

Learning English

American Stories

The Return of a Private

by Hamlin Garland

Lesson Plan

by Jill Robbins, Ph.D.

Introduction

This lesson plan is to accompany the American Stories series episode, *The Return of a Private* by Hamlin Garland.

A transcript of the story is included at the end of this lesson to print so students can read as they listen. Teachers who cannot play the audio from the website can read the story aloud or have students read it.

This lesson plan is based on the CALLA Approach. See the end of the lesson for more information and resources on teaching with the CALLA approach. The following slide shows the five parts of this lesson plan.

Lesson Elements

Prepare

Present

Practice

Self-Evaluate

Expand

Prepare

Introduce the story. “Today we will read *The Return of a Private* by Hamlin Garland. Do you know what a private is? It is the lowest rank for a person in the army. This story tells about a man in the army returning home. He was in the US Civil War. What do you know about the Civil War? When did it take place? How do you think the soldiers feel when they go home from a war?

Listen to students’ answers. Tell students the war was between the Northern, or Union states, and the Southern, or Confederate states. It took place between 1861 and 1865. The man returning home in the story is going back to his farm in Wisconsin. So he was in the North, or the Union Army. He was on the winning side. But he has been away a long time.

Teach the vocabulary for the story.

Vocabulary

scar - *n.* a mark that is left on your skin after a wound heals

forehead - *n.* the part of the face above the eyes

malaria - *n.* a serious disease that causes chills and fever and that is passed from one person to another by the bite of mosquitoes

mood - *n.* the way someone feels : a person's emotional state

pickle - *n. chiefly US:* a cucumber that is preserved in salt water or vinegar

barn - *n.* a building on a farm that is used for storing grain and hay and for housing farm animals or equipment

courage - *n.* the ability to do something that you know is difficult or dangerous

Present

Introduce the task to students: “As we read the story today, we will practice the strategy *classify* to help us understand the story. I’ll show you how to do this.”

Play or read aloud to “‘She usually has dinner about one o'clock on Sunday afternoon,’ and he smiled.’

Model the strategy: “The first part of the story describes the three soldiers coming home on a troop train. We learn that Private Smith had malaria. That is a disease that makes people weak. We learn about his fears and worries about returning home. We also see he has positive thoughts about coming home. Let’s make a chart separating these two kinds of information.”

Make a chart like the one on the next slide. Classify the information that the author gives as positive or negative. In the left hand column, write the negative ideas and information. In the right-hand column write the positive ideas and information.

Classify

Negative	Positive
Private Smith has malaria and feels weak	He imagines getting home for dinner

Practice

Prepare students for the next part, “Now it’s your turn. Let’s listen to some more of the story. Take out a piece of paper. Write a chart with two columns. As we listen, think about what the author is telling us. *Classify* it as negative or positive ideas and information.”

Play or read aloud to “But there was no man on the farm to cut it down and sell it.”

Have students sit with a classmate and compare how they classified the information. Ask several students to share what they have written with the class. The following page shows possible answers.

Classify

Negative	Positive
Private Smith has malaria and feels weak	He imagines getting home for dinner
Smith remembers how a soldier was killed.	Smith says goodbye to his good friends from the army.
Mrs. Smith has to take care of the farm herself. A man hired to help her was dishonest.	He sees his farm from a distance. The fields are full of wheat.

Ask students to listen again. “As we read the rest of the story, think about the information you are getting. Is Hamlin Garland telling us about positive or negative things? Is there a balance or is there more of one kind of idea than another? Add the information to your chart in the correct column.”

Play or read aloud to the end of the story.

Ask students to share their classification charts with their classmate. Have several report on how they classified.

Classify

Negative	Positive
Private Smith has malaria and feels weak	He imagines getting home for dinner
Smith remembers how a soldier was killed.	Smith says goodbye to his good friends from the army.
Mrs. Smith has to take care of the farm herself. A man hired to help her was dishonest.	He sees his farm from a distance. The fields are full of wheat.
Mrs. Smith does not want to be alone.	Mrs. Gray welcomes her and feeds her. They laugh and have fun.
Mrs. Smith calls out to Private Smith but he cannot hear her.	Mrs. Smith and her children run to meet Private Smith on the road.
Smith's farm needs work. His children need clothes. He is not young. He is not strong.	The family is together and the farm is peaceful. Smith has the courage to face his future.

Self-Evaluate

Ask students to stay with their partner and talk about the end of the story: “What do you think Hamlin Garland wants his readers to feel at the end of the story? Why does Private Smith need courage after he comes home from the war?”

Give students time to talk about the end of the story. Point out the balance of positive and negative ideas that they classified.

Ask, “Now I’d like to ask – what do you think about using this strategy, *classify*, when you read? Did it help you understand the structure of this story? Write a sentence or two on your paper to turn in about how *classifying* helped you today.”

Expand

Ask students, “Are there other times when you can *classify* as you read?”

Listen to students’ responses.

Continue, “This strategy is helpful in both reading and listening. *Classifying* helps you remember what you read. This can also work well when you are studying a science lesson, or a history lesson. This strategy helps you organize what you are learning so it makes more sense to you. Try using this strategy tonight when you do your homework, or in your next class. Let me know how it goes!”

Our story today is called, "The Return of a Private." It was written by Hamlin Garland. Here is Harry Monroe with our story.

The soldiers cheered as the train crossed the border into the state of Wisconsin. It had been a long trip from the south back to their homes in the north.

One of the men had a large red **scar** across his **forehead**. Another had an injured leg that made it painful for him to walk. The third had unnaturally large and bright eyes, because he had been sick with **malaria**.



The three soldiers spread their blankets on the train seats and tried to sleep. It was a cold evening even though it was summertime. Private Smith, the soldier with the fever, shivered in the night air.

His joy in coming home was mixed with fear and worry. He knew he was sick and weak. How could he take care of his family? Where would he find the strength to do the heavy work all farmers have to do? He had given three years of his life to his country. And now he had very little money and strength left for

his family.

Morning came slowly with a pale yellow light. The train was slowing down as it came into the town of La Crosse where the three soldiers would get off the train. The station was empty because it was Sunday. "I'll get home in time for dinner," Smith thought. "She usually has dinner about one o'clock on Sunday afternoon," and he smiled.

Smith and the other two soldiers jumped off the train together. "Well, boys," Smith began, "here's where we say good-bye. We've marched together for many miles. Now, I suppose, we are done." The three men found it hard to look at each other.

"We ought to go home with you," one of the soldiers said to Smith. "You'll never be able to walk all those miles with that heavy pack on your back."

"Oh, I'm all right," Smith said, putting on his army cap. "Every step takes me closer to home."

They all shook hands. "Good-bye!" "Good luck!" "Same to you!" "Good-bye!"

Smith turned and walked away quickly. After a few minutes, he turned again and waved his cap. His two friends did the same. Then they marched away with their long steady soldier's step. Smith walked for a while thinking of his friends. He remembered the many days they had been together during the war.

He thought of his friend, Billy Tripp, too. Poor Billy! A bullet came out of the sky one day and tore a great hole in Billy's chest.

Smith knew he would have to tell the sad story to Billy's mother and young wife. But there was little to tell. The sound of a bullet cutting through the air. Billy crying out, then falling with his face in the dirt.

The fighting he had done since then had not made him forget the horror of that moment when Billy died.

Soon, the fields and houses became familiar. Smith knew he was close to home. The sun was burning hot as he began climbing the last hill. Finally, he reached the top and looked down at his farm in the beautiful valley. He was almost home.

Misses Smith was alone on the farm with her three children. Mary was nine years old. Tommy was six and little Teddy had just turned four.

Misses Smith had been dreaming about her husband, when the chickens awakened her that Sunday morning. She got out of bed, got dressed and went out to feed the chickens. Then she saw the broken fence near the chicken house. She had tried to fix it again and again. Misses Smith sat down and cried.

The farmer who had promised to take care of the farm while her husband was away had been lazy and dishonest. The first year he shared the wheat with Misses Smith. But the next year, he took almost all of it for himself. She had sent him away. Now, the fields were full of wheat. But there was no man on the farm to cut it down and sell it.

Six weeks before, her husband told her in a letter that he would be coming home soon. Other soldiers were returning home, but her husband had not come. Every day, she watched the road leading down the hill.

This Sunday morning she could no longer stand being alone. She jumped up, ran into the house and quickly dressed the children. She carefully locked the door and started walking down the road to the farmhouse of her neighbor, Misses Gray.



Mary Gray was a widow with a large family of strong sons and pretty daughters. She was poor. But she never said 'no' to a hungry person who came to her farm and asked for food. She worked hard, laughed often and was always in a cheerful **mood**.

When she saw Misses Smith and the children coming down the road, Misses Gray went out to meet them. "Please come right in, Misses Smith. We were just getting ready to have dinner."

Misses Smith went into the noisy house. Misses Gray's children were laughing and talking all at the same time. Soon she was laughing and singing with the rest of them.

The long table in the kitchen was piled with food. There were potatoes, fresh corn, apple pies, hot bread, sweet **pickles**, bread and butter and honey. They all ate until they could eat no more. Then the men and children left the table. The women stayed to drink their tea.

"Mamma," said one of Misses Gray's daughters. "Please read our fortunes in the tea leaves! Tell us about our futures!"

Misses Gray picked up her daughter's cup and stirred it first to the left, then to the right. Then she looked into it with a serious expression. "I see a handsome man with a red beard in your future," she said. Her daughter screamed with laughter.

Misses Smith trembled with excitement when it was her turn. "Somebody is coming home to you," Misses Gray said slowly. "He's carrying a rifle on his back and he's almost there."

Misses Smith felt as if she could hardly breathe. "And there he is!" Misses Gray cried, pointing to the road. They all rushed to the door to look.

A man in a blue coat, with a gun on his back, was walking down the road toward the Smith farm. His face was hidden by a large pack on his back.

Laughing and crying, Misses Smith grabbed her hat and her children and ran out of the house. She hurried down the road after him, calling his name and pulling her children along with her. But the soldier was too far away for her voice to reach him.

When she got back to their farm, she saw the man standing by the fence. He was looking at the little house and the field of yellow wheat. The sun was almost touching the hills in the west. The cowbells rang softly as the animals moved toward the **barn**.



"How peaceful it all is," Private Smith thought. "How far away from the battles, the hospitals, the wounded and the dead. My little farm in Wisconsin. How could I have left it for those years of killing and suffering?"

Trembling and weak with emotion, Misses Smith hurried up to her husband. Her feet made no sound on the grass, but he turned suddenly to face her. For the rest of his life, he would never forget her face at that moment.

"Emma!" he cried.



The children stood back watching their mother kissing this strange man. He saw them, and kneeling down he pulled from his pack three huge, red apples. In a moment, all three children were in their father's arms. Together, the family entered the little unpainted farmhouse.

Later that evening, after supper, Smith and his wife went outside. The moon was bright, above the eastern hills. Sweet, peaceful stars filled the sky as the night birds sang softly, and tiny insects buzzed in the soft air.

His farm needed work. His children needed clothing. He was no longer young and strong. But he began to plan for next year. With the same **courage** he had faced the war, Private Smith faced his difficult future.

You have just heard the story, "The Return of a Private." It was written by Hamlin Garland, and adapted for Special English by Dona de Sanctis. Your narrator was Harry Monroe.

Words in This Story

scar - *n.* a mark that is left on your skin after a wound heals

forehead - *n.* the part of the face above the eyes

malaria - *n.* a serious disease that causes chills and fever and that is passed from one person to another by the bite of mosquitoes

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About the CALLA Approach

The Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) is an instructional model for second and foreign language learners based on cognitive theory and research.

CALLA integrates instruction in priority topics from the content curriculum, development of the language skills needed for learning in school, and explicit instruction in using learning strategies for academic tasks.

The goals of CALLA are for students to learn essential academic content and language and to become independent and self-regulated learners through their increasing command over a variety of strategies for learning in school. CALLA can be used in ESL, EFL, bilingual, foreign language, and general education classrooms.

CALLA was developed by Anna Uhl Chamot and J. Michael O'Malley, and is being implemented in approximately 30 school districts in the United States as well as in several other countries.

See a list of language learning strategies below.

Metacognitive Strategies

CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES		
Plan / Organize	 Planner	Before beginning a task: -Set goals. -Plan the task or content sequence. -Plan how to accomplish the task (choose strategies). -Preview a text.
Monitor / Identify Problems	 Check	While working on a task: -Check your progress on the task. -Check your comprehension as you use the language. Do you understand? If not, what is the problem? -Check your production as you use the language. Are you making sense? If not, what is the problem?
Evaluate	 I did it!	After completing a task: -Assess how well you have accomplished the learning task. -Assess how well you have used learning strategies. -Decide how effective the strategies were. -Identify changes you will make the next time you have a similar task to do.
Manage Your Own Learning	 Pace Yourself	-Determine how you learn best. -Arrange conditions that help you learn. -Seek opportunities for practice. -Focus your attention on the task.

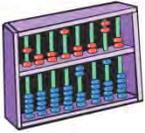
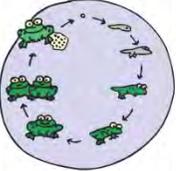
Task-Based Strategies

CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
TASK-BASED STRATEGIES		
 <p style="text-align: center;">USE WHAT YOU KNOW</p>		
Use Background Knowledge	 <p style="text-align: center;">I know.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Think about and use what you already know to help you do the task. - Make associations between new information and your prior knowledge. -Use new information to clarify or modify your prior knowledge.
Make Inferences	 <p style="text-align: center;">Use Clues</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use context and what you know to figure out meaning. -Read and listen between the lines. -Go beyond the text to understand its meaning.
Make Predictions	 <p style="text-align: center;">Crystal Ball</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Anticipate information to come. -Make logical guesses about what will happen in a written or oral text. -Make an estimate (math). -Make a hypothesis (science).
Personalize	 <p style="text-align: center;">Me</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Relate new concepts to your own life, to your experiences, knowledge, beliefs and feelings.

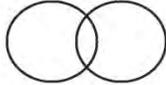
Task-Based Strategies

CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
TASK-BASED STRATEGIES		
Transfer / Use Cognates	 Coffee/Café	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Apply your linguistic knowledge of other languages (including your native language) to the target language. -Recognize cognates.
Substitute / Paraphrase	 Make it work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use a synonym or descriptive phrase for unknown words or expressions.
  USE YOUR SENSES		
Use Images	 See it in your mind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use or create an actual or mental image to understand and/or represent information. -Use or draw a picture or diagram.
Use Sounds	 Sound Out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Say or read aloud a word, sentence, or paragraph to help your understanding. -Sound out/vocalize. - Use your "mental tape recorder" to remember sounds, words, phrases, and/or conversations.

Task-Based Strategies

CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
TASK-BASED STRATEGIES		
Use Your Kinesthetic Sense		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Act out a role, for example, in Readers' Theater, or imagine yourself in different roles in the target language. -Use real objects to help you remember words, sentences, or content information.
  USE YOUR ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS		
Find/Apply Patterns	 abacus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Apply a rule. -Make a rule. -Recognize and apply letter/sound, grammar, discourse, or register rules. -Identify patterns in literature (genre). -Identify patterns in math, science, and social studies.
Classify/Sequence	 Life cycle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Categorize words or ideas according to attributes. -Classify living things; identify natural cycles. -Identify order and sequences in math, science, and social studies. -Sequence events in history.

Task-Based Strategies

CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
TASK-BASED STRATEGIES		
Take Notes	 <p>PDA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Write down important words and ideas while listening or reading. -List ideas or words to include in speaking or writing..
Use Graphic Organizers	 <p>A Venn diagram</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use or create visual representations (such as Venn diagrams, time lines, webs, and charts) of important relationships between concepts.
Summarize	 <p>Main Idea</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Create a mental, oral, or written summary of information.
Use Selective Attention	 <p>Focus</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Focus on specific information, structures, key words, phrases, or ideas.

Task-Based Strategies

CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
TASK-BASED STRATEGIES		
 		
USE A VARIETY OF RESOURCES		
Access Information Sources	 Look it up!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use the dictionary, the internet, and other reference materials. -Seek out and use sources of information. -Follow a model -Ask questions
Cooperate	 Together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Work with others to complete tasks, build confidence, and give and receive feedback.
Talk Yourself Through It (Self-Talk)	 I can do it!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use your inner resources. Reduce your anxiety by reminding yourself of your progress, the resources you have available, and your goals.