

Biography of Stephen Crane

to be used in support of lessons from The Red Badge of Courage and Other Stories

- The Open Boat

This Level 1 ELLSA lesson can be accessed on the internet at

http://www.rdlthai.com/ellsa_cranebio.html

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1. Biographical details

Stephen Crane (1871-1900) was born in 1871 in Newark, New Jersey. He was educated at Lafayette College and Syracuse University. In 1891, he got a job as a freelance reporter, writing articles about the slums of New York. Without steady work as a reporter, Crane, himself, was a poor man and lived in The Bowery, New York's worst slum. This firsthand experience of poverty gave Crane the material he needed for his first novel, *Maggie, a Girl of the Streets*. It was a tragic story about a young prostitute who commits suicide. Crane used what little money he had to publish the book in 1893, using the pen-name Johnston Smith. Although it was not a commercially successful novel, the book received excellent critical reviews.

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2. Vocab checkpoint

- **freelance (adjective)** To work on a freelance basis, means to work independently of a particular company or organization. A freelance professional may work with different companies at the same time.
- **steady (adjective)** Steady means secure and/or reliable. Steady work implies a full time job with a regular salary.
- **firsthand (adjective)** Firsthand (all one word) experience, means experience that has happened to a person directly. The person has not learned about the experience from another. Compare this with second-hand (two words with hyphen), which means something, like a car, has been owned by somebody else before the new owner bought it.

- **tragic (adjective)** If something is tragic, it is very sad and causes a lot of problems for people who experience it. We often use tragic to describe a person's death, a car crash, a natural disaster (earthquake, volcano, etc). The noun is tragedy.
- **recognition (noun)** Recognition, in this example, means being noticed by others and given credit for talent or hard-work. It should not be confused with the mean of recognition that is directly connected to the verb, recognize, which means to remember the face of a person when you see her/him.
- **portrayed (verb)** To portray is to represent an image or character, or sequence of events, in writing, theater or film. The noun is portrayal, which should not be confused with portrait, also a noun, which means a painting or photograph of a person's face.
- **natural forces (noun)** We use natural forces to describe the power of the elements: air, earth, fire and water. These descriptions are often related to disasters or difficulties caused by these elements. The Open Boat is a story of the struggle of four men against natural forces.
- **correspondent (noun)** A Correspondent is a person who is employed by a newspaper, magazine or TV company to provide reports or articles on a regular basis. They often work on a single subject, e.g. war correspondent, sports correspondent.
- **broke out (phrasal verb)** To break out is to begin suddenly. Here it means the beginning of a war. It is often used to talk about illness or physical condition (break out in a rash, break out in a sweat). Another common meaning is to escape: break out of jail.
- **tuberculosis (noun)** Tuberculosis (often called TB) is a serious disease of the lungs.