

Literature Circle Questions

Use these questions and the activities that follow to get more out of the experience of reading *Iron Thunder* by Avi.

1. Why does Tom have to quit school? What does his mother want him to do instead? How does Tom feel about this plan?
2. Who is Captain Ericsson? How is he described to Tom? What are Tom's first impressions of Captain Ericsson?
3. How does Tom get the gold coin? Why doesn't he tell his sister Dora the truth about where it came from?
4. When Tom allows the copperhead to buy him a meal, is he also agreeing to spy for him? Why or why not? Why do you think the copperhead has chosen Tom to be a spy?
5. Tom insists on referring to the boat by its name, the *Monitor*, to the boys at the funeral. Why? How have his feelings about the boat changed since he began working on it?
6. List all the ways that Tom's day-to-day life in Brooklyn in 1862 is different from your life today. Is there anything about his life you wish were true of yours? Is there anything that you are glad is different?
7. Imagine that you were Tom. Would you have taken both gold coins? Why or why not?
8. While Tom does not often mention his father's death, what role does that loss play in Tom's life? How does it affect his relationship with Captain Ericsson? How does it affect his feelings about the *Monitor* and the Union cause?
9. On page 106, Tom comments that "Captain Ericsson could think us to the moon if he wanted to." What does he mean? How does Avi, the author, speak directly to a modern reader with this line?
10. On the way to Hampton Roads, the *Monitor* is nearly sunk during a storm. How does this chapter build excitement about the coming battle? If the workmen had had time to completely test and finish the boat, would the final battle have been as thrilling to read about?
11. What if Tom had helped out the copperheads and given them what they wanted? How might the course of the whole war been different?
12. Did Captain Worden do the right thing by bringing Tom on board the *Monitor*? Is it all right for children to be in a military battle?
13. Each side claims to have won the final battle. Who do you think won? Why?

Note: These questions are keyed to Bloom's Taxonomy as follows: Knowledge: 1–3; Comprehension: 4–5; Application: 6–7; Analysis: 8–9; Synthesis: 10–11; Evaluation: 12–13.

Activities:

1. Tom tells us that many people watched the battle between the two ships from the shore. Imagine you were one of those who had actually seen it. How would you describe it in your journal or in a letter to a friend?
2. Avi consulted many primary documents—letters, newspaper articles, memoirs—to write his fictionalized account of this incident from the Civil War. Can you find an actual account of the battle? In a group, discuss how it is the same as Tom's account and how it is different.
3. The invention of "ironclad" boats changed the course of the Civil War. What other military inventions were created and utilized during this time? What affect did they have on the war? You may want to create a poster or PowerPoint presentation to share your discoveries.

Other Books by This Author:

The Book Without Words; City of Light, City of Dark; Crispin: The Cross of Lead; The Man Who Was Poe; The Secret School; The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle; Who Stole the Wizard of Oz

Author Web Site: <http://www.avi-writer.com/>