stammeringly he told the story of his father's death and the horse's connection therewith.

"Well," said Brackett, "if you don't turn out a hoodoo,<sup>7</sup> you're a winner, sure. But I'll be blessed if this don't sound like a story! But I've heard that story before. The man I got Black Boy from, no matter how I got him, you're too young to understand the ins and outs of poker, told it to me."

When the bell sounded and Patsy went out to warm up, he felt as if he were riding on air. Some of the jockeys laughed at his get-up, but there was something in him—or under him, maybe—that made him scorn their derision. He saw a sea of faces about him, then saw no more. Only a shining white track loomed ahead of him, and a restless steed was cantering<sup>8</sup> with him around the curve. Then the bell called him back to the stand.

They did not get away at first, and back they trooped. A second trial was a failure. But at the third they were off

### Spiral Review

**THEME** What detail in this paragraph hints at the theme of "overcoming obstacles"?

### Comprehension

What unexpected job does Patsy take on?

6. **dam** (dam) *n.* mother of a horse.

7. **hoodoo** (hōō' dōō') *n.* here, someone or something that causes bad luck.

8. **steed** (stēd) **was cantering** (kan' tər in) high-spirited riding horse was running at a smooth, easy pace.

► **Critical Viewing**

What details in this photo tell you that the horses are moving very rapidly?



**Character**

In what ways are Black Boy and Patsy well suited for each other as horse and jockey?

in a line as straight as a chalk-mark. There were Essex and Firefly, Queen Bess and Mosquito, galloping away side by side, and Black Boy a neck ahead. Patsy knew the family reputation of his horse for endurance as well as fire, and began riding the race from the first. Black Boy came of blood that would not be passed, and to this his rider trusted. At the eighth the line was hardly broken, but as the quarter was reached Black Boy had forged a length ahead, and Mosquito was at his flank. Then, like a flash, Essex shot out ahead under whip and spur, his jockey standing straight in the stirrups.

The crowd in the stand screamed; but Patsy smiled as he lay low over his horse's neck. He saw that Essex had made his best spurt. His only fear was for Mosquito, who hugged and hugged his flank. They were nearing the three-quarter post, and he was tightening his grip on the black. Essex fell back; his spurt was over. The whip fell unheeded on his sides. The spurs dug him in vain.

Black Boy's breath touches the leader's ear. They are neck and neck—nose to nose. The black stallion passes him.

Another cheer from the stand, and again Patsy smiles as they turn into the stretch. Mosquito has gained a head. The colored boy flashes one glance at the horse and rider who are so surely gaining upon him, and his lips close in a grim line. They are half-way down the stretch, and Mosquito's head is at the stallion's neck.

For a single moment Patsy thinks of the sick woman at home and what that race will mean to her, and then his knees close against the horse's sides with a firmer dig. The spurs

**Character**

What circumstances give Patsy extra motivation to win?

shoot deeper into the steaming flanks. Black Boy shall win; he must win. The horse that has taken away his father shall give him back his mother. The stallion leaps away like a flash, and goes under the wire—a length ahead.

Then the band thundered, and Patsy was off his horse, very warm and very happy, following his mount to the stable. There, a little later, Brackett found him. He rushed to him, and flung his arms around him.

“You little devil,” he cried, “you rode like you were kin to that hoss! We’ve won! We’ve won!” And he began sticking banknotes at the boy. At first Patsy’s eyes bulged, and then he seized the money and got into his clothes.

“Goin’ out to spend it?” asked Brackett.

“I’m goin’ for a doctah fu’ my mother,” said Patsy, “she’s sick.”

“Don’t let me lose sight of you.”

“Oh, I’ll see you again. So long,” said the boy.

An hour later he walked into his mother’s room with a very big doctor, the greatest the druggist could direct him to. The doctor left his medicines and his orders, but, when Patsy told his story, it was Eliza’s pride that started her on the road to recovery. Patsy did not tell his horse’s name.

### Character

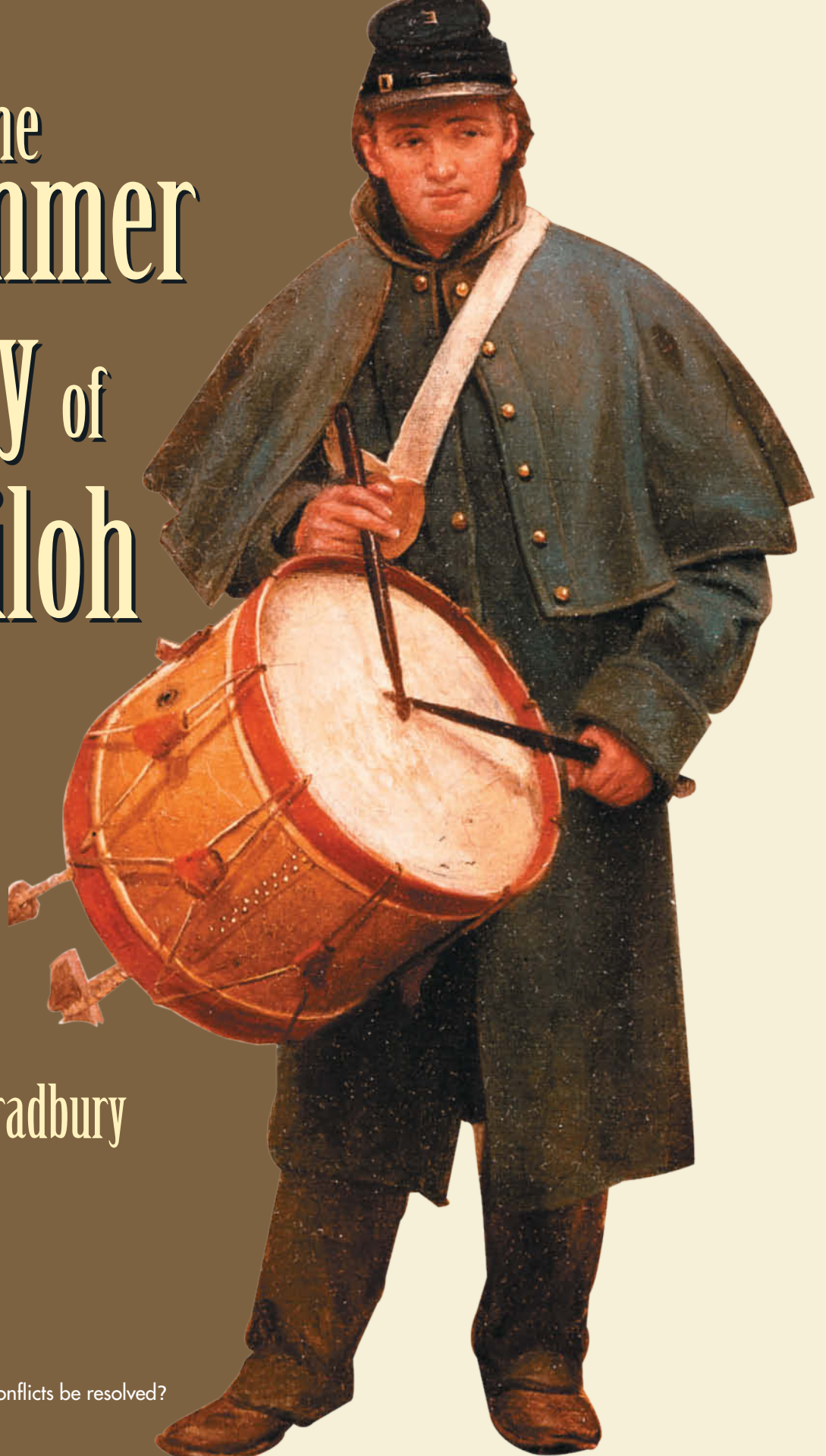
How have events in the story changed Patsy?

## Critical Thinking

- 1. Key Ideas and Details: (a)** Instead of school, where does Patsy prefer to go? **(b) Infer:** In what way do Patsy’s reasons for spending time there change after his mother becomes ill?
- 2. Key Ideas and Details: (a)** Why does the doctor speak to Eliza Barnes in an unfeeling way? **(b) Draw Conclusions:** What does this story suggest about the problems faced by Patsy and his mother?
- 3. Key Ideas and Details: (a)** What motivates Patsy to ride Black Boy? **(b) Analyze:** How is Patsy’s win a victory for both his mother and his father?
- 4. Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: (a)** Identify two conflicts that Patsy faces. **(b)** What do these conflicts reveal about American society in the nineteenth century? **(c)** Explain whether these conflicts are resolved in the story. [*Connect to the Big Question: Can all conflicts be resolved?*]



# The Drummer Boy of Shiloh



Ray Bradbury

This story is about a Civil War drummer boy. Although drummer boys accompanied troops into battle, they carried no weapons. There was no age requirement; some drummer boys were as young as ten. Because few parents were willing to send their young sons to battle, many drummer boys were runaways or orphans.

**I**n the April night, more than once, blossoms fell from the orchard trees and lighted with rustling taps on the drumhead. At midnight a peach stone left miraculously on a branch through winter, flicked by a bird, fell swift and unseen; it struck once, like panic, and jerked the boy upright. In silence he listened to his own heart ruffle away, away—at last gone from his ears and back in his chest again.

After that he turned the drum on its side, where its great lunar face peered at him whenever he opened his eyes.

His face, alert or at rest, was solemn. It was a solemn time and a solemn night for a boy just turned fourteen in the peach orchard near Owl Creek not far from the church at Shiloh.

“. . . thirty-one . . . thirty-two . . . thirty-three.” Unable to see, he stopped counting.

Beyond the thirty-three familiar shadows forty thousand men, exhausted by nervous expectation and unable to sleep for romantic dreams of battles yet unfought, lay crazily askew in their uniforms. A mile farther on, another army was strewn helter-skelter, turning slowly, basting themselves with the thought of what they would do when the time came—a leap, a yell, a blind plunge their strategy, raw youth their protection and benediction.<sup>1</sup>

Now and again the boy heard a vast wind come up that gently stirred the air. But he knew what it was—the army here, the army there, whispering to itself in the dark. Some men talking to others, others murmuring to themselves, and all so quiet it was like a natural element arisen from South or North with the motion of the earth toward dawn.

What the men whispered the boy could only guess and he guessed that it was “Me, I’m the one, I’m the one of all the rest who won’t die. I’ll live through it. I’ll go home. The band will play. And I’ll be there to hear it.”

Yes, thought the boy, *that’s all very well for them, they can give as good as they get!*

#### ◀ Critical Viewing

Which aspects of this drummer boy reflect the information in the background note above the story?

#### Character

What historical situation affects the boy’s mood?

#### Character

How do the drummer boy’s age and job give him a different perspective from those of soldiers in modern wars?

#### Comprehension

Why do the soldiers sleep uneasily?

1. **benediction** (ben’ ə dik’ shən) *n.* blessing.

**Vocabulary** ►  
**immortality**  
(im' ôr tal' i tē) *n.*  
endless life

**Character**  
How does the boy's historical situation affect his mood and that of the story?



▲ **Critical Viewing**  
Based on his expression, what emotions might this young drummer boy be feeling?

For with the careless bones of the young men, harvested by night and bindled<sup>2</sup> around campfires, were the similarly strewn steel bones of their rifles with bayonets fixed like eternal lightning lost in the orchard grass.

*Me, thought the boy, I got only a drum, two sticks to beat it, and no shield.*

There wasn't a man-boy on this ground tonight who did not have a shield he cast, riveted or carved himself on his way to his first attack, compounded<sup>3</sup> of remote but nonetheless firm and fiery family devotion, flag-blown patriotism and cocksure **immortality** strengthened by the touchstone of very real gunpowder, ramrod, Minié ball<sup>4</sup> and flint. But without these last, the boy felt his family move yet farther off in the dark, as if one of those great prairie-burning trains had chanted them away, never to return—leaving him with this drum which was worse than a toy in the game to be played tomorrow or someday much too soon.

The boy turned on his side. A moth brushed his face, but it was peach blossom. A peach blossom flicked him, but it was a moth. Nothing stayed put. Nothing had a name. Nothing was as it once was.

If he lay very still, when the dawn came up and the soldiers put on their bravery with their caps, perhaps they might go away, the war with them, and not notice him lying small here, no more than a toy himself. •

“Well, by thunder now,” said a voice. The boy shut his eyes to hide inside himself, but it was too late. Someone, walking by in the night, stood over him. “Well,” said the voice quietly, “here's a soldier crying *before* the fight. Good. Get it over. Won't be time once it all starts.”

And the voice was about to move on when the boy, startled, touched the drum at his elbow. The man above, hearing this, stopped. The boy could feel his eyes, sense him slowly bending near. A hand must have come down out of the night, for there was a little *rat-tat* as the fingernails brushed and the man's breath fanned the boy's face.

“Why, it's the drummer boy, isn't it?”

The boy nodded, not knowing if his nod was seen. “Sir, is that you?” he said.

2. **bindled** (bin' dæld) *adj.* bedded.

3. **compounded** (käm pound' əd) *adj.* mixed or combined.

4. **Minié** (min' ē) **ball** *n.* cone-shaped rifle bullet that expands when fired.

"I assume it is." The man's knees cracked as he bent still closer. He smelled as all fathers should smell, of salt-sweat, tobacco, horse and boot leather, and the earth he walked upon. He had many eyes. No, not eyes, brass buttons that watched the boy.

He could only be, and was, the general. "What's your name, boy?" he asked.

"Joby, sir," whispered the boy, starting to sit up.

"All right, Joby, don't stir." A hand pressed his chest gently, and the boy relaxed. "How long you been with us, Joby?"

"Three weeks, sir."

"Run off from home or join legitimate, boy?"

Silence.

"Damn-fool question," said the general. "Do you shave yet, boy? Even more of a fool. There's your cheek, fell right off the tree overhead. And the others here, not much older. Raw, raw, damn raw, the lot of you. You ready for tomorrow or the next day, Joby?"

"I think so, sir."

"You want to cry some more, go on ahead. I did the same last night."

"You, sir?"

"God's truth. Thinking of everything ahead. Both sides figuring the other side will just give up, and soon, and the war done in weeks and us all home. Well, that's not how it's going to be. And maybe that's why I cried."

"Yes, sir," said Joby.

The general must have taken out a cigar now, for the dark was suddenly filled with the Indian smell of tobacco unlighted yet, but chewed as the man thought what next to say.

"It's going to be a crazy time," said the general. "Counting both sides, there's a hundred thousand men—give or take a few thousand—out there tonight, not one as can spit a sparrow off a tree, or knows a horse clod from a Minié ball. Stand up, bare the breast, ask to be a target, thank them and sit down, that's us, that's them. We should turn tail and train four months, they should do the same. But here we are, taken with spring fever and thinking it blood lust, taking our sulphur with cannons instead of with molasses, as it should be—going to be a hero, going to live forever. And I can see all them over there nodding agreement, save the other way around. It's wrong, boy, it's wrong as a head put on hindside front and a man marching backward through life. Sometime



#### Character

Why is the general's reaction to the boy's tears surprising?

#### Comprehension

Why is Joby crying?

## LITERATURE IN CONTEXT

### Social Studies Connection

#### A Bloody Battle

The Battle of Shiloh was sparked when the southern Confederate army suddenly attacked the northern Union troops near Shiloh Church in Tennessee on April 6, 1862. Some of the heaviest fighting took place in Sarah Bell's peach orchard.

Thanks to the efforts of raw, young recruits from the farms of Iowa and Illinois, the Union lines held. This bloody, bitterly fought battle resulted in the killing or wounding of about 23,000 men and dashed any hopes of a quick end to the Civil War.

### Connect to the Literature

What details of the historical setting are included in Bradbury's story?



#### Character

What do the general's words reveal about his character?

this week more innocents will get shot out of pure Cherokee enthusiasm than ever got shot before. Owl Creek was full of boys splashing around in the noonday sun just a few hours ago. I fear it will be full of boys again, just floating, at sundown tomorrow, not caring where the current takes them.” ●

The general stopped and made a little pile of winter leaves and twigs in the dark as if he might at any moment strike fire to them to see his way through the coming days when the sun might not show its face because of what was happening here and just beyond.

The boy watched the hand stirring the leaves and opened his lips to say something, but did not say it. The general heard the boy's breath and spoke himself.

“Why am I telling you this? That's what you wanted to ask, eh? Well, when you got a bunch of wild horses on a loose rein somewhere, somehow you got to bring order, rein them in. These lads, fresh out of the milkshed, don't know what I know; and I can't tell them—men actually die in war. So each is his own army. I got to make one army of them. And for that, boy, I need you.”

“Me!” The boy's lips barely twitched.

“You, boy,” said the general quietly. “You are the heart of the army. Think about that. You are the heart of the army. Listen to me, now.”

And lying there, Joby listened. And the general spoke. If he, Joby, beat slow tomorrow, the heart would beat slow in the men. They would lag by the wayside. They would drowse in the fields on their muskets. They would sleep forever, after that—in those same fields, their hearts slowed by a drummer boy and stopped by enemy lead.

But if he beat a sure, steady, ever faster rhythm, then, then, their knees would come up in a long line down over that hill, one knee after the other, like a wave on the ocean shore. Had he seen the ocean ever? Seen the waves rolling in like a well-ordered cavalry charge to the sand? Well, that was it, that's what he wanted, that's what was needed. Joby was his right hand and his left. He gave the orders, but Joby set the pace.



### ◀ Critical Viewing

Why might the drummer boy's role be important in the confusion of a Civil War battle such as this one?

So bring the right knee up and the right foot out and the left knee up and the left foot out, one following the other in good time, in brisk time. Move the blood up the body and make the head proud and the spine stiff and the jaw **resolute**. Focus the eye and set the teeth, flare the nostrils and tighten the hands, put steel armor all over the men, for blood moving fast in them does indeed make men feel as if they'd put on steel. He must keep at it, at it! Long and steady, steady and long! Then, even though shot or torn, those wounds got in hot blood—in blood he'd helped stir—would feel less pain. If their blood was cold, it would be more than slaughter, it would be murderous nightmare and pain best not told and no one to guess.

The general spoke and stopped, letting his breath slack off. Then, after a moment, he said, "So there you are, that's it. Will you do that, boy? Do you know now you're general of the army when the general's left behind?"

The boy nodded mutely.

"You'll run them through for me then, boy?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good. And, God willing, many nights from tonight, many years from now, when you're as old or far much older than me, when they ask you what you did in this awful time, you will tell them—one part humble and one part proud—I was the drummer boy at the battle of Owl Creek or the Tennessee River, or maybe they'll just name it after the church there. I was the drummer boy at Shiloh. Good grief, that has a beat and sound to it fitting for Mr. Longfellow. 'I was the drummer boy at Shiloh.' Who will ever hear those words and not know you, boy, or what you thought this night, or what you'll think tomorrow or the next day when we must get up on our legs and move!"

### ◀ Vocabulary

**resolute** (rez' ə lōōt)  
*adj.* showing a firm purpose

### Spiral Review

**THEME** As the general describes the role of the drummer boy, are there any hints that he is exaggerating? Explain.

### Comprehension

According to the general, what is Joby's role in the war?

### Character

Why might the general's words appeal to a young boy in the middle of the Civil War?

The general stood up. "Well, then. God bless you, boy. Good night."

"Good night, sir." And tobacco, brass, boot polish, salt sweat and leather, the man moved away through the grass.

Joby lay for a moment staring, but unable to see where the man had gone. He swallowed. He wiped his eyes. He cleared his throat. He settled himself. Then, at last, very slowly and firmly he turned the drum so that it faced up toward the sky.

He lay next to it, his arm around it, feeling the tremor, the touch, the muted thunder as, all the rest of the April night in the year 1862, near the Tennessee River, not far from the Owl Creek, very close to the church named Shiloh, the peach blossoms fell on the drum.

## Critical Thinking

- 1. Key Ideas and Details: (a)** What frightens Joby most about the upcoming battle? **(b) Compare and Contrast:** How are his fears like and unlike those of the other soldiers? **(c) Compare and Contrast:** In what other ways are Joby and the soldiers alike and not alike?
- 2. Key Ideas and Details: (a)** What do you think motivates the general to talk to Joby? **(b) Draw Conclusions:** How do you think Joby feels after his talk with the general? Explain.
- 3. Key Ideas and Details:** Is the drummer boy's role as crucial as the general says? Explain.
- 4. Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: (a)** What does Joby promise to do? **(b)** Do you think the general has motivated Joby to keep his promise? Why or why not? **(c) Make a Judgment:** Is the general's request fair or unfair to Joby? Explain.
- 5. Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: (a)** What conflict does the general help resolve for Joby? **(b)** Is this resolution a true or valid resolution? Explain, using details from the selection and your background knowledge. [*Connect to the Big Question: Can all conflicts be resolved?*]