

Soldiers (one-sheet)

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Synopsis: Frank, a kid whose family is struggling with money and whose father is abusive, plays “soldiers” with some wealthier children in his father’s friends’ neighborhood. He thinks about how his father insults and hits him and why he, in turn, bullies a child at his school. Frank returns home with the same issues weighing on him, but also a new perspective and self-awareness.



Vocabulary

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| 1. deliberate | 5. gauzy |
| 2. resigned | 6. Arroyo |
| 3. caulk | 7. insignia |
| 4. embankment | 8. silhouette |

Pre reading writing prompt

How much do other peoples’ opinions of you affect how you view yourself? Which people’s opinions are most important to you? Do you think you take feedback too personally? Too impersonally? Write for 15 minutes.

Pre reading discussion (class wide or in pairs)

Talk about a time you witnessed someone being ignored. Why were they being ignored? Do you think the reason was valid?

Post reading questions (class-wide or in pairs)

1. Summarize the text. Next, identify two or more central themes of the story. How do these themes interact throughout the text?
2. What does the helmet signify in the story, for Frank and for Frank’s father? Use details from the story to support your argument.
3. What is Brittany’s role in “Soldiers”? Why do you think she and her brothers say nothing after they ask Frank, “Are you going to keep doing it [hurting Curt]?” Why do *you* think Frank hurts Curt?
4. Optional Follow-Up Question: What do you think Curt feels after Frank pummels him? How do you think he expresses his negative feelings about it?

Post reading writing prompt:

1. In the story, the arroyo becomes the setting for Frank and the other children’s fictional battle. The dirt, the fog, the bridge, and the cars passing by all add to an atmosphere of tension.

Write your own story set in a mysterious place. Describe what your characters hear, see and feel (and possibly smell), as well as what your main character(s) want(s) and what obstacles get in the way of them getting what they want.