

## Unit 1

Title: Where Have You Gone, Charming Billy?<sup>1</sup>

Suggested Time: 5 days (45 minutes per day)

Common Core ELA Standards: RL.9-10.1, RL.9-10.2, RL.9-10.3, RL.9-10.4, RL.9-10.5; W.9-10.1, W.9-10.4, W.9-10.7, W.9-10.8, W.9-10.9; SL.9-10.1; L.9-10.1, L.9-10.2, L.9-10.4

## Teacher Instructions

### **Preparing for Teaching**

1. Read the Big Ideas and Key Understandings and the Synopsis. Please do **not** read this to the students. This is a description for teachers about the big ideas and key understanding that students should take away **after** completing this task.

#### Big Ideas and Key Understandings

Fear itself can be as destructive as the cause of the fear.

#### Synopsis

The text focuses on Paul Berlin's mental struggle to conquer his fear in Vietnam. After his first day in combat during which he watched Billy Boy Watkins die of a heart attack, Berlin is on a tense night march to the sea. To quell his fear, he thinks about home, his childhood, and his father. Flashbacks reveal the details of Billy Boy's death: After a mine blows off his foot, Billy's

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<sup>1</sup> *This story is a "duplicate." (It is found in other anthologies, as well.) This particular revision was completed by a teacher who uses a different anthology than you, so the page numbers have been removed. This may require you to make some adjustments/add page numbers to some of the questions.*

## Where Have You Gone, Charming Billy?

fear of dying brings on a heart attack. Later, his body falls from the helicopter lifting it and is fished from the rice paddy by his platoon who sing the children's song of the title. Recalling these events, Paul Berlin cracks; He giggles so hysterically that another soldier must smother him into silence so the noise does not alert the Vietcong to their position. The patrol finally gets to the sea, their objective, but Paul's fear remains.

2. Read the entire text a time or two, keeping in mind the Big Ideas and Key Understandings.
3. Re-read the text while noting the stopping points for the Text Dependent Questions and teaching Tier II/academic vocabulary.

### **During Teaching**

1. Students read the entire text independently.
2. Teacher reads the text aloud while students follow along or students take turns reading aloud to each other. This text is complex in its ideas but not in its syntax or vocabulary, so letting the students read it out loud to each other would be great practice with fluency.
3. Students and teacher re-read the text while stopping to respond to and discuss the questions, continually returning to the text. A variety of methods can be used to structure the reading and discussion (i.e., whole class discussion, think-pair-share, independent written response, group work, etc.

### Text Dependent Questions

<b>Text-dependent Questions</b>	<b>Evidence-based Answers</b>
What can you infer about the enemy forces based on the way the American men behave in the dark? Use evidence from the text to support your inference.	Because the soldiers are described as moving "slowly in the dark, single file, not talking" and are "very quiet", we can infer that the enemy does not engage in open warfare.
What can we infer about the differences among the men in terms of willingness to serve and fight in this war?	Some of the men are excited about the adventure, but some of them are afraid. Some are described as being exhausted from

Where Have You Gone, Charming Billy?

	<p>the long night march. We can infer that some of the men, then, wanted to join the military, while other were drafted into the military service by the government and did not choose to be there.</p>
<p>What effect does the author's choice of the word "pinched" have on the description of Paul Berlin? Support your answer with reasons from the text.</p>	<p>The use of the word "pinched" suggests that he is trying as hard as he can to eliminate any visual from his eyes while waiting in the dark. This word adds to the description of the soldier who is trying to escape his hard reality and pretend he is not actually there; he hopes that when he opens his eyes, "his father would be there by the campfire and they would talk softly about whatever came to mind..."</p>
<p>We learn how long Paul Berlin has been at war. Cite evidence that lets us know how long he has been there and examine his reactions to his situation.</p>	<p>He indicates that he is comfortable and that he doesn't want to move. When he does move, he stumbles, scrapes his knee, and gropes in the darkness as though he is blind; he clearly has not had experience in the dark in such conditions. Additionally, he shares that he will tell his Mother about what he experienced, but he determines that he will not tell her how frightened he was on this first day. Because of this imagined omission, it can be inferred that he is embarrassed of the fact that he is so frightened.</p>
<p>The author uses adjectives to indicate how the soldier's reaction to fear has changed over the course of one day. Trace the description of "fear" in this paragraph using specific evidence from the text to show the change in fear.</p>	<p>The soldier describes his fear in the afternoon as being "bundled and tight". This is a result of his having witnessed the death of Billy Boy Watkins. He describes fear differently in the evening as being "diffused and unformed" and compares it to the fear he has experienced in the past as a child. Specifically, he indicates that his present fear is "mostly the fear of being so terribly afraid again."</p>
<p>How does the author use imagery to help create the feeling that "you are there"? How does his description lend credibility to the soldiers' experience?</p>	<p>The sensory images, such as "the shadow of the man in front of him" and "his boots made sleepy, sloshing sounds, like a lullaby" put the reader inside the soldier's mind, making the experience vivid and real.</p>

### Where Have You Gone, Charming Billy?

<p>The tone changes when Berlin imagines how things will be when he and his platoon reach the coast. Using evidence from the text, describe how the tone changes at this point in the text.</p>	<p>The dark tone of fear becomes upbeat, almost lighthearted. Berlin expresses his desire to potentially make friends with some of the other soldiers, learning their names and laughing at their jokes. He imagines that when the war is over, he will have “war buddies” and guesses he will write to them “once in a while and exchange memories.”</p>
<p>We learn that the soldiers consider the burial mounds that they encounter to be a fine place to shoot their weapons. Explain the irony of this consideration.</p>	<p>The mounds are described as being found in a graveyard and are described as being “conical-shaped”. The graveyard is described as having a “perfumy smell” and it is very quiet. That they would consider this a “nice place to spend the night” and that the mounds would “make fine battlements” to shoot guns is ironic because a graveyard is a place of peace, not war.</p>
<p>Paul reflects on the training he had prior to the war. What effect does this training have on his current state in the text?</p>	<p>In his training, Paul remembers to “Stay off the center of the path, for that was where the land mines and booby traps were planted” he was also taught to stay alert. However, he reflects that they were not taught how to “stop being afraid; they hadn’t given any lessons in courage”. This illustrates that Paul feels ill prepared to deal with the frightening realities of war. He feels like the preparation he really needed was learning how to be brave and remain unaffected by the circumstance.</p>
<p>How does the author refer to Paul throughout the text? Compare and contrast this to the way that the author crafts Toby’s identity. What can be inferred about each of the characters through their titles?</p>	<p>The author consistently refers to Paul as “Private First Class Paul Berlin”. This is a formal title given upon entrance to the military. In contrast, the author introduces Toby simply as “the soldier” and when Toby introduces himself to Paul he uses his first name only. He then shares his two nicknames: “everybody calls me Buffalo” and that “sometimes they just call me Buff”. The stark difference between the titles of the two men emphasizes Paul’s status as a new soldier with no nickname or familiarity with his companions and Toby’s status as a seasoned soldier who has earned a nickname and clearly has familiarity with the platoon.</p>

Where Have You Gone, Charming Billy?

<p>Paul recalls a vivid memory that sends him into a fit of giggles. What happens in this memory, why does it make him react his way, and why is it significant to the text?</p>	<p>Paul and Toby are remembering what happened to their companion Billy Boy Watkins, and this prompts Paul to recollect the event in detail. Paul and Billy were drinking coke together and then began their days' march. Later, Billy Boy steps on a mine and Paul remembers "how it made a tiny little sound—<i>poof</i>—". He also remembers how "Billy Boy stood there with his mouth wide open, looking down at where his foot had been blown off" and that Billy was very casual about the situation even with his detached foot "lying behind him, most of it still in the boot". The horrors of this memory cause Paul to begin to giggle uncontrollably – unable to stifle his emotions. This signals the beginning of his mental breakdown at this point in the story as he succumbs to his fear and shock due to this event. This is a significant moment in the story because the major source of Paul's pervasive fear is revealed. The reason Paul continues to reference Billy's "heart attack" in the story becomes clear once it is known that the source of the heart attack was a shocking and surreal event.</p>
<p>What do the words "bawling" and "giggling" connote that "crying" and "laughing" do not? What is the author's intent in using these words?</p>	<p>In this paragraph the author uses the words <i>bawling</i> and <i>giggling</i> as opposed to <i>crying</i> or <i>laughing</i>. The chosen words are more extreme versions of their standard counterparts. This gives the connotation that the soldiers, Paul and Billy, have lost control of their emotions as they respectively giggle and bawl. The feeling created by the author is that these men are releasing pent up stress and emotions due to these extreme situations.</p>
<p>Contrast the first time Paul Berlin references the Sea. What were his expectations of arriving at the sea and what did it represent for him? How does this contrast with the reality of being there?</p>	<p>In his first reference to the sea, Paul states "it would be better. The hot afternoon would be over, he would bathe in the sea, and he would forget how frightened he had been on his first day at the war." This indicates that Paul is optimistic about his arrival at the sea. He believes that it will bring some peace and</p>

## Where Have You Gone, Charming Billy?

	<p>relief from his frightening first day's experience. It is a symbol of hope to him. In reality when he arrives at the sea in the end of the story "when he smelled salt and heard the sea, he could not stop being afraid." Paul comes to the realization that the sea did not bring the comfort and solace he was seeking and in reality he is still scared.</p>
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Where Have You Gone, Charming Billy?

Tier II/Academic Vocabulary

	<p><b>These words require less time to learn</b>                      (They are concrete or describe an object/event/                      process/characteristic that is familiar to students)</p>	<p><b>These words require more time to learn</b>                      (They are abstract, have multiple meanings, are a part                      of a word family, or are likely to appear again in future texts)</p>
<p><b>Meaning can be learned from                      context</b></p>	<p>hedgerow                      platoon                      column                      inertia*                      stifle                      mortar</p> <p>*definition given in text</p>	<p>primitive                      diffuse*                      valiantly                      consolation*</p> <p>*definition given in text</p>
<p><b>Meaning needs to be provided</b></p>	<p>stealth*                      groping                      battlements*                      inert*                      agile</p> <p>*definition given in text</p>	<p>fecund*                      skirted*                      succumbing*</p> <p>*definition given in text</p>

## Culminating Writing Task

- Prompt

*Write a well-developed essay considering the last line of Tim O'Brien's text, "Where Have You Gone, Charming Billy?" What lasting impression are the readers left with at the end of the text? What is the author's purpose in including this statement, and what claim does this make about the effects of war? How would the meaning of the text change if this line were not included? Cite specific evidence from the text to support your reasoning.*

- Teacher Instructions

1. Students identify their writing task from the prompt provided. Class discussion of the TDQs for the story should help to clarify the students' understanding of the text. Through discussion on these questions, the teacher should be able to discern whether or not the students are prepared to write.
2. Students complete an evidence chart as a pre-writing activity. Teachers should remind students to use any relevant notes they compiled while reading and answering the text-dependent questions.

<b><i>Evidence Quote or paraphrase</i></b>	<b><i>Elaboration / explanation of how this evidence supports ideas or argument</i></b>
Paragraph 1: "...some of them excited by the adventure, some of them afraid, some of them exhausted from the long night march, some of them looking forward to reaching the sea, where they would be safe."	The author first uses the image of the sea to intentionally build anticipation for a peaceful and comforting end to Paul's tense, frightening, and dangerous journey.
Paragraph 2: "In the morning, when they reached the sea, it would be better. The hot afternoon would be over, he would bathe in the sea, and he would forget how frightened he had been on his first day at the war."	The image of the sea is symbolic of an oasis with the power to alleviate their fears and help them all endure what's ahead.

Where Have You Gone, Charming Billy?

<p>Paragraph 1: "Once they reached the sea, things would be better. They would have their rear guarded by three thousand miles of ocean, and they would swim and dive into the breakers and hunt crayfish and smell the salt, and they would be safe."</p>	<p>Images of a happier, safe, and carefree time are conjured again the sea is referenced and Paul dreams of diving into the breakers to hunt crayfish with his platoon.</p>
<p>Paragraph 6: "Shut up!' the soldier hissed, but Paul Berlin could not stop giggling, remembering: scared to death". Paragraph 9: "The giggles were caught in his throat, drowning him in his own laughter: scared to death like Billy Boy."</p>	<p>Paul laughs and giggles uncontrollably recounting the details of his death and twice it is revealed that he is truly "scared to death." Through this unsettling and unexpected reaction of laughter in response to tragedy, the reader experiences the fragility of Paul's emotional state and a sense of urgency for resolution to his internal turmoil develops for the reader.</p>
<p>Concluding paragraph: "But even when he smelled salt and heard the sea, he could not stop being afraid."</p>	<p>The concluding statement of the text begins with Paul smelling the salt and hearing the sea, which again appeals to the senses and invokes a feeling of solace and hope for Paul in the reader. However, in the second half of the statement, the reader immediately realizes the war has had a lasting effect on Paul. Even when physical safety is achieved and he has finally reached the place he hoped would bring refuge, he finds the horrors he had experienced will not go away.</p>
<p>Concluding paragraph: "He would do better once he reached the sea, he thought, still smiling a little. A funny war story that he would tell to his father, how Billy Boy Watkins was scared to death. A good joke."</p>	<p>Paul's thoughts allude to a longing to escape the effects of the war and return home with the war as a distant and more insignificant and lighthearted "good joke". At this point, it seems Paul has escaped his present reality by coping with pervasive fear through denial and he is in control of his fear.</p>
<p>Concluding paragraph: "But even when he smelled the salt and heard the sea, he could not stop being afraid."</p>	<p>Despite the longing for the calm, peace and release Paul is longing to experience when encountering the sea, the author leaves the reader with the impression that Paul's</p>

## Where Have You Gone, Charming Billy?

	emotional battle to cope with the harsh realities of war will continue because it does the experience does not alleviate his fear.
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3. Once students have completed the evidence chart, they should look back at the writing prompt in order to remind themselves what kind of response they are writing (i.e. expository, analytical, argumentative) and think about the evidence they found. (Depending on the grade level, teachers may want to review students' evidence charts in some way to ensure accuracy.) From here, students should develop a specific thesis statement. This could be done independently, with a partner, small group, or the entire class. Consider directing students to the following sites to learn more about thesis statements: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/545/01/> OR [http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/thesis\\_statement.shtml](http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/thesis_statement.shtml).
4. Students compose a rough draft. With regard to grade level and student ability, teachers should decide how much scaffolding they will provide during this process (i.e. modeling, showing example pieces, sharing work as students go).
5. Students complete final draft.

- Sample Answer

In Tim O'Brien's text, *Where have You Gone, Charming Billy?*, the fear and turmoil caused by war are explored through the eyes of Private First Class Paul Berlin. Throughout his first day in Vietnam Paul encounters tense and fearful moments, but the experience that most affects him is the death of fellow soldier Billy Boy Watkins, who stepped on a land mine, lost his leg, and proceeded to succumb to his own fear and panic, ultimately dying from a shock induced heart attack. This event deeply affects Paul who feels unprepared for the reality of war. Throughout the text chronicling his first day at war, Paul Tries to conquer his fear but despite small victories he never succeeds in being unafraid.

## Where Have You Gone, Charming Billy?

In the last line of the text, Paul states, "But even when he smelled the salt and heard the sea, he could not stop being afraid." His longing for the calm, peace and release through experiencing the sea does not come to fruition and the author leaves the reader with the impression that Paul's emotional battle to cope with harsh realities of war will remain. The author begins intentionally building anticipation for a peaceful and comforting end to Paul's tense, frightening and dangerous journey through earlier instances in the text. First, in the opening paragraph, the reader learns that some of the men in his platoon were "looking forward to reaching the sea where they would be safe." After learning this is Paul's first day at the war in the second paragraph, the sea is again mentioned as an oasis that would help them all endure what's ahead. Paul believes when they finally reach the sea, "it would be better" and he would "...forget how frightened he had been on his first day at the war."

Once more images of a happier, safe, and carefree time are conjured by the sea when Paul dreams of diving into the breakers to hunt crayfish with his platoon with "their rear guarded by three thousand miles of ocean" Yet, fear continues to plague him and nearly engulfs him along their march to the sea when he recalls the death of another soldier from their platoon, "Billy Boy Watkins", who had died from a heart attack after stepping on a land mine. Unexpectedly, Paul laughs and giggles uncontrollably while recounting the details of his death and twice it is revealed that he is truly "scared to death." Through the unsettling and unexpected reaction of laughter in response to tragedy, the reader experiences the fragility of Paul's emotional state and a sense of urgency for resolution to his internal turmoil develops within the reader. Unfortunately, the author's purpose in the last line of the story indicates Paul's physical and emotional quest to conquer his fear will continue and the terror of war will not be erased.

The concluding statement of the text begins with Paul smelling the salt and hearing the sea, which again appeals to the senses and invokes a feeling of solace and hope for Paul in the reader. The author signifies the tension and lasting, deep effects of war at the end of the same statement, "he could not stop being afraid." Thus, the reader immediately realizes the war has had a lasting effect on Paul. Even when physical safety is achieved and he has finally reached the place he hoped would bring refuge, he finds the horrors he had experienced will not go away.

## Where Have You Gone, Charming Billy?

At the end of the text, Paul dreams of the effect of the sea and he is “still smiling a little.” He describes his memories as “a funny war story” that he would tell to his father. Again, his thoughts allude to a longing to escape the effects of the war and return home with the war as a distant and more insignificant, lighthearted “good joke”. Had the text ended at this point, the meaning of the text would be completely altered as the reader would sense that Paul has escaped his present reality by coping with pervasive fear through denial. Thus, the effect the war had on his life would have been tamed and controlled. In reality, the final line does not bring emotional closure for Paul or the reader, suggesting that the impact of war is more unpredictable, lasting and beyond his control.

### Additional Tasks

- Have students research Tim O’Brien’s life and body of work. In light of the knowledge they have gained, write an argumentative essay taking a position on what they think the author wants us to understand about war. What might O’Brien’s philosophical position be, and how does his story lead us to this understanding? How do O’Brien’s views and experiences affect the credibility of his argument? Students should include evidence from the print and digital sources they used during their research, being careful to avoid plagiarism and using citations properly.

### Note to Teacher

- Tim O’Brien fought in the Vietnam War for 2 years. Much of his writing centers on the Vietnam War, including his novel *The Things They Carried*.

Where Have You Gone, Charming Billy?

Where Have You Gone, Charming Billy?

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**“Where Have You Gone, Charming Billy?”**

1. What can you infer about the enemy forces based on the way the American men behave in the dark? Use evidence from the text to support your inference.
2. What can we infer about the differences among the men in terms of willingness to serve and fight in this war?
3. What effect does the author’s choice of the word “pinched” have on the description of Paul Berlin? Support your answer with reasons from the text.
4. We learn how long Paul Berlin has been at war. Cite evidence that lets us know how long he has been there and examine his reactions to his situation.

Where Have You Gone, Charming Billy?

5. The author uses adjectives to indicate how the soldier's reaction to fear has changed over the course of one day. Trace the description of "fear" in this paragraph using specific evidence from the text to show the change in fear.
  
6. How does the author use imagery to help create the feeling that "you are there"? How does his description lend credibility to the soldiers' experience?
  
7. The tone changes when Berlin imagines how things will be when he and his platoon reach the coast. Using evidence from the text, describe how the tone changes at this point in the text.
  
8. We learn that the soldiers consider the burial mounds that they encounter to be a fine place to shoot their weapons. Explain the irony of this consideration.
  
9. Paul reflects on the training he had prior to the war. What effect does this training have on his current state in the text?

Where Have You Gone, Charming Billy?

10. How does the author refer to Paul throughout the text? Compare and contrast this to the way that the author crafts Toby's identity. What can be inferred about each of the characters through their titles?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
11. Paul recalls a vivid memory that sends him into a fit of giggles. What happens in this memory, why does it make him react his way, and why is it significant to the text?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
12. What do the words "bawling" and "giggling" connote that "crying" and "laughing" do not? What is the author's intent in using these words?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
13. Contrast the first time Paul Berlin references the Sea. What were his expectations of arriving at the sea and what did it represent for him? How does this contrast with the reality of being there?