
Lesson Plans

Teaching with Primary Sources Program

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Camp Life in the Civil War

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Camp Life in the Civil War

Lesson Overview

This lesson uses primary sources - photographs - to explore the various aspects of a soldier's camp life during the Civil War. By looking at photographs the student will gain an understanding of what it would be like to be a soldier in the Civil War.

Goal

The students will develop an understanding of soldiers' camp life during the Civil War. They will develop a knowledge of, and empathy for, the hardships faced by a variety of groups (women, servants, soldiers...) involved in daily war camp life. With the development of this background knowledge the students will be able to connect the hardships that soldiers endured to better understand the magnitude of war.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- develop skills in seeing and understanding visual sources;
- learn to analyze and to draw inferences from sources;
- develop understanding of life during the civil war

Investigation Question

What did you discover, during your analysis of photos, that would help you determine if you would like to be a Civil War Soldier and why?

Standards

Illinois State Learning Standards Grade 5 Social Science

16.A.2c. LEARNING STANDARD / PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTOR

Ask questions and seek answers by collecting and analyzing data from historic documents, images and other literary and non-literary sources.

Common Core Standards

CC.K-12.W.R.8

Research to Build and Present Knowledge: Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.

CC.K-12.SL.5

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas: Make strategic use of digital media and visual display of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.

Time Required

- 3 one hour periods

Recommended Grade Level

- 5th grade

Topic

- Social Science

Era

- Civil War

Credits

Mimi Sprague

Lesson Procedure

Activity One

1. Spread out photo sets on a table in the classroom. Tell students the topics of the 3 sets (Soldiers in Camp, Others in camp, Communication in camp) and have them pick the table set they want based on personal interest. Up to 10 students to a table. Let them know that if they don't get their first pick today they will get another chance the next time they do this activity.
2. Discuss assessment expectations and assignment goals. Inform them that they will work in pairs to look at a photo and fill out the analysis sheet. If there is time left over they are to work on another photo. (They were given previous lessons on analyzing photos so this will not be new to them.)
3. Students analyze a photo and record their thoughts on the [Primary Source Analysis Tool](#). Before the students begin, have them select questions from the teacher's guide [Analyzing Primary Sources](#) to focus the group work, and select additional questions to focus and prompt discussion of their analysis.

Activity Two

- Each set of partners will create a brief oral presentation, for their topic group only, of what they learned from analyzing the documents on the table. (The summary print out is on last page of this lesson plan.) Possible points to include in the presentations:
 - o Summarize the content of each of the documents of photographs.
 - o Comment on the types of jobs that were seen in the photos.
 - o Describe how the soldiers, or other workers, spent their day.
 - o What was surprising to you? What did you learn? What would you like to know more

about?

o Would you like to be a soldier during this time period? Why?

- Students present their completed project to the table partners in a brief oral presentation with visual support.

**each student will go through the 3 topics and photos for each topic. It is better that they have a “new Inquiry” experience each time and so they just report to their topic group.

Activity Three (optional)

Each table group will explore objects or activities that relate to the primary sources they analyzed. The objects come from the Gettysburg Traveling Trunk. Information for the trunk can be found at:

<http://www.nps.gov/gett/forteachers/travellingtrunks.htm>

The “Soldier’s Life” group will compare a uniform from the Civil War and an army uniform from today and write down their observations.

The “Other People” group will play the games the soldiers played, checkers, chess, dominoes, and cards. Before playing they will explore the differences of the items from yesterday and today. An example of this would be to compare a domino set from 1860 to one of today. How are they the same and how are they different?

The “Communication Group” will learn look at the items a soldier would carry with him, such as a blanket, eating utensils, and food. They will compare these items from yesterday with items of today. An example of this would be hardtack and a saltine cracker.

**At each table activity there will be a blank sheet of paper so they can write down 4 objects of their choosing and then they create a Venn diagram on each object.

o Summarize the content of each of the documents of photographs.

o Comment on the types of jobs that were seen in the photos.

o Describe how the soldiers, or other workers, spent their day.

o What was surprising to you? What did you learn? What would you like to know more about?

o Would you like to be a soldier during this time period? Why?

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Civil War Camp Life
Reflection
Mimi Sprague
Jan. 27, 2012

I tremendously enjoyed researching and teaching this lesson. I found that time was my enemy – there was so much more I could have researched and so much more I could have taught. At first I had many different topics but found it was too much. Dealing with one topic and breaking it down into parts was a tremendous help. The topic was Civil War Camp life and the three subtopics were: The Soldiers Life, Others in Camp and Communication.

I had many pictures at each table because I wanted the students to choose their topic and I wanted to have enough material. I think this helped because the students could look at another picture while they waited for other students in their group to finish their work. This kept children on task and also gave them a broader view of their topic.

I found that I needed more time to get around to each group to facilitate their learning. I often was busy helping one group only to find that there were others that needed help as well. Part of this, I believe, is because it was their first independent experience in analyzing pictures. Another factor was their lack of background knowledge on the Civil War. I knew these factors would be an issue and that is one reason why they worked in groups. The groups' questions and conversation would, I hope, create more questions and conversation. I did, thankfully, notice this happening and felt it helped the inquiry based lesson experience develop more naturally. Due to the students' lack of prior knowledge I created the lesson in hopes the inquiry method would get them excited about studying the Civil War in their classroom.

At Prairie School we work with the students on the "Habits of Mind". While I was explaining the first lesson to one of the classrooms a child said, "This is like the Habit of Mind that opens your mind to learning". For the students to get that connection was great! We had done an analysis sheet together using a picture of the Monitor and Merrimac. The next day a boy came up to me and said he saw that same picture in a Civil War timeline in the classroom. He had also made a connection that became meaningful to him. It is often easy to glance over pictures and timelines. Having had experience with analyzing the picture beforehand gave him a deeper understanding of that incident.

As I started teaching this lesson to the 4 fifth grade classrooms the students were starting the Civil War unit in their teachers. Every teacher told me that their students made connections with my lesson. They would tell me that the students would always say, "I learned that in my picture" or "Mrs. Sprague talked about that". The teachers told me how much fun the kids had with the inquiry lesson and they felt it created an excitement for classroom learning.

One student asked me if the pictures were of real soldiers during the Civil War. He was amazed when I said yes. Having the primary document was marvelous but another exciting element was the Civil War Traveling Trunk from Gettysburg. Having replicas of objects the soldiers used helped make a true connection to real life experience, something that really did happen so long ago. Making history come alive is a wonderful way to help the students create meaning to an event that happened so long ago.

What I would change:

Time: In this lesson I wanted to have the kids wonder about the 3 different topics I used for camp life by giving them a chance to do the 3 different topics. Once they were done with all three topics I highlighted some of the pictures from each group and answered some of the questions they had and brought up topics they hadn't even thought about.

They loved this “closing summary” of mine. There were very attentive and we had some great conversations because of it.

Next time I may have the students try 2 topics instead of three. Instead of presenting picture information to their small group I will have them present their information to the large group.

Their summary will let me know what they learned and will also create students questions and discussion. When the groups analyze the second topic they will have a better understanding of what to look for and what to question. I will need to make sure the students have enough pictures so they don't analyze the same ones.

This is where I would change the time element. I think the lesson provided enough time to analyze the picture but not enough time to do a decent summary. More time was needed for the summary. The summary should allow time for the student to teach but also time for everyone to learn more through questions and discussion.

Help: I think next time I would do this lesson in the classroom during the designated Social Science time. By doing it this way I will have the teacher in the classroom helping groups out too. We can help more students this way and it will help the students create deeper understanding of the material.

Material: All the pictures were blown up in Power Point and this was a huge help in aiding the children as they looked for details. I think it might be helpful if I had reading material for them to look at when they were done analyzing their picture. The material would all be on the civil war topic they were looking at. For example, if they were looking at the telegraph I could have information on Morse Code. If they were looking at the photographer I could have information on the photographic process at that time. After reading the material the group could go back to the picture they analyzed and do more work on it.

Overall I think the lesson went well. The students not only had a great time but also made leaning connections in the classroom. The lesson goal was to create an interest in the Civil War and that was achieved, as seen by the student and teacher comments.