

Starship Troopers by Robert A. Heinlein

Lesson Plans
by
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Introduction:

Starship Troopers is the last of the juveniles Robert Heinlein published with the prestigious Scribner's from the late forties through the late fifties. The series is widely regarded as the finest science fiction ever written for young people; many, including Grandmaster Jack Williamson, believe them to be the best science fiction Robert Heinlein ever wrote.

Starship Troopers caused a breach between Heinlein and Scribner's. After a decade of a mostly happy relationship (there were occasional disagreements with the juvenile editor, Alice Dalgliesh), Heinlein was unceremoniously dumped by Scribner's without even so much as a phone call from the publisher. Heinlein had singlehandedly created the genre of the science fiction juvenile in the fifties, keeping Dalgliesh's department in the black, and spawning a whole host of imitators, including the *Tom Swift, Jr.* series. The conflicts Heinlein had had with Dalgliesh were mostly due to content; Heinlein always wanted to push his young readers into thinking, and there were times when Dalgliesh chose to impose editorial control (over such understandable issues as guns in *Red Planet*, but also over ridiculous things, like the supposed sexual nature of the flat cats in *The Rolling Stones*). This time, Heinlein had written a deeply felt, intellectually challenging book, which he believed the nation's youth needed to read. Heinlein was increasingly troubled by the Cold War, and the poor decisions he considered the Eisenhower administration to be making. As he cast his role in writing the juveniles as one of educating the young, he wanted them to think about the nature of citizenship, and promote the essential qualities of freedom and self-responsibility in the next generation. He always made sure there was plenty of excitement and sense of wonder, and this was especially true of this novel – the battles, the powered armor – but he also included issues to chew on to make his audience think. In *Tunnel in the Sky*, it was government; in *Have Spacesuit, Will Travel*, it was education. Here, it was the responsibility of the citizen to make mature decisions when voting, and to keep in mind the need to think of others at the highest possible scale when casting a vote. Apparently, Dalgliesh and Scribner's felt the book was completely inappropriate for young readers, and rejected it. The novel was then snatched up by Putnam (Heinlein added another section so it could be published as an adult novel), and went on to major sales and the Hugo for best science fiction novel of the year. The book has never been out of print, and is regularly used as assigned reading in the military, to promote the qualities of leadership and sacrifice which are the essence of the mature adult serving our country. The book was adapted into three movies, all of which seem to have completely ignored the novel (I stopped teaching the novel when the movie came out, because I rarely teach books that have been turned into films – students tend to watch the movie instead of reading the

book. After I saw the movie, I went right back to teaching the book, since nobody would ever confuse the two, as they are so far apart in almost every single way).

We hope you find the following lesson plans helpful, and that you will choose *Starship Troopers* or another Heinlein work to use in your classrooms. We would like to hear from you about your own experiences using Heinlein's works.

Edition Used:

I have used the Ace paperback, as the most readily available.

Date of Publication:

Starship Troopers was finished in November, 1958, and published for the Christmas trade in 1959.

Chapter Summaries / Discussion Notes:

Each chapter will be summarized, and pertinent details and issues explicated. Any of the details might be turned into extra credit questions, which require the student to do research on the internet or in a library. Heinlein often inserted historical, scientific, and literary references into his novels, as a way of gently urging the reader to explore these references. Vocabulary words which students may have difficulty with will be suggested, with particular attention paid to words Heinlein invented (which, unless we've adopted the word, won't be found in a dictionary).

I strongly urge that students learn vocabulary not by checking the dictionary, but by the following procedure: 1) say the word aloud (this begins to fix the word in long-term memory); 2) look for roots (Spanish speakers often have an advantage here, since the longer Latinate words in English often have a simple Spanish root, as in the word "facilitate"); 3) use context to make TWO guesses as to what the word means; 4) then, and only then, check the dictionary. Students need to be reminded to learn new vocabulary words, because they will often choose to simply skip the word they don't know, or in running to the dictionary, will fail to permanently learn the new word as they only place the definition into short-term memory. I require my students to learn at least seven new words a week; in this, Heinlein is very helpful, because he actually used a more sophisticated vocabulary in his juveniles than in his adult fiction. If teachers do not encourage students to acquire the new vocabulary, students often have a hard time with Heinlein's juveniles for precisely that reason: they are more difficult than today's more controlled, simplistic vocabulary in most young adult novels.

CHAPTER ONE

The novel begins in the middle, *in medias res*. Few of Heinlein's novels do this; he tends to begin in the beginning (or after the fact, with the narrator looking back). *Starship Troopers* is one of his most literary works, being written in the middle of writing *Stranger in a Strange Land*, one of his masterpieces. As he so often did, he puts us into another time and place very quickly, by dropping in an event or action that simply doesn't exist yet, then treating it as normal background: "I always get the shakes before a drop." What's a drop?!? Then, he brings up injections and hypnosis, and we are off to a highly exciting future we have never been to before. From this moment, we get a character who is fully human, a soldier who admits his fear: Johnny Rico. Johnny is serving aboard the *Roger Young*. His previous platoon leader, Lieutenant Rasczak, died on the last mission; the platoon sergeant, Sergeant Jelal, who is Finno-Turk. Heinlein is promoting his future in which race doesn't matter: Jelal is Finnish and Turkish.

Jelal is inspecting them, even though they've each checked their own gear (Heinlein is using this note to promote self-responsibility: "look, it's your own neck – see?"). He checks one of the soldier's vitals by pressing the button; he's got a degree and a half of fever, so Jelal orders him to stay on board. Johnny is worried; that was one of his men, and he's assistant section leader now. Jelal begins laying into them verbally – we find that each man's training and equipment cost over half a million dollars (that would run roughly ten times that much, more or less, in today's dollars; inflation, you know...)

Jelal lays out the battle plan. They are doing a raid, and he wants them using all their ammo to intimidate the population. Rasczak's Roughnecks has a reputation to uphold. He hands things over to Sergeant Migliaccio, who is the Padre. They pray. Heinlein drops in a stunner, when Johnny mentions that there used to be ministers who didn't fight alongside their troops. In the Mobile Infantry, *everybody* fights.

Johnny never talks to the Padre before a drop, but this time, the Padre comes to him, and tells him that as his first mission as a non-com, he needs to stay alive and just do his job: don't try to be a hero. Johnny is then strapped into his capsule for the drop, and begins to shake from fear.

Johnny waits for the drop. Heinlein again surprises us, and enlightens us, by revealing that women are always the best pilots. The drop begins, capsule by capsule. The drop is described in brilliant detail.

He lands; his suit has jump jets. He's on the wrong side of the river. Ace resents having to take orders from Johnny. Johnny steps "off the building and across the river." (now there's an audacious sentence!). He keeps dropping bombs. Ace again isn't following orders well; Johnny is going to have settle things with him onboard. The platoon starts leapfrogging. He has bombs, rocket launchers, nuclear bombs,

flamethrowers in his hands (I've often wondered if Stan Lee read this novel before creating Iron Man). Johnny has to roast a local with the hand flamer (one of the objections to this novel must have been this scene: few juveniles would present a killing so off the cuff and matter of fact). Johnny is teaching the reader proper military procedures throughout this chapter, including how to jump. This kind of "you are there" and "here's how it's done" technique was something few have ever been able to match; Heinlein was a genius at creating believable scenes that have the weight and heft of lived-in reality. Johnny prefers fighting the Skinnies on this planet than the Bugs, which sicken him. Johnny is looking for the best targets for the three remaining nuclear warheads – they aren't to be wasted, and this is only the second time he's been allowed to use them. He sends one after a big target, then keeps moving, and giving orders to his squad.

Johnny needs to catch up and close the circle to reach rendezvous. The Skinnies are beginning to fight back. He's hit by a paralysis beam, but his suit was already jumping when it happened. He sends another nuclear warhead at the spaceport. He breaks through a wall, finds a room full of the Skinnies, and drops a talking bomb that freaks them out, then gets out alive. They wrap up the mission, only to discover Dizzy Flores is missing. Ace and Johnny go after him (Johnny is ordered not to go, but claims he didn't hear it; it's his responsibility, so he goes). The retrieval boat is coming, and they are running out of time!

Ace finds Dizzy, and tells Johnny to go back; Johnny ignores him. They get to Dizzy – there's a hole in his armor. Together, they grab him by the belt and carry him back to the ship. The retrieval ship is about to leave, and Jelly orders it to wait; Ace and Johnny get Dizzy back in time, with Jelly's help (his command suit is much faster). The pilot, Captain Deladrier, somehow manages to get to the rendezvous on time, despite the delay.

Dizzy dies.

CHAPTER TWO:

We now go back to the beginning (this is a much more typical opening for a Heinlein juvenile). Johnny never wanted to join the military – especially not the infantry! Heinlein drops another bomb: this society of his has public whippings. Johnny recalls a conversation with his father about signing up for Federal Service. Most do at eighteen, then forget about it. The only reason Johnny did was that his best friend Carl did. Carl is smart; Johnny's father is rich. Johnny and Carl shared everything. Carl says Johnny's father won't let him; Johnny said nobody can stop someone at 18 from doing so.

Johnny's father asks if he's crazy. He goes over how he raised Johnny. When he broke one of his Mother's Ming vases (ONE of them?!), he didn't know any better; when he swiped cigars, getting sick was enough punishment. Finding out about girls, a normal stage – and so is thinking about Federal Service at 18. Johnny's father tells him no member of the family has entered politics in a century (so, Heinlein begins laying the groundwork for tying the franchise to service). Mr. Rico then blames his teacher for this idea, the veteran Mr. Dubois, and his History and Moral Philosophy class. Mr. Rico objects to the school being an undercover recruiting station, and threatens to write a letter; as a taxpayer, he ought to have some rights! (more groundwork for the franchise being limited) Johnny tries to tell him that Mr. Dubois tells them all they're not good enough; Mr. Rico suggests this is an excellent way to get recruits. Mr. Rico has plans for Johnny: go to Harvard, then off to the Sorbonne, and learn the family business, starting from the ground up.

Mr. Rico argues that if there were a war, he'd be happy to have his son serve. But there are no wars, and Federal Service is "parasitism" for "inferiors" to live off the taxpayer then assert airs. Then Mr. Rico unleashes his secret weapon: Johnny's graduation present is going to be a vacation on Mars. Johnny knows it's a bribe; he doesn't care.

Back in school, in Mr. Dubois' class – which everybody has to take, but nobody has to pass. Mr. Dubois is missing his left arm. Mr. Dubois shoots out a question, then lets the arguments begin. Mr. Dubois demolishes the idea that violence never settles anything: "Breeds that forget this basic truth have always paid for it with their lives and freedoms." Mr. Dubois asks Johnny what the difference is between a soldier and a civilian: Johnny answers that a soldier accepts responsibility for the "body politic" which is a member of; a civilian doesn't. Mr. Dubois points out that he has quoted the textbook – but does Johnny believe it?

Johnny and Carl graduate. Johnny hasn't told Carl he isn't going; he goes with him down to the recruiting office. They meet up with their classmate, Carmencita Ibanez, "one of the nice things about being a member of a race with two sexes." (This may be another reason why Scribner's rejected this novel; Heinlein had never inserted

this much pointing at sexual attraction before.). Carmencita is joining up too. She is really good at math. Johnny's mouth commits him to joining up – to be a space pilot like her. Carl wants to go into research and development on starships and electronics. The recruiting sergeant has no legs and only one arm – and a ton of medals. The sergeant ignores the boys and talks to Carmencita (I suspect Heinlein is trying to teach his readers good manners – and good taste). The sergeant asks what they want, and then tries to talk them out of joining, pointing out his missing limbs.

Everyone has a constitutional right to serve. Nobody can be denied that opportunity. Not everybody has the ability to serve in the military, so they find other ways to serve, all of which have to be nasty and dangerous so citizens will treat the franchise correctly. He tells them that they don't take cannon fodder any more – it's too expensive and difficult to fight with idiots (more or less). Then he points out they are likely to die, rather than be merely crippled like him. They refuse to leave. He reminds them they don't get to choose how they will serve – only state their preferences.

The boys submit to a physical exam, which nobody can fail – but this is how they determine what you are capable of doing. The only way they can deny you is if the psychologist says you can't understand the oath. The doctor ridicules the idea of Federal Service, just to get the vote. The sergeant swears them in (two years minimum, but it could be for life if they are needed).

They are then given 48 hours leave; if they don't return, no harm done – but they will never get another chance. Johnny's father argues with him; his mother cries then ignores him. Johnny leaves.

Johnny doesn't have the ability to be a pilot. He takes four days of aptitude tests, many of them bizarre. He lists all his choices; his last two are K-9 Corps and Infantry. The placement officer, Mr. Weiss, interviews him. He wants to know if Johnny likes dogs, and how much. Not enough for K-9 Corps and the neodogs. Johnny realizes he isn't qualified for anything above that. Which leaves the Mobile Infantry. Mr. Weiss disparages Johnny's entire education; the only thing going for him is a recommendation from Mr. Dubois: "He says you are not stupid, merely ignorant and prejudiced by your environment." That, and the fact that he got a C- in Television Appreciation...

Mr. Weiss offers him the Mobile Infantry.

Johnny leaves, and runs into the recruiting sergeant, who has artificial limbs. Sergeant Ho congratulates him on joining the Mobile Infantry, which is where he served as well – it IS the army!

Johnny gets infected with this pride.

CHAPTER THREE:

Johnny describes going to basic training at Camp Arthur Currie. They stay warm by exercising. Sergeant Zim is their drill sergeant. When a recruit named Jenkins sneezes because he's cold, Zim makes him run. Far. Johnny is fascinated by how inventive Sergeant Zim is in insulting them, without ever using vulgarity.

Sergeant Zim then asks if anybody there can beat him in physical combat. A big man named Breckenridge offers; Zim breaks his wrist. Then he offers to let two of them attack him, and two Germans named Heinrich and Meyer step forward. They have facial scars from student dueling in German universities. Zim lets them attack, and knocks them both out. A small man named Shujumi steps out; his father is Colonel Shujumi. They each win one round. Colonel Shujumi trained Zim. Zim then leads them in calisthenics.

Jenkins is mad at Zim for not letting him go back to his bunk when he doesn't feel well. He wants to get even. A corporal jokes that sergeants have no mothers; they reproduce like bacteria.

CHAPTER FOUR:

They take away their cots. Johnny has learned how to sleep anywhere. “Happiness consists in getting enough sleep.” Sleep is the #1 choice of leisure activities.

Boot camp is made as hard as possible; it’s not sadism; it’s surgery. The operation? Cut out anybody who can’t meet the MI’s standards.

Johnny, looking back from his present day, refuses to go on a drop with anybody who hasn’t been pushed as hard as he was in boot camp.

Johnny has to learn how to tailor his own uniforms.

They learn how to march 50 miles a day.

They go on a march with no supplies. Johnny has learned to sneak food and keep it hidden, so he won’t starve. They have no bedrolls. They share their food – Johnny is angry some of them are dumb enough to bring no hidden food. They keep warm that night by body warmth – as best they can. They march the next morning, singing. Several quit when they get back to camp; Johnny almost does, but he has a temporary promotion, and feels too proud to quit.

Johnny has to pass his survival test – forty miles through the snow alone.

Two recruits die. They find their bodies; the MI never abandons their own.. Breckenridge is one of those who died.

He wasn’t the last.

CHAPTER FIVE:

Johnny explains combat training. Hands and feet are dangerous enough. Shujumi is made an instructor for a time. Zim spends most of his time now in personal training – he is “sudden death with anything.” Hendrick questions the need for knives. Zim straightens him out: “There are no dangerous weapons; there are only dangerous men.” Hendrick questions the need for all this training, since they have much better weapons. Zim asks him if he wanted to teach a baby a lesson, would you cut off its head? The point of war is “controlled violence...to support your government’s decisions by force.” You need to make the enemy do what you want, and killing is the last resort. But a soldier should never make those decisions; government should.

They train with every single weapon imaginable.

During exercises, one in five hundred bullets is real, to make them take the training seriously. Not one death comes from bullets...just other weapons.

Johnny explains how he almost quit. He lost his temporary promotion over something one of his men did when he wasn’t there. He gets busted back to private. His mother writes him a letter. He hurts his shoulder, which gets him light duty in Captain Frankel’s office. Sergeant Zim comes in looking like death himself, with Hendrick in tow. Hendrick has broken the rules; Frankel looks surprised Zim hasn’t dealt with it himself. Hendrick has demanded to see the Captain himself. Hendrick didn’t obey the freeze order; he didn’t return to freeze either. Frankel throws the book at him. He should get a court-martial, but Frankel is too busy right now.

Hendrick opens his mouth and insists on telling his own side of the story. Hendrick explains that he was on an anthill, and being stung by hundreds of ants. Frankel is unmoved; if it had been rattlesnakes, he should have stayed still. Hendrick complains that Zim knocked him down. Frankel explains that he is allowed to, and explains the batons. Frankel is trying to teach Hendrick, so he will understand why he is being punished.

Hendrick lets slip that he hit Zim back. Hendrick wants out. Frankel asks if the articles of war have been posted; they have. Johnny realizes that what Hendrick has done is punishable by death by hanging.

Frankel sets up a court-martial. Hendrick is quickly put on trial, and found guilty. He is given ten lashes and a Bad Conduct Discharge. This being a field court martial, they won’t hang him – but a general court martial would have.

The other men watch the flogging. Johnny has never seen one, even though they do them publicly back home. Johnny passes out. So do two dozen others.

CHAPTER SIX:

Johnny hits his low point. He can't even sleep. His mother's letter and Hendrick's flogging keep him awake. Johnny wonders how long it will be before he makes the same kind of stupid mistake Hendrick made. Johnny decides it's time to go back home and off to Harvard.

Zim worries him. Johnny overhears the conversation Zim has with Frankel, and how Zim is responsible for letting Hendrick hit him. Zim asks Frankel for a transfer to a combat team; he is denied. Zim explains the mistake he made: he thought Hendrick was one of the safe ones. Zim liked him.

Frankel and Zim both wish they could have taken the flogging. Hendrick should have been cut out long before; he was stupid!

Frankel says that this training is the most important work in the military. Frankel reminds Zim of how Zim trained him a dozen years ago. He tells Zim what Zim told him: "Soldier, shut up and soldier!"

Frankel warns Zim that they must be extremely careful the next few days; some recruit is likely to blow up over this.

Zim and Frankel arrange to spar later.

Hearing that the great Zim wants to quit too leads Johnny to want to quit even more. The whole world seems turned upside down, and Johnny doesn't want to find out the truth. More importantly: he doesn't want to be hanged or flogged. His mother's letter babies him; he starts to cave.

Johnny plans to see Zim at the earliest opportunity – but he never gets the chance. Mail call comes, and Zim brings it to them in the field. Mr. Dubois has sent him a letter, telling Johnny how proud he is, and that he should be over his "hump" by now. Dubois was a lieutenant colonel.

Dubois demolishes the Marxist theory of value. He then goes on to show that all values are relative; nothing is absolute. More importantly: nothing in life is free. What dooms a democracy is the belief that the electorate can vote for whatever they want without paying the price for it. "Nothing of value is free." Dubois points that being handed a first place award without earning it has no value.

On the march, all of a sudden, Johnny feels good!

Zim asks who the letter was from; the fact that Colonel Dubois was his teacher is the only thing Johnny has ever done that impressed Zim.

CHAPTER SEVEN:

Here's where the tech guys go nuts....Heinlein has Johnny explain how the suits work. What does the MI do? "We make war as personal as a punch in the nose." Johnny explains why the infantry is so indispensable.

The suits run by negative feedback and amplification. Try to do something, and the suit will do it, with power.

The only thing wrong with the suit is you can't scratch.

There are three types of suits: marauder, command, and scout.

Johnny describes the mistake he made in the armor in training. He flipped up his snoopers, and looked with his own eyes – against the rules of engagement. Zim rips him a new one. Johnny gets five lashes. He discovers it's easier to be lashed than to watch one. He will never forget it. Nobody else ever mentions it again.

CHAPTER EIGHT:

Floggings were rare; Johnny was the only one who got the maximum five.

But they did hang someone. A deserter left two days after coming to boot camp. The army never bothers to track down deserters. Why force a man to serve? Most of them come back on their own, take their fifty lashes, and are kicked out. This deserter, named Dillinger, kills a baby girl. The MI take over, because the MI take care of their own – even the bad ones. Real men shoot their own dogs. They hang him. Heinlein then proceeds to use Johnny to dispose of another idea: “To understand all is to forgive all.” Johnny says for some things, the more you know, the more you hate, Johnny only cares about what happened to the little girl, and her parents. Everybody in the MI feels disgraced. Johnny works through the morality of capital punishment. The only way to be absolutely sure that it doesn’t happen again to another little girl is to kill the murderer. If he knew what he was doing, then hanging was too easy; if he was crazy, don’t we shoot mad dogs? If he can’t be made well, better that he’s gone; if he can be made well, how can he ever live with what he did? And what if he escaped and did it again?!

Johnny remembers a time from his class with Mr. Dubois, in which the time of the Terror was discussed (essentially, the America of the fifties), in which it wasn’t safe to go into public parks at night, because gangs of teenagers would attack you. These attacks also happened during the day, and in schools too. Dubois asks for a definition of juvenile delinquent. Dubois then denies such a thing exists. He then asks how a puppy is raised. Johnny comes around to admitting some pain had to be involved to housebreak a puppy. Did that make Johnny a sadist? You have to punish the dog immediately, not later. Dubois points out that many of the children were arrested by the police, scolded badly – and then didn’t have their noses rubbed in it, as their privacy was protected. Nobody ever spanked them, rarely even as children. Spanking was seen as damaging. Schools were forbidden corporal punishment.

Dubois (Heinlein) then disposes of the idea of “cruel and unusual punishment”; to effective, he argues, it must be painful. Evolution is built on pain. Without it, we don’t learn. If punishment isn’t unusual, it doesn’t work – what if you spanked a puppy every hour? Criminal justice systems that warn, then scold, and probation – and no real punishment – only caused the crimes to spiral and increase, until upon becoming an adult, they ended up in prison, or executed. If you were to yell at a dog, then lock him up in an outhouse, then let him back in – and when he didn’t learn, you pulled out a pistol and shot it. Dubois then says that it is not the fault of the child; it is the fault of the parent.

Social workers and child psychologists abandoned methods successful for centuries. This is Heinlein’s comment on childrearing in the late fifties.

Dubois then argues that they were wrong because they didn’t have a correct theory of morals. They (wrongly) believed in the moral instinct. Dubois then argues that

the only moral instinct man has is the one parents train into children. And what is morality? To care about more than yourself: your family, your children, your nation, the human race. “Greater love hath no man than a mother cat dying to defend her kittens.” \

The best juvenile delinquents manage was loyalty to the gang. The reformers tried to appeal to their moral sense, but the only thing they had was how to survive on the streets. Instead, they believed in their “rights.”

Dubois then argues there is no such thing as human rights; in one stroke, Dubois/Heinlein disposes of the grounds for the Declaration of Independence. Dubois calls it “magnificent poetry.” What right to life does a man drowning have? The ocean won’t respect it. Or to save his own life, when his children need saving? If two men are starving, and cannibalism is the only way to survive, who has the right to live? Liberty must be paid for, as the Founding Fathers knew. Happiness is not something others can take away.

The problem with the phrase juvenile delinquent is that to be delinquent is to be failing in duty – but only adults have duty. A child becomes an adult when he replaces self-love with love of others. Had the adults not abandoned their duty, their children would not have behaved as criminals.

Johnny decides hanging was the right thing to do. He sleeps well.

CHAPTER NINE:

They head to the mountains for Camp Sergeant Spooky Smith for more intensive training. Captain Frankel is now involved in their training. Suit training is dangerous; two die, one gets invalidated out. They learn alpine rock climbing.

They get their first liberty that they actually get to go somewhere: Vancouver. Johnny enjoys going to the town, but he enjoys looking at girls more. Leivy talks them into going to his hometown of Seattle, which isn't a town used to MI. They go to a restaurant, and merchant marine sailors hassle them; they get into a fight. Everything now is reflex; the whole thing happens without thinking. Johnny realizes how much he's changed.

They make a series of practice drops.

They graduate; this is the biggest day ever.

CHAPTER TEN:

War has broken out.

The Bug War.

His first unit is Willie's Wildcats, who have all made at least one combat drop.

Heinlein throws in one of his gender bender touches, when he mentions Johnny has earrings – which when the book was written, was utterly never, ever done.

He sees some bone and skull earrings. He wants some – but there's a price to pay he doesn't know about yet.

The Bugs have wiped out Buenos Aires, Johnny goes on Operation Bughouse. The MI is taking the fight to the Bugs. Buenos Aires isn't Johnny's home, so he doesn't think much about it, because they're at war on Klendathu, the home world of the Bugs. Later on, Buenos Aires will mean more.

Everything went wrong on Operation Bughouse.

Their General died in the battle. Otherwise, he would have been court-martialed.

There would have been no point in wiping out the surface of Klendathu – the brain caste and queens were deep underground. The Bug soldiers aren't capable of surrender.

Johnny spent eighteen hours fighting on Klendathu; to this day, he can't eat crabs or lobsters.

The neodogs suicided when they came into contact with the Bugs.

Johnny barely gets off the planet.

He gets reassigned to Raszak's Roughnecks. Nobody wears the skull earrings in this outfit.

They follow the Lieutenant with great fervor.

They have never had a single prisoner taken.

His squad leader beats the crap out of Johnny when he gets too big for his britches.

Johnny describes life on board the *Roger Young*.

Things go fairly well until the Lieutenant is killed.

Johnny finds out that his mother was in Buenos Aires when the Bugs hit it. Johnny assumes his father is dead too. The Lieutenant offers him leave, but Johnny doesn't take it –which means he is there when the Lieutenant is killed saving two of his men. Jelly keeps them all together by acting as if the Lieutenant were still alive.

CHAPTER ELEVEN:

We are now after the first chapter.

Johnny says being an MI is like being a pilot in twentieth century wars – long months of training, with brief periods of combat.

Johnny gets promoted to corporal.

They keep the armor in maintenance. They make a model of the ship for Captain Deladrier and invite her to dinner to thank her. Johnny settles things with Ace (barely winning).

Johnny doesn't really know the big picture of the war. The Skinnies switch sides. They just keep fighting.

They don't know they're losing the war.

The Bugs can just hatch replacements; humans have to be raised and trained.

They're communists by evolution (this is the point of the book: to compare the two systems).

The humans are learning new weapons and tactics; they clear the Bugs off of Sheol.

They try to rename the Roughnecks "Jelly's Jaguars." Jelly says no.

They have leave on Sanctuary. Sanctuary is an evolutionary backwater, it needs radiation.

Johnny enjoys his leave, but he has no more money. Ace offers to take him out anyways. Ace suggests that Johnny goes to Officer Candidate School. Johnny considers it. He feels totally part of the MI.

He goes to Jelly, and tells him he wants to go career – and Jelly already has the papers ready.

CHAPTER TWELVE:

The *Roger Young* returns to base. Jenkins died; so did the Padre. Johnny is promoted to sergeant; soon, he will be off to OCS, and Ace will be sergeant.

Johnny meets his father, who has enlisted. His real name is Juan. Johnny thought his father was dead. They have very little time; his father has to report aboard, Johnny is off to OCS. His father is proud of him. His father is in the MI too. They talk; it turns out they were both on Sheol.

He tells Johnny that the reason he signed up was more him than the mother dying. He was angry at Johnny because he knew, deep inside, that he should have signed up himself. He had to finally become a man by serving.

They part.

Johnny checks in.

He describes OCS. Most of the teachers are disabled. Ensign Ibanez visits him. Carl was killed when the Bugs attacked Pluto. Carmen's head is shaved. Carmen kisses him goodbye.

The only class Johnny describes is History & Moral Philosophy. You had to pass it – no grades handed out – in order to get your commission. The class makes you THINK! Why do you fight?

San Francisco is destroyed.

One person dying is enough to fight. It's not numbers. "Men are not potatoes."

We find out, somewhat, how the Federation started. After the twentieth century wars, returning veterans wanted to solve the chaos. Veterans trusted each other.

Why do only veterans have the right to vote? Veterans are not more intelligent; they are not more disciplined. During peacetime, most veterans don't come from combat branches. They continue the system because it works. The history of the franchise is a search for good government: absolute monarchy? Elective monarchy? Anarchy? Communism? The point was "stable and benevolent government."

The reason their system works is that those who vote have shown they put the group ahead of themselves – voluntarily. The flip side of authority is responsibility. There will never be revolution in this system, because the aggression necessary for revolution has been put in charge. Requiring someone to serve does not give them the moral character choosing to serve does. Conscript armies don't work.

Wars result from population pressure. “Moral behavior is survival behavior above the individual level.” If you reduce population, you might get less wars – but you’d be cutting your own people’s throats, because other peoples will move in on you and take over. If the human race manages to stop war, the Bugs show up.

Who should take over? Whoever can. That’s evolution. Anything else is wishful thinking.

Johnny and two of the OCS candidates go to meet Commandant Nielszen. They have their temporary commissions; he wants to be sure they know their status. They will be in the line of command; they need to be, just in case. The only way to see if they can be officers is to have them be officers. To be an officer in the MI, you have to be a combat veteran. He goes through several cases where a very junior officer ended up in command, and one where a greenhorn saved his commander, and was tried for abandoning his post without orders. The commandant swears them in.

The commandant recommends listening to their sergeants. Give orders with certitude; an officer who can’t make up his mind is serious trouble. He gives them their pips, along with the histories of them. Colonel Dubois made a request that Johnny have his, but they’re lost in combat. So the commandant asks Johnny to break the bad luck on the ones he wore first – nobody since him has become an officer.

He then tells Johnny to be sure to take his math books with him to study.

Johnny’s friend Birdie dies bravely.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN:

Johnny is serving on the *Tours*, which has six platoons.

The Navy and Army compete with each other over who's more useless.

As an officer, he's allowed to go into the part of the ship where the women are serving.

Johnny explains all the social niceties on board.

Johnny has to keep working on his math – with the Skipper overseeing.

He explains why there are so few officers in the MI. In the MI, everybody fights. The MI is driven by freedom, free choice to serve. All the soft jobs are done by civilians. (Heinlein works in some serious criticism of how the American military was run).

Johnny gets put in charge of a platoon (officially; in reality, the sergeant is going to be in charge). After a week of running around like a headless chicken, his commander sets him straight: delegate! Look relaxed!!!

Johnny gets grilled over promoting Brumby to sergeant; Johnny figures it out, and is complimented. Johnny also offers to help maintain the suits. Johnny also takes over inventory, and insists on a sight check – and discovers a discrepancy. Blackie figures out ways to write them off.

Blackie then points out Johnny isn't taking care of himself. He orders him to exercise and sleep every day.

They reach Planet P, and don't have to drop – the MI controls the surface. They are there to capture a Bug brain or queen.

The Bugs have been taking human prisoners; the MI wants them back!

Humans will always sacrifice themselves to save others, as a species – which may be a weakness, but Johnny calls it their greatest strength.

Johnny has his orders, and his part to play.

For the first time, they're not going to close the tunnels. They want the Bugs to come out. Johnny is worried about all he has to cover. They investigate the new crater. Johnny gives orders, then he worries how things will go.

Major Landry and a psychic show up. The “senser” maps out things for them.

Johnny sends half of his people to sleep through hypnosis.

Blackie puts Johnny to sleep later.

The Bugs are coming; they break through in numerous places. Johnny is tumbled in among them, but keeps reporting. The Bugs around him are all workers.

They go in after Sergeant Brumby.

Brumby can't move, but he's safe (it's not explained why at first).

Johnny and his men are coming. They find Brumby; he's captured a brain Bug.

A piece of roof lands on Johnny and knocks him out.

Johnny wakes up in sick bay.

The Bugs killed all their own queens, but the MI captured six brain Bugs.

Johnny knew his sergeant: his name is Zim.

Johnny gets his commission; Zim gets promoted past him.

The fleet is gathering; Johnny wants one named after Magsaysay. We find out Johnny is Filipino – his native language is Tagalog.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN:

Johnny now runs the Roughnecks. He is instructing a junior officer. His sergeant is his father. The war goes on, and they're going after Klendathu – and they're going to get their people back!! Sergeant Jelal lost his legs.

Chapter Tests / Quizzes:

Personally, I do not care for many published textbook tests/quizzes, as I often find them to not fit what we have actually discussed in class, or what the students have themselves found in the text. I therefore tend to make up my own quizzes and tests, and I also rely heavily on questions about relationships, more than I do questions about specific details of the books. I teach very poor readers, and I am far more concerned that they understand what is happening between the characters, than I am in what color shirt a particular character is wearing, or some other pithy little detail that teachers dealing with very good readers might ask to make sure that their students have read. I check to make sure they've read by insisting that they answer the following kinds of questions using specific details (and by always asking a question about the end of the chapter), but I allow them to choose the details themselves to fit the question. I train them to answer questions this way by giving them several sample questions, then answering them on the board, using their input to craft a model response. I hope that the following questions are useful for quizzes and tests, as well as for classroom discussion. Again, I expect students to use specific details from the novel to answer these questions. If the extra credit questions seem appropriate for your class, you can add them to the quizzes, or use them as extra credit homework assignments.

CHAPTER ONE:

1. What is Johnny feeling? Why?
2. Describe the drop from the ship.
3. Describe what the powered armor is capable of.
4. What is the problem Johnny is having with Ace?
5. What happens to Dizzy Flores?

CHAPTER TWO:

1. What does Johnny want to join?
2. Why?
3. How does his father talk him out of it?
4. Describe Mr. Dubois.
5. Explain how the class in History and Moral Philosophy work.

6. Discuss the argument over the idea, “violence never settles anything.”
7. Why does Johnny end up joining?
8. What are neodogs?
9. Where does he end up? Why?
10. How does Johnny feel at the end of the chapter about the branch he joined?

CHAPTER THREE:

1. Describe Sergeant Zim.
2. What happens to Breckenridge?
3. What happens to the two Germans?
4. What happens with Shujumi?
5. Describe life at Fort Currie.
6. How do sergeants reproduce?

CHAPTER FOUR:

1. What is the purpose of boot camp?
2. What does Johnny learn how to do?
3. What happens on the march that they have to survive?
4. How does Johnny do on his survival test? Explain his methods.
5. What happens to Breckenridge?

CHAPTER FIVE:

1. What three things almost lead Johnny to quit?
2. What happened between Hendricks and Zim?
3. What happened at Hendricks’ trial?
4. What was his punishment?

5. How did Johnny respond?

CHAPTER SIX:

1. Why does Johnny find out about Zim?
2. Why does this upset him so much?
3. What does his mother's letter make him feel?
4. What is he afraid will happen to him?
5. Who does he get a letter from?
6. What does that letter tell him?
7. What changes for Johnny on the march?
8. Why is Zim impressed with Johnny?

CHAPTER SEVEN:

1. What is the purpose of the infantry?
2. How does the armor work?
3. What are three types of suit?
4. Why does Johnny get lashed?
5. What odd thing does he discover when he's being lashed?

CHAPTER EIGHT:

1. What did Dillinger do?
2. What does the MI decide to do about him?
3. Why does the MI do that?
4. How does Johnny feel about the whole affair?
5. What does Dubois argue about juvenile delinquents? Who is responsible? Why?
6. Explain the science of morality and ethics being promoted in this novel?

7. What does Dubois argue about rights?

CHAPTER NINE:

1. What happens in Camp Smith?

2. What happens in Seattle?

CHAPTER TEN:

1. What happened to Buenos Aires?

2. Evaluate the success of Operation Bughouse.

3. What happened to Johnny's mother?

4. What happened to Lieutenant Raszak?

CHAPTER ELEVEN:

1. How is the war going?

2. What happens between Johnny and Ace?

3. Explain why the Bugs are communists.

4. What is Sanctuary like?

5. What does Ace suggest Johnny do?

6. What does Johnny decide to do? Why?

CHAPTER TWELVE:

1. Who does Johnny meet when he leaves to go to OCS?

2. Why did the person Johnny meets join up?

3. What does Johnny learn in OCS?

4. Why does their system of government work?

5. What does Commandant Nielssen explain to them?

6. What is the secret about the pips the Commandant asks Johnny to wear?

7. What happens to Birdie?

CHAPTER THIRTEEN:

1. What is life like aboard ship for Johnny? Describe two mistakes he makes, and two things he learns.
2. Explain why they're on Planet P.
3. Evaluate the success of what happens on Planet P.
4. Who is Johnny's sergeant?
5. What is Johnny's home language?

CHAPTER FOURTEEN:

1. Who is Johnny's sergeant?
2. How is the war going?

Extra Credit Questions:

1. What would the city fathers of Carthage know about the phrase "Violence never settles anything."?
2. Who was Juggernaut? [NOT the X-Men villain]
3. Who was Arthur Currie?
4. What is a "Danny Deever"?
5. Why name the killer Dillinger?
6. What does it mean that Sergeant Zim has Argus eyes?

Vocabulary Words (these are all words I've had students ask me about):

- p. 2: mustered; glared
- p. 3: retrieval; intervals
- p. 7: latitude; disperse; rendezvous; retrieval; lateral; vector; turbulence; pension
- p. 8: slough; transponders
- p. 9: cybernetic
- p. 10: surliness
- p. 11: kilotons; nominal; tamper; implosion; catastrophe
- p. 12: yokels
- p. 22: electrons; tentatively
- p. 24: parasitism
- p. 33: appended; certified; delegated
- p. 34: sovereign; franchise
- p. 41: marauding
- p. 42: impersonal; swagger; moulinet
- p. 50: asexual
- p. 52: reveille
- p. 53: inflamed
- p. 64: materiel
- p. 75: mitigation; extenuation
- p. 80: doctrine; docile; mercury fulminate
- p. 81: twerps
- p. 83: fraternize
- p. 92: orthodox; corollary; conversely; confection; fallacy; disheveled; turgid; neurotic; pompous; fraud
- p. 93: quantitatively
- p. 94: somnambulists
- p. 95: attrition
- p. 100: myopia; honorific; mussed
- p. 100: amplification
- p. 101: regimental
- p. 102: marauder; vernier
- p. 103: binaural; receptors; hydrocephalic
- p. 106: detached
- p. 122: beryl; insignia
- p. 123: perpendicular
- p. 126: proprietor
- p. 156: transients; pithecanthropus
- p. 157: utopia; vested; figment
- p. 158: valuta
- p. 159: reveille
- p. 166: quarantine
- p. 171: cynically
- p. 180: justification; coup d'etat; verifiable; rigors
- p. 182: lapse

p. 192: poltroon
p. 194: supernumerary
p. 205: chaperonage
p. 228: transponder

Essay Questions and Projects:

1. Research the current state of artificial limbs. How close are we to the kind of powered prosthetics Heinlein predicts? Present your findings.
2. Write a paper researching and explaining each of the epigrams that start the chapters. What does this add to the novel?
3. Write an argumentative essay for or against the phrase: “Happiness consists in getting enough sleep.” If you agree, you might want to add some research about the effects of sleep deprivation.
4. Go read “Horatius at the Bridge” and “The Death of the Bon Homme Richard”; in an essay, explain why Heinlein believed they showed the lessons Zim is trying to teach in Ch. 5.
5. Summarize Heinlein’s arguments about capital punishment. Do you agree or disagree? Write a persuasive essay based on your answers.
6. Summarize Heinlein’s arguments about the value of corporal punishment. Go through each step of his puppy-raising analogy, and discuss whether or not you agree with that step. Can you think of situations in which his solution would not work as it does with a puppy? Conclude by examining his connection of spanking with moral behavior.
7. Summarize Heinlein’s arguments about ethics and morality being based on thinking of others first. Using his various stages – self love, love of family and children, love of nation, love of humanity – can you suggest exceptions to each of those in which a lower level of his morality would in fact be the correct one? For example, if you are serving your country, but in so doing, you are damaging your children, what is the right thing to do?
8. Do human beings have rights? Begin with Heinlein’s arguments, then proceed to your own? What rights do you have? Why do you have them? What are the consequences, of those rights? Do you agree that a national obsession with rights leads to a moral and political downfall, as we forget our responsibilities in favor of what we are entitled to?
9. On pg. 259, go through the list of ships and explain (briefly) why each ship has that name. Finish your project by explaining who Magsaysay was.