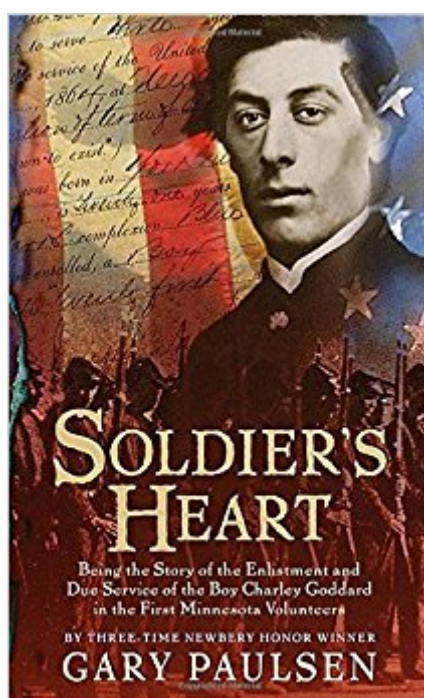


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# Soldier's Heart: Being The Story Of The Enlistment And Due Service Of The Boy Charley Goddard In The First Minnesota Volunteers



## Synopsis

In June 1861, when the Civil War began, Charley Goddard enlisted in the First Minnesota Volunteers. He was 15. He didn't know what a "shooting war" meant or what he was fighting for. But he didn't want to miss out on a great adventure. The "shooting war" turned out to be the horror of combat and the wild luck of survival; how it feels to cross a field toward the enemy, waiting for fire. When he entered the service he was a boy. When he came back he was different; he was only 19, but he was a man with "soldier's heart," later known as "battle fatigue."

## Book Information

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## Customer Reviews

In spare, almost biblical prose, Gary Paulsen writes of the horrors of combat in a Civil War novella that puts a powerful, more contemporary spin on Stephen Crane's classic *The Red Badge of Courage*. Based on the life of a real boy, it tells the story of Charley Goddard, who lies his way into the Union Army at the age of 15. Charley has never been anyplace beyond Winona, Minnesota, and thinks war would be a great adventure. And it is--at first--as his regiment marches off through cheering crowds and pretty, flag-waving girls. But then comes the battle. Charley screams, "Make it stop now!" disbelieving that anything so horrible could be real. Paulsen is unsparing in the details of what actually happens on the battlefield: the living men suddenly blown into pieces, the agony and fear, the noise and terror, the stinking corpses. After many battles, Charley is wounded and sent

home an old man before he is 20, his will to live destroyed by combat fatigue--leaving him with a "soldier's heart." Paulsen has received the Margaret A. Edwards Award, the ALAN Award, and several Newbery Honor awards for previous work, but this superb, small masterpiece transcends any of his earlier titles in its remarkable, memorable intensity and power. (Ages 12 to 15) --Patty Campbell

Addressing the most fundamental themes of life and death, the versatile Paulsen produces a searing antiwar story. He bases his protagonist, Charley Goddard, on an actual Civil War soldier, a 15-year-old from Minnesota who lied about his age and ended up participating in most of the war's major battles. At first Paulsen's Charley is fired up by patriotic slogans and his own naive excitement; in a rare intrusion into the narrative, the author makes it clear that ending slavery was not the impetus: "Never did they speak of slavery. Just about the wrongheadedness of the Southern 'crackers' and how they had to teach Johnny Reb a lesson." But Charley's first battle? Bull Run? immediately disabuses him of his notions about honor and glory. A few sparsely written passages describe the terror of the gunfire and the smoke from the cannons. Interwoven with these descriptions, a brilliant, fast-moving evocation of Charley's thoughts shows the boy's shocked realization of the price of war, his absolute certainty that he will die and his sudden understanding of the complex forces that prevent him from fleeing. Details from the historical record scorch the reader's memory: congressmen bring their families to picnic and watch the fighting that first day at Bull Run; soldiers pile the bodies of the dead into a five-foot-high wall to protect themselves from a winter wind. By the time Charley is finally struck down, at Gettysburg, he has seen it all: "At last he was right, at last he was done, at last he was dead." He is not in fact dead, but a victim of "soldier's heart," defined in an eloquent foreword as a contemporaneous term for what is now called post-traumatic stress disorder. Paulsen wages his own campaign for the audience's hearts and minds strategically and with great success. Elsewhere, as in *The Rifle*, he has told stories in service to a message; here the message follows from the story ineluctably. Charley comes across fully human, both his vulnerabilities and strengths becoming more pronounced as the novel progresses. Warfare, too, emerges complexly--while a lesser writer might attempt to teach readers to shun war by dint of the protagonist's profound disgust, Paulsen compounds the horrors of the battlefield by demonstrating how they trigger Charley's own bloodlust. Charley cannot recover from his years of war; in a smaller but more hopeful way, neither may the audience. Paulsen's storytelling is so psychologically true that readers will feel they have lived through Charley's experiences. Ages 12-up. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or

unavailable edition of this title.

My son had to read this book for school and told me how he enjoyed it. I enjoyed it too as the author takes the reader on a journey about a fictionalization of the teen who enlists in the Union Army during the Civil War. The teen is involved in battles at Gettysburg, PA and Bull Run at Manassas, VA. The story is based on the reality of the civil war but with fictional characters.

Good summer read for rising 5th graders.

Chose this to do a book report on for a college history class, and was pleasantly surprised! While many parts of the book aren't pleasant to think about, I found myself not being able to put it down...I read it all in one sitting! It's a fairly easy read but intensely good. Maybe I liked this so much because I come from a family of Veterans (incl. my husband), but I'd definitely recommend this book!

A Soldiers Heart is a book that I would recommend to other readers not only because of the great details that Gary Paulsen put into it, but because you relive the Civil War. I liked this book because it's about a boy that is 15 years old, Charley Gaddard. He lied about his age and joined the Minnesota Volunteers. Gary Paulsen is a wonderful writer, and Soldiers Heart is one of his best novels. The gore is not all that great, but you get used to it. This is a great book to read if you are learning about the Civil War. Charley was pretty brave for going into the Civil War at the age of 15. What a big task.

Great inspirational mature read for those interested in history -- book included in our community's give-away of books at our library conducted in conjunction with the Detroit Lakes, MN rededication of the Grand Army of the Republic Park, 150th anniversary of the end of the Civil War and the death of President Lincoln. It deals with a subject matter that is relevant today as our men and women come home from war.

I bought this book to use with middle school students during a Civil War study. By the conclusion, though, I found myself in tears. For middle school students it was attention getting and graphic with details describing the horrors the main character, Charley, experiences during the war. Yet, the ending brings them full circle to more sensitive, empathetic emotions and a world needing to understand the personal devastation of those horrors.

My 7 year old grandson and I read the book together. He wants to be a Marine when he grows up and this gave him a good opportunity to see how it used to be to go to war.

My son needed to read this book for school. He doesn't always like to read but when he started this book he said it became interesting enough that he kept reading. After reading the whole book he said it was a bit sad and there were some graphic parts but he really liked it.

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