

Questions and Activities to accompany the reading and discussion of *Broken Drum/Drums of War*

by Edith Morris Hemingway and Jacqueline Cosgrove Shields

1. What were the various duties of a drummer boy in the Union Army?
2. Name at least three major Civil War battles or campaigns in which Charley King's regiment, the Pennsylvania 49th, was involved.
3. What actual historical figures did Charley meet during his experience in the Civil War?
4. Give an example of a scene from the book that makes you realize there was good and bad in both the Union and Confederate sides of the war.
5. Why did more soldiers die from infection and disease than from battle wounds during the Civil War?
6. What were the reasons Charley was chosen by the General to go up in the balloon?
7. What was the atmosphere in camp the morning before Charley's first battle outside the town of Williamsburg the morning of May 5, 1862? What were Sergeant O'Toole's last minute instructions to the boys of the drum corps, and why were they important?
8. Compare *Broken Drum* with other accounts of the Civil War, such as your history textbook, other novels or perhaps a movie or documentary you have seen. How does this account differ from others you have read or viewed?
9. What were Charley's reasons for wanting to enlist as a drummer boy, and how did reality differ from his expectations?
10. What in Frank Simpson's past helps you better understand his actions and attitude toward Charley at the start of the book?
11. How do Charley's letters home change during the course of the year? How do his letters to Elspeth Sinclair differ from those to his family?
12. Describe how Charley's and Frank's relationship changes over the course of the story. What do you think caused these changes?
13. *Broken Drum* is historical fiction, based on the life of an actual drummer boy, Charles E. King. What fictional characters and events do you think the authors wove into the plot, and how do those fictional elements make it a better story?

14. Describe how the idyllic setting of Harrison's Landing (at the start of Chapter 13) changed over the six weeks that the Union troops were encamped there. How do you think the authors used this description as a metaphor for the destruction of war?
15. What scene or vignette from *Broken Drum* stands out most vividly in your mind as representative of the Civil War experience?
16. To whom would you recommend *Broken Drum*? Write a specific, detailed recommendation for this person, explaining why you think he or she would enjoy the book.

Note: These questions are keyed to Bloom's Taxonomy as follows: Knowledge: 1-3; Comprehension: 4-7; Application: 8-9; Analysis: 10-11; Synthesis: 12-14; Evaluation: 15-16.

Activities:

1. Write a short story about what happens to Frank Simpson after he goes home with Charley's father *or* about Elspeth Sinclair after she loses touch with Charley.
2. What do you consider to be the five or six most important scenes from *Broken Drum*? Create a storyboard in which you illustrate the scenes you think are essential to the novel's plot. For each scene you choose, include a short caption to help explain it, and be prepared to justify why you chose the scenes you did.
3. Imagine that you have been chosen to design a recruitment poster for drummer boys in the Union Army. How would you motivate boys, ages 12 to 15, to enlist? Draw a poster to encourage enlistment based on your knowledge of the responsibilities of drummer boys from *Broken Drum*.