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## What was it like to be a soldier in the Civil War?

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# What was it like to be a soldier during the Civil War?

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## OVERVIEW

Through two activities students will use primary sources to learn about what it was like to be a soldier during the Civil War. Students will see what the daily life of the soldier was like, what they experienced from written letters. They will also see the weapons, uniforms, and daily activities of a soldier through the use and analysis of photographs. Students will learn how to gather information from diagrams, photos, and letters. Students will answer guided questions about the soldiers' lives. Any new questions about the war developed through this activity will allow students to conduct further research on the Civil War, questions pertaining to battles will lead to further research about battles which may lead to use of primary resources such as maps of the battles. New research therefore propels participants to the next stage of the Stripling Model of Inquiry thus perpetuating and reinforcing the cycle of inquiry.

## GOAL

Students will learn about soldiers' daily life, uniforms and weapons during the Civil War.

## OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

- Gather information from photos.
- Participate in primary source analysis
- Analyze primary resources including photos and letters
- Infer activities or circumstances from written communication
- Develop questions fro inquiry from the photos or written letters
- Analyze primary sources.
- Develop questions of inquiry.
- Connect past events with current knowledge.

## INVESTIGATIVE QUESTION

How did the soldiers spend their days during the Civil War? What details or objects/ places in the photo attribute to the soldiers daily life? What was it like to be a soldier? How did the soldiers feel during the war?

## TIME

One class period

## BEST FOR

Grades 4-8

## SUBJECT/SUB-SUBJECT

Social Studies, History

## STANDARDS: K—12

New Illinois Learning Standards for English Language Arts Incorporating the Common Core College and Career Readiness Skills, K—12

**CC.K-12.SL.1 Comprehension and Collaboration:** Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

**CC.K-12.SL.2 Comprehension and Collaboration:** Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

New Illinois Learning Standards for English Language Arts Incorporating the Common Core: Grade 4

**CC.4.R.I.3 Key Ideas and Details:** Explain events, procedures, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text, including what happened and why, based on specific information in the text.

**CC.4.R.I.7 Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:** Interpret information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively (e.g., in charts, graphs, diagrams, time lines, animations, or interactive elements on Web pages) and explain how the information contributes to an understanding of the text in which it appears.

**CC.4.W.2 Text Types and Purposes:** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

**CC.4.SL.1 Comprehension and Collaboration:** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 4 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

**CC.4.SL.1.b Comprehension and Collaboration:** Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions and carry out assigned roles.

**CC.4.SL.1.c Comprehension and Collaboration:** Pose and respond to specific questions to clarify or follow up on information, and make comments that contribute to the discussion and link to the remarks of others.

**CC.4.SL.1.d Comprehension and Collaboration:** Review the key ideas expressed and explain their own ideas and understanding in light of the discussion.

**CC.4.SL.2 Comprehension and Collaboration:** Paraphrase portions of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

New Illinois Learning Standards for English Language Arts Incorporating the Common Core: Grade 5

**CC.5.R.I.7 Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:** Draw on information from multiple print or digital sources, demonstrating the ability to locate an answer to a question quickly or to solve a problem efficiently.

**CC.5.W.2 Text Types and Purposes:** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

**CC.5.SL.1 Comprehension and Collaboration:** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 5 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

**CC.5.SL.1.b Comprehension and Collaboration:** Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions and carry out assigned roles.

**CC.5.SL.1.c Comprehension and Collaboration:** Pose and respond to specific questions by making comments that contribute to the discussion and elaborate on the remarks of others.

**CC.5.SL.2 Comprehension and Collaboration:** Summarize written a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

Illinois Social Science Standards: K—5

- **16.A.1a.** Explain the difference between past, present and future time; place themselves in time.

- **16.A.1b.** Ask historical questions and seek out answers from historical sources (e.g., myths, biographies, stories, old photographs, artwork, other visual or electronic sources).
- **16.A.1c.** Describe how people in different times and places viewed the world in different ways.
- **16.A.2c.** Ask questions and seek answers by collecting and analyzing data from historic documents, images and other literary and non-literary sources.
- **16.C.2c.** Describe significant economic events including industrialization, immigration, the Great Depression, the shift to a service economy and the rise of technology that influenced history from the industrial development era to the present.
- **16.D.2d.** Describe the various roles of men, women and children in the family, at work, and in the community in various time periods and places (e.g., ancient Rome, Medieval Europe, ancient China, Sub-Saharan Africa).

New Illinois Learning Standards for English Language Arts Incorporating the Common Core: Grades 6—8

**CC.6-8.R.H.7 Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:** Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

**CC.6-8.R.H.1 Key Ideas and Details:** Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

**CC.6-8.W.HST.1 Text Types and Purposes:** Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content.

**CC.6-8.W.HST.1.a Text Types and Purposes:** Introduce claim(s) about a topic or issue, acknowledge and distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically.

**CC.6-8.W.HST.1.b Text Types and Purposes:** Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant, accurate data and evidence that demonstrate an understanding of the topic or text, using credible sources.

**CC.6-8.W.HST.1.c Text Types and Purposes:** Use words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

**CC.6-8.W.HST.10 Range of Writing:** Write routinely over extended time frames (time for reflection and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Illinois Social Science Standards: 6—8

- **16.A.3a.** Describe how historians use models for organizing historical interpretation (e.g., biographies, political events, issues and conflicts).
- **16.A.3b.** Make inferences about historical events and eras using historical maps and other historical sources.
- **16.A.3c.** Identify the differences between historical fact and interpretation.
- **16.C.3b.** Explain relationships among the American economy and slavery, immigration, industrialization, labor and urbanization, 1700-present.
- **16.E.3c.** Describe the impact of urbanization and suburbanization, 1850 - present, on the environment.

**PREPARATION**

Facilitator Preparation

Facilitator should complete the online module, “Supporting Inquiry with Primary Sources” (<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/professionaldevelopment/selfdirected/inquiry.html>) from the Teacher's Page on the Library of Congress professional development website. The facilitator should also read “Using Primary Sources” (<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/index.html>) and “Why Use Primary Sources” (<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/whyuse.html>) available on the Teacher’s Page. They should also complete Analyzing Primary Sources: Photographs and Prints.

Primary sources assist in relating an event or story. A primary source tells its story from the perspective of the creator. The creator may have a biased or one-sided opinion that they are attempting to convey. The primary source needs to be critically analyzed to determine if there is any bias. An individual primary source should not be used to convey an entire event or a story. The importance of having multiple resources to communicate the event can assist you in determining if any one resource is unfairly biased to a particular perspective.

## **MATERIALS**

Activity facilitators should have knowledge of the Civil War and related resources at the LOC website. It is highly recommended that the facilitator complete the [Introduction to the Library of Congress Module](#), [Analyzing Primary Sources: Photographs and Prints](#), and [Analyzing Primary Sources: Maps](#) available on the LOC’s Teacher’s Professional Development page.

### Images

#### **Washington, District of Columbia. Officers of 3d Regiment Massachusetts Heavy Artillery**

- **Date:** 1865
- **URL:** <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/cwp2003004584/PP/>

#### **[Unidentified African American soldier in Union uniform with wife and two daughters]**

- **Date:** [between 1863 and 1865]
- **URL:** <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2010647216/>

#### **Major-General Wadsworth fighting in the Wilderness**

- **Author/Creator:** Alfred R. Waud
- **Date:** 1864
- **URL:** <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2004660194/>

#### **The soldiers sharing rations**

- **Author/Creator:** Alfred R. Waud
- **Date:** 1865
- **URL:** <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2004660404/>

#### **[Soldiers of the 79th New York at camp]**

- **Digital ID:** [between 1861 and 1865]
- **URL:** <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2010647705/>

Letters (Students will read specific pages in the following books online, in addition there are two printed copies to also read and analyze).

Letter from Joseph F. Green to Juliana Smith Reynolds, January 2, 1863

**Author/Creator:** Joseph F. Green

**Date:** 1863

**URL:** <http://www.loc.gov/item/mreynolds000074/>

Book of compiled letters: <https://archive.org/details/civilwarletters100wesc>

Letters from a surgeon of the Civil War: <https://archive.org/details/lettersfromsurge01perr>

Letter from Joseph F Green to Juliana Smith Reynolds:

<http://www.loc.gov/resource/mreynolds.008001/#homeseq-1>

Letters from the army: [https://archive.org/details/lettersfromarmy00stev\\_1](https://archive.org/details/lettersfromarmy00stev_1)

### Other Resources

Teacher's Guide to Analyzing Primary Sources:

[http://loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/resources/Analyzing\\_Primary\\_Sources.pdf](http://loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/resources/Analyzing_Primary_Sources.pdf)

Teacher's Guide to Analyzing Photographs and Prints:

[http://loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/resources/Analyzing\\_Photos\\_and\\_Prints.pdf](http://loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/resources/Analyzing_Photos_and_Prints.pdf)

Primary Source Analysis Tool:

[http://loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/resources/Primary\\_Source\\_Analysis\\_Tool.pdf](http://loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/resources/Primary_Source_Analysis_Tool.pdf)

### **PROCEDURE**

1. Review the facts of the Civil War, including review of reasons it was fought, who was fighting, references to the two sides (ensuring the students understand that the North is referred to as the Union, Yankees and the South is the confederacy or confederates)

2. Students will read and answer questions in handout #1:

#### Handout #1 Assessing the Pre-Knowledge – Civil War

- Write two or three you know about the Civil War?
- What are some things you believe the soldiers did during the war?
- How do you think soldiers felt about fighting the war?
- What weapons do you think they used during the war?
- What do you think their uniforms like?

#### **Activity #1: Analyzing photos of soldiers and diagrams of weapons.**

3. Discuss the activity with the entire class; students will look at photographs in small groups and complete graphic organizer.

4. Students will discuss the photographs and draw conclusions of what a soldier's life was like. Using photos listed in resource section.

5. Students will share the photos and their conclusions they drew from the small group discussion.

### Handout #1 Civil War photo analysis (Bottom half)

- What new information have you learned?
- Were you surprised by anything you saw in the photos?
- Write four questions (as a group) you would further investigate about the soldier's life, weapons or other activities?

When the students complete handout #1, they are expressing their previous knowledge, developing further questions of inquiry, reflecting on what new information they have learned and connecting information about the Civil War.

### Activity #2: Analysis of soldier letters

6. Students will use the letters and written communication from soldiers to gather insight on what it was like to be a soldier.

Students will break up into groups and begin reading letters or written communication. Most groups will have printed copies of the letters, but one group will access the letter using a link to read it electronically in the hand written form but also have access to click and see it typed out.

7. Class discussion/presentations on student observations.

Class discussion will allow students to express their knowledge about the soldiers experiences. When one student is expressing their knowledge the other students should be listening for differences of opinions and new information. Listening and sharing will allow other students to construct new knowledge.

Students will then share back to the groups what their letter said and highlight ways they were able to infer how the soldier felt about the war and his experience. We will then further discuss what the group noticed overall making generalities.

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Reflection on Primary Source Lesson Plan

The lesson I completed on Wed. May 21, using primary resources in learning about the Civil War soldiers was an introductory lesson. The lesson introduced the fifth grade students to the use of primary resources and it was basic enough to begin learning about the usefulness of primary resources when studying historical events. I believe the students enjoyed learning about a historical event in a different way. They usually read from a textbook and get the facts from a publishers point of view. The students applied their observation skills to analyze photographs and letters from soldiers. They were involved in open ended discussions with heterogeneous groups. I believe these resources sparked curiosity about the soldiers life, about the battles and the Civil War.

In reflection of the lesson there are definitely certain things I would change. First I would either do 2-3 sessions separate sessions or shorten the activity. If I had the time optimally I would do one introductory lesson which I did before I was observed. Then I would complete the lesson that was observed, and then I would add a final lesson to recap and have the students discuss their conclusions about a soldiers life citing evidence from their resource they used. I previously thought to cut the time I would have the students either analyze the photos, or analyze the letter, because this would shorten the time that was necessary. but after the lesson I asked a few students their thoughts on the lessons. Many highlighted the analysis of the photos and felt that this resource was highly engaging and gave them a fuller understanding of a soldiers life even though it lead to many questions. I plan to continue this momentum toward natural research to answer those questions the students generated. One change would only give each group one photo to analyze unless there is a specific compare and contrast of the two photos and that would be specified. I gave each group two photos but it was only to add a resource rather than further their understanding. Another idea is to add a third group and have those students analyze battle maps. I believe these resources would lead to a deeper understanding of where battles were fought and could give a better overall understanding using the primary resources. The final addition is I would do this further into the unit of study, basically the year was coming to an end and although I thought the students would have more background knowledge they lacked some basics that were necessary to get the full understanding of the letters.

I enjoyed both primary resource curses offered from DePaul and appreciate having the opportunity to use these resources with my students.