

“As the War Turns” Exploring the Drama of the Civil War

"It is well that war is so terrible, else we should grow too fond of it." ~General Robert E. Lee

Overview

When you think of the Civil War, it is likely that your mind is drawn to a common topic, such as Abraham Lincoln, the Battle of Gettysburg, the Emancipation Proclamation, Sherman’s march through Atlanta, etc. Yet, beyond the textbook stories of the Civil War, even more intriguing subjects can be found. Bioterrorism, espionage, gruesome diseases – the Civil War had plenty of soap opera-like drama. This lesson will focus on such captivating topics, beginning with an interactive warm up in which students learn about the effects of yellow fever during the period of Civil War. Afterwards, students will begin their exploration of Civil War “drama” by reading about bioterrorist plots involving diseases such as yellow fever, as well as other attempts of terrorism during this time. Students will then work on a group project in which they explore other intriguing aspects of the Civil War through reading and the examination of primary sources. They will then work with their group to create a creative and educational soap opera that will teach the rest of their classmates about their assigned topic.

- **Teacher Note Regarding Document Length:** All readings and primary sources for the group activity have been provided at the end of this lesson, thus making this document a lengthy 49 pages. Before printing, teachers should review pages 1-5 of the procedure, as well as review the document sets at the end of the lesson to confirm what needs to be printed.

Grade
8

Essential Questions

- What role did terrorism play between the North and the South during the Civil War?
- How did the amount of deaths occurring during the Civil War compare to deaths occurring during other wars?
- What advances in technology occurred during the Civil War and what impact did they have?
- What were sanitary conditions like during the Civil War and what impact did these conditions have on the Northern and Southern armies?
- What were the leading causes of death during the Civil War?
- What type of medical treatment was available during the Civil War?
- Why was the draft utilized during the Civil War and how did people react to it?
- How could someone avoid conscription entirely, or if drafted, get out of serving?
- What were conditions like in Civil War prisons?
- What were some of the strategies prisoners used to try and cope with their imprisonment?
- What was life in the army like for Civil War soldiers?
- What role did spies play during the Civil War?
- Why do you think so many brave African Americans served as spies when there were so many risks involved?

Materials

- Yellow Fever Simulation Squares, attached

- The Strange Saga of Civil War Terrorism, edited article attached
 - Taken from “The Fiend in Gray”
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/magazine/2003/06/01/the-fiend-in-gray/818f9565-ca66-4ccc-b70d-c5023229966a/>
- As the War Turns, Creating Soap Operas on Civil War Topics; assignment sheet attached
 - Teachers should determine whether students will be assigned groups or allowed to choose
- Student Handout Sets (each includes an introductory reading and 3 primary sources), attached:
 - Set A - Civil War Casualties
 - Set B - Medicine & Disease
 - Set C - Conscription
 - Set D - Prison
 - Set E - Life of a Soldier
 - Set F - Civil War Spies

Duration

- 1 class period for setting up and describing project
- Teachers will determine how much additional class time will be provided for completion of soap opera project (at least 2-3 partial class periods is recommended)
- 1 class period for presentation of soap operas

Preparation

Students should have a basic knowledge of the Civil War (i.e. reasons for the conflict, knowledge of the two sides and their objectives, as well as an understanding of key battles.)

Procedure

Warm Up: Simulating the Spread of Yellow Fever

1. Previous to the start of class, teachers should cut the attached “Yellow Fever Simulation Squares” apart and place them into a container. (Another option involving less preparation is to use small Post-It notes of two different colors, with approximately 15% of the Post-It’s being one color and 85% being another color.) As students enter class, have them draw a square of paper, ensuring students cannot see what they are drawing out. Once students are seated, tell those who drew a paper with a mosquito on it to stand (or those who drew the 15% Post-It color.) Tell these students that you are very sorry, but due to having been bitten by a mosquito, they are now infected with yellow fever. Let students know that diseases such as yellow fever took more lives during the Civil War than actual battle violence did. Tell students that as if straight out of a drama or fear-filled horror flick, contracting yellow fever during the 1860s was gruesome.
2. Explain to students what to expect as the virus takes hold:
 - Generally there is an incubation period of three to six days.
 - The first signs of yellow fever include muscle pain (with prominent backache), headache, shivers, loss of appetite, and nausea and/or vomiting. (Tell students to remember a time when they have had the flu. Tell them to remember how bad they felt, and to imagine feeling worse than that!)
 - Depending on how many students are standing, tell most of them to sit so that only 15 percent of those infected are still standing. Tell those who sat that thought they experienced great sickness, they are lucky. After three to four days most patients improve and their symptoms disappear.
 - However, 15 percent of patients enter a toxic phase within 24 hours. Tell the students still standing that unfortunately, this is the situation they are in.
 - In the toxic phase, your fever reappears.
 - The patient rapidly develops jaundice and complains of abdominal pain with vomiting.

- Bleeding can occur from the mouth, nose, eyes and/or stomach.
- Once this happens, blood appears in the vomit and feces.
- Kidney function deteriorates; this can lead to complete kidney failure with no urine production.
- Generally half of patients recover from the toxic phase with no significant organ damage (tell half of the students still standing to sit). Most unfortunately however, the other half die within ten to fourteen days. Tell the student(s) still standing that you are very sorry, but they have passed away, dying a gruesome death, of yellow fever.

What a Drama! From Yellow Fever to Terrorism During the Civil War

3. Next, ask students to make estimates as to how many people died during the Civil War. Teachers may want to give students hints regarding how close or far off their guesses are. Finally, write the number 617,528 and explain to students that this is the estimated number of people who died during the Civil War (North and South.) Next, ask students to take a guess as to how many of these deaths were due to diseases, such as yellow fever. Again, once student estimates have waned, write the number 413,458 under the first number and point out that disease killed more people than the violence of the war itself!
4. Explain to students that during today's lesson, they are going to be looking at some of the most surprising, shocking, interesting, and drama-filled aspects of the Civil War. Tell students that they are going to continue focusing on disease during the Civil War for a bit longer, specifically as it relates to bioterrorism. Discuss:
 - Do any of you know (or think you know) what bioterrorism is?
 - Ensure students gain the understanding that bioterrorism describes a terrorist act in which a biological agent (such as germs, disease, toxins, etc.) is used to harm mass amounts of people.
 - Can you cite any examples, present or past, when bioterrorism has been used?
 - Do you think bioterrorism would have been used during the Civil War? Why or why not?
5. Give students the attached "The Strange Saga of Civil War Terrorism" and let them know that they'll find out the answer in the article, which details some intriguing aspects of the Civil War they may never have heard of. Either individually or in partners, instruct students to read the article and answer the corresponding questions.
6. Once students have completed the reading, discuss their answers to the questions as a class. Further discuss:
 - Had any of you heard any of this information before? What did you find most surprising about what you read?

"As the War Turns" - Creating Soap Operas on Civil War Topics

7. Let students know that beyond the "typical" topics of the Civil War that we usually study – i.e., key battles, famous figures, etc. – there are many more interesting aspects of the war. Tell students that they are going to be working together on a group project in they will explore some of the many, but perhaps lesser known, Civil War topics that are full of surprise, drama, and intrigue. Tell students that they will form six groups and that each group will be assigned a reading and several primary sources on the following topics:
 - Group A - Civil War Casualties
 - Group B - Medicine & Disease
 - Group C- Conscription
 - Group D - Prison
 - Group E - Life of a Soldier
 - Group F - Civil War Spies

(Note: Teachers can choose to eliminate or alter the topics as they see fit.)

8. Tell students that based on their reading and examination of primary sources related to their topic, they will then create a short, 5 minute soap opera detailing the drama and intrigue of their topic. Provide the attached assignment sheet, “As the War Turns, Creating Soap Operas on Civil War Topics” and go over the assignment in detail with students. Teachers should determine a timeline for completion that they share with students, letting them know how much class time will be provided to work on the soap opera, and how much time outside of class they are expected to spend on the project. Let students know the final due date/performance date.
9. Once the assignment is clear, allow students to get into their groups and give each group their set of documents. (While teachers may want to copy the introductory reading of sets A-E for each student in the group, only one copy per group of their set’s primary sources will be necessary.)









Civil War Soap Opera Performances

10. Before the group performances begin, instruct students to create the following chart on notebook paper. Tell students that as they watch each scene, they should take detailed notes regarding what they learned about each particular topic. (Students should note at least 5 facts.)

Soap Opera Title and Topic	Facts I learned...	What I liked about the soap opera...

11. Go over respectful audience member expectations with students and allow them to present their soap operas. After each soap opera, lead a feedback and discussion with student. Student audience members should share what they learned and what they liked. Teachers should ask questions of the performers and the audience to ensure the main points of each topic are covered and learned by the class.

Yellow Fever Simulation Squares

The Strange Saga of Civil War Terrorism

The Washington Post - Sunday, June 1, 2003

by Jane Singer

The portly, middle-aged American doctor walked slowly through the thatched warren that served as a hospital, along the rows of the fevered, the dead and the dying. A yellow fever epidemic was raging in Bermuda, and Luke Pryor Blackburn, a doctor well known for treating and containing the deadly disease in the American South, had come to help. There was no need, he told grateful Bermuda physicians, to pay him for his services. Making his rounds on a warm night in April 1864, Blackburn sometimes wiped sweat from men's brows with a soft white cloth or poured lemonade and bits of ice through parched lips. He held patients in his arms, cradling their heads as they vomited black bile, a sure sign the end was near.

This night, he asked an attending nurse to help him take new woolen shirts from a trunk to cover the patients. Later, she remembered him saying that their rough warmth would aid "sweating." After the dead were carried away, the nurse saw the doctor collect a pile of dirty bedding and shirts as well as his perspiration-stained white cloths. He neatly packed them in trunks along with brand-new clothing fit for a fine gentleman, such as a president. An odd act, but the nurse did not question the doctor, who slipped out of Bermuda with his trunks the next day. Blackburn's destination was Toronto. His aim was nothing less than a deadly bioterror attack on Washington and President Abraham Lincoln.

Both sides in the Civil War contemplated acts beyond traditional warfare, according to legal documents, court testimony, historical records, books and newspaper accounts of the day. Artillery shells filled with chlorine for use on the battlefield were proposed by New York schoolteacher John Doughty early in the war. Lincoln refused to consider such chemical weapons, viewing them as being outside the laws of war. Sure that the Confederacy would rapidly overpower its enemies, President Jefferson Davis initially shied away from such measures as well.

But as the conflict lengthened from months to years, and the casualties mounted from the thousands to the hundreds of thousands, the South's desperation spawned a largely untold story: a series of terrorist plots against Washington and New York.

Hatched by politicians, rogue scientists, saboteurs and foot soldiers fanatically loyal to the Confederacy, the plans included spreading yellow fever to Washington and the White House; burning New York City to the ground; poisoning New York's water supply; and attacking Northern ports with a newly developed chemical weapon. There was even a scheme in the war's waning days to blow up the White House, though Lincoln refused to take it seriously. "I cannot bring myself," he said when told of the threat, "to believe that any human being lives who would do me any harm."

While most of the plots failed, their intent was clear. Then as now, they were designed to kill, terrify and demoralize civilians. Many of the plots against Washington and New York were dreamed up in Canada, a haven for Confederate agents throughout the Civil War who considered -- and embraced -- all kinds of acts of terrorism. Their schemes took on even greater urgency after a one-legged colonel named Ulric Dahlgren led a Union cavalry force on a mission to take Richmond, the Confederate capital, in the winter of 1864. When Dahlgren was ambushed and killed just outside the city, papers found on his body included detailed instructions for the assassination of Davis and his cabinet. The failed raid jolted Richmond, increasing its resolve to use whatever means necessary to destroy the North. Increasingly, Confederate funds flowed north to plotters in Toronto.

Luke Blackburn, a well-born Kentuckian and dyed-in-the-bones Rebel was too old to fight and too fired up not to, and thus hatched a plan to inflict a yellow fever epidemic on the North. The deadly disease had long been a

scourge in the South, where Blackburn had treated and saved many victims. Known colloquially as "yellow jack," "bronze John" and "black vomit," the disease includes symptoms such as fever, headache, vomiting, jaundice, bleeding, delirium, seizures and, finally, coma. With a 30 percent fatality rate and no known cure, any outbreak of yellow fever caused panic and despair.

By the spring of 1864, yellow fever was taking hundreds of lives in Bermuda. Blackburn set off for the island, promising his Confederate associates that the trip would yield "an infallible plan directed against the masses of Northern people solely to create death."

When he returned from Bermuda, Blackburn was carrying trunks that he believed were filled with disease. One trunk he fondly called "Big Number Two" would kill a man at 60 yards once it had been opened, the doctor boasted. Blackburn handed the trunks over to his operative, Godfrey Joseph Hyams, an impoverished Englishman who had lived in the American South for nine years. For a promised fee of \$100,000, Hyams had agreed to smuggle the trunks into Washington and other cities along the Eastern Seaboard. A special valise packed with fancy dress shirts and infected rags was to be delivered to President Lincoln.

Assured by Hyams that yellow fever was on its way to the North, Blackburn went back to Toronto. Soon he was at work on a new brainstorm, calculating just how much arsenic and strychnine would be needed to poison New York's water supply.

Eight operatives, led by Confederate officers Robert M. Martin and John William Headley, left Toronto for Manhattan in late fall of 1864 to carry out the most audacious terrorist attack of the Civil War: the effort to torch New York. Headley eventually published a detailed account of the operation in a book, describing how he and his accomplices were "ready to create a sensation in New York" with "Greek fire," a clear destructive liquid made of phosphorus in a bisulphide of carbon.

The fires would be ignited "so as to do the greatest damage in the business district on Broadway." The men set off on their mission on the evening of November 25, 1864, with bottles of Greek fire wrapped in paper and stuffed in their coat pockets.

"I reached the Astor House at 7:20 o'clock, got my key and went to my room," Headley wrote. "I opened a bottle carefully and quickly and spilled it on the pile of rubbish. It blazed up instantly . . . I locked the door and walked down the hall and stairway to the office, which was fairly crowded with people. I left the key at the office as usual."

The seven other accomplices apparently did the same in other locations, pouring bottles of Greek fire on mattresses and hallways, lobbing them against doors and hurling them against wooden wharves. Fire alarms began to sound. Before the night was over, 15 hotels and the Barnum museum, which housed a jumble of animals, freaks and frauds, had been set ablaze. Fire brigades tore through the streets and eventually put out the blazes, which caused much damage but no deaths. Within days, New York papers condemned the plot, calling it an act of evil beyond measure.

Meanwhile, Richard Sears McCulloh, a chemistry professor, had filled a small Richmond laboratory with cats. Early in 1865, as a delegation of Confederate congressmen watched through a small glass window in the door, McCulloh dropped a handkerchief saturated with liquid into the room. Within a minute, the cats began to gasp for breath. Seconds later, they suffocated as the handkerchief burst into flames.

McCulloh's new chemical weapon had performed perfectly. Oldham, the Confederate senator, from Texas, gushed about the weapon's possibilities when he reported the results to Jefferson Davis on February 11, 1865. McCulloh, who'd been a dutiful chemistry professor at Columbia until his defection in 1863, had spent a year hunkered in his secret laboratory, honing his formula for the Confederacy. Its contents were -- and remain to

this day -- a mystery, though Oldham boasted that the weapon could have laid waste to the enemy. Before it could be put to use, however, Richmond fell on April 3, 1865. McCulloh's laboratory was abandoned as he took flight. He was captured two months later off the coast of Florida and served nearly two years in prison, most of it in solitary confinement in the Virginia State Penitentiary.

As for Luke Blackburn, he abandoned his scheme to poison New York's Croton reservoir and -- just five months after his first visit -- returned to Bermuda, which in September 1864 was battling a new and even more terrible yellow fever epidemic. Once again, Blackburn collected infected clothing and packed it in trunks. Edward Swan, a hotel keeper in Bermuda, agreed to store the trunks until final shipping arrangements could be made.

However, by the time Blackburn had returned to the U.S., Godfrey Hyams (the Englishman who had smuggled Blackburn's first set of trunks), had gone to the U.S. consul in Canada with a terrible tale to tell. Angered that Blackburn had never paid him, on April 12, 1865, Hyams made a lengthy statement to the authorities about Blackburn's efforts at bioterrorism.

Blackburn had promised him "more honor and glory to my name than General Lee" for participating in the plot, Hyams told the consul. He acknowledged delivering "Big Number Two" and other trunks to Northern cities, but he said he "declined taking charge" of the valise intended for Lincoln. "I afterward heard that it had been sent to the president," he reported, though there is no known record of the valise actually reaching the White House.

On April 14, the day Lincoln was assassinated, a Confederate agent appeared at Allen's office in Bermuda and repeated many of the allegations made by Hyams. A bombshell discovery followed. Three infected trunks were still in Bermuda in the keep of Edward Swan. They were quarantined immediately and, according to one of Allen's agents, contained "dirty flannel drawers and shirts . . . evidently taken from a sickbed . . . some poultices and many other things which could have been placed there for no legitimate purpose."

Blackburn was arrested in Montreal on May 25, 1865. The New York Times trumpeted news of "The Yellow Fever Fiend," also known as "Dr. Black Vomit." He was called "a hideous devil" responsible for "one of the most fiendish plots ever concocted by the wickedness of man" and blamed for outbreaks of yellow fever.

But though yellow fever epidemics occurred regularly during the Civil War, they owed nothing to Blackburn's efforts. He and others were mistaken in thinking that soiled clothing could spread the disease. It is now known that yellow fever is spread by the bite of a mosquito.

Source: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A50445-2003May28?language=printer> (link and article unavailable online)

Answer/discuss:

1. Why did neither President Lincoln or Jefferson Davis consider using chemical weapons at the start of the Civil War?
2. What led to a series of terrorist plots being formed as the war waged on?
3. Summarize Luke Blackburn's plot. In your opinion, was his plan a good one? Why or why not?
4. Describe the plot against New York City and its outcome.
5. What was Richard McCulloh's plan?
6. What determines whether or not an act is terrorism?
7. In your opinion, are acts of terrorism ever warranted (for example, when at war)? Why or why not?

“As the War Turns” Creating Soap Opera Dramas on Civil War Topics

Group Members: _____

Civil War Topic: _____

From disease and death, to riots and spies, your group will be assigned a reading on a Civil War topic that is filled with drama and intrigue. After reading about your topic, your group will create a 5 minute soap opera detailing your assigned topic for your classmates. Your soap opera should be entertaining and educational, teaching your classmates the facts you learned in a creative way.

Step 1: Review the roles below and determine who in your group will be responsible for each. While one group member will be in charge of each aspect of the project, all group members must actively contribute to each step.

- **Dramaturge:** Lead the group during Step 2, during which you will ensure everyone in your group engages in productive reading and discussion about your topic. Handouts and primary sources for your group to inspect will be provided by the teacher. Make sure each person reads carefully. Lead your group through discussing the questions provided (ensuring everyone, including yourself, contributes to the discussion) and summarize your group’s answers on notebook paper.
- **Script Writer:** Lead the group during Step 3, in which your group will brainstorm ideas for your short soap opera. Your soap opera should be creative and entertaining, but ultimately, it must teach the class about your assigned topic. After you have discussed various ideas for your soap opera, pick an idea and begin to stage your scene. While you will be responsible for writing down each actor’s lines on paper, everyone must contribute and offer ideas as to what they think their character would say.
- **Director:** You will lead the group during Step 4, when your group begins practicing and staging the script. Ensure everyone (including yourself) participates and stays on task during rehearsal. As you all begin acting out the lines you wrote in the previous step, you may find that some parts don’t work or need revision. Lead the group through making any changes necessary. Ultimately, you need to ensure that the group is as well-rehearsed as possible before presenting your soap opera in front of the class.
- **Artistic Designer:** After the soap opera script has been written and rehearsed, it is time to add some artistic touches to make your soap opera even more entertaining, believable, and educational. Lead the group during Step 5, brainstorming what materials can be brought to class or prepared to enhance your soap opera. This can include costumes, props, set pieces, music, etc. If your group will be creating some items in class, make sure everyone contributes and stays on task. If your group members are bringing items from home, make sure to divide up who is bringing what and remind your group members of their obligation. You should also go through a “final check” with your group, ensuring all aspects of the assignment are covered before the due date/performance date.

Step 2 - Research: Under leadership of the Dramaturge, read through the introductory information on your topic provided by the teacher and examine the primary sources in your packet. The Dramaturge will lead your group through discussing the questions provided.

After going over the questions, the Dramaturge will lead you in creating a list of what you all think are the most interesting, surprising, lesser known, or dramatic aspects of what you learned from your reading and primary sources. Talk about what you feel you need to teach your classmates about the topic assigned to you.

Step 3 – Brainstorm and Write: After your group has read and discussed your topic in depth, the Script Writer will lead your group through taking the information you’ve identified as most interesting or important and

turning those ideas into a soap opera script. Brainstorm as many creative ideas as you can then pick an idea and begin to write out your soap opera. Make sure your group considers:

- Where is this scene taking place?
- Who are the characters in the scene?
- What will the characters say and do in the scene? (Remember, the point is to have your soap opera convey the important information on your topic from your reading.)

While the Script Writer will write, each person must contribute ideas. Every group member must have at least one small part; group members can play more than one character if needed. You can also request assistance from other people in the school or class to play small parts if necessary.) The final script must be turned in on the day you perform and:

- Should be written with the purpose of educating your classmates about your Civil War topic
- Must contain accurate information
- Should be creative
- Should not contain grammatical errors (in written form)

Step 4 – Practice and Revise: Under leadership of the Director, you will begin staging and rehearsing your final presentation. (Remember, it should be at least 5 minutes long when performed.) All group members must take an active role in the final soap opera. Do your best to familiarize yourself with your lines; if you must keep your script in hand, do not read directly from it. Remember, your ultimate goal is to teach the rest of the class about your Civil War topic using this creative format.

Step 5 – Finishing Touches: Under leadership of the Artistic Designer, think about what materials you can create, use from the classroom, or bring from home to enhance your short soap opera. Consider how the use of props, scenery, costumes, music, etc. can make your presentation more believable, entertaining and educational. If you will need particular supplies, the Artistic Designer should consult with your teacher. All materials must be in class on the day you are scheduled to perform.

It is also the job of the Artistic Designer to lead the group through a final “check,” making sure all aspects of the assignment have been completed. Remember, your final soap opera should:

- Be presented as a serious performance (i.e. assume the appropriate persona of your character, keep a straight face, deliver your lines as believably as possible, support your fellow actors, etc.)
- Be organized and well rehearsed
- Be engaging and creative
- Teach us about your Civil War topic and make us interested to learn more. Your soap opera should convey an abundance of information clearly related to your topic. The information you share must be accurate and educational.
- Make sure each of you speaks at an appropriate volume and uses appropriate emotion to convey your character
- Props, music, costumes etc. if present in scene should be used effectively
- Once all steps are complete, give your soap opera a title (i.e. “As the War Turns,” “Battlefield Hospital,” “The Young and the Soldiers,” etc.)

In-class work days: _____

Due Date: _____

What questions do you have about this assignment?

A. CIVIL WAR CASUALTIES

Introduction

In all, historians estimate that about 620,000 Americans died in the Civil War. That's almost as many as have died in *all other U.S. wars combined*:

Deaths in U.S. Wars		
War	Dates	U.S. deaths
Revolution	1775–1783	4,000
War of 1812	1812–1815	2,000
Mexican-American War	1846–1848	13,000
Civil War	1861–1865	618,000
Spanish-American War	1898	2,000
World War I	1917–1918	112,000
World War II	1941–1945	405,000
Korean War	1950–1953	54,000
Vietnam War	1959–1975	58,000
Persian Gulf War	1991	300
Afghanistan War	2001–	600 (a)
Iraq War	2003–	4,300 (b)

Civil War Casualties			
	Union	Confederacy	Total
Deaths			
Death from wounds	110,070	94,000	204,070
Death from disease	249,458	164,000	413,458
Total deaths	359,528	258,000	617,528
Total death rate	23%	24%	23%
Wounded			
Wounded	275,175	~100,000	~375,000
All casualties			
Totals	634,703	~358,000	~992,703

(a) as of April 2009. (b) as of May 2009.

The numbers are especially shocking when you remember that the population of the United States in 1860 was only 31,443,321 — which means that nearly *two percent* of the U.S. population died in the Civil War.

Both sides in the conflict lost about the same fraction of their troops — 23 or 24 percent — so one soldier in four died.

Individual battles

The following table lists battles with more than 20,000 casualties. Here, “casualties” includes killed, wounded, captured, and missing. Note that estimates of casualties vary — often widely — and we’ve tried to give the most commonly cited numbers or ranges, rounded off for simplicity.

Regardless of the detail, the scale of the carnage is simply incredible. As many Americans died in a single day at Antietam as died in the entire War for Independence. In the Normandy Landings on “D-Day,” June 6, 1944 — the most famous battle of World War II — the U.S. suffered 6,600 casualties, yet that number pales in comparison with the deaths at Gettysburg.

Bloodiest battles of the Civil War								
Battle	Dates	Union			Confederate			Total casualties
		Forces	Casualties	Percent	Forces	Casualties	Percent	
Gettysburg	July 1–3, 1863	94,000	23,000	24%	72,000	23,000	30%	46,000
Chickamauga	Sept. 19–20, 1863	60,000	16,000	27%	65,000	18,500	28%	34,500
Chancellorsville	May 1–4, 1863	134,000	17,000	13%	61,000	13,000	21%	30,000
Spotsylvania Court House	May 8–19, 1864	100,000	18,000	18%	52,000	12,000	23%	30,000
The Wilderness	May 5–7, 1862	102,000	18,500	18%	61,000	7,500–11,500	12–19%	26,000–30,000
Second Bull Run (Second Manassas)	August 28–30, 1862	62,000	14,500	23%	50,000	9,500	19%	24,000
Antietam	Sept. 17, 1862	87,000	12,500	14%	45,000	10,500	23%	23,000
Stones River	Dec. 31, 1862–Jan. 2, 1863	43,500	13,000	30%	38,000	10,000	26%	23,000
Shiloh	April 6–7, 1862	67,000	13,000	19%	44,500	10,500	24%	23,500

There were several reasons for the huge numbers of casualties in the Civil War. They had to do not only with the way battles were fought, but with what happened to soldiers afterward.

Technology

Military technology improved tremendously in the middle of the nineteenth century. In particular, new guns could be loaded faster or fire multiple rounds without being reloaded. The first revolver was invented in 1836, and breech-loading rifles could be loaded from the back, letting a soldier fire more rounds per minute. (Compare this to what a Revolutionary soldier had to do.)

The minie ball made infantry fighting especially deadly. A rifled barrel spins the bullet and thus makes it fly straighter — think of the spiral on a football — but older rifles had to be loaded by slowly stuffing the bullet through the grooves of the barrel, which was not practical for someone in the heat of battle. The minie ball was smaller than the diameter of the barrel, and so a soldier could load his rifle simply by dropping the minie ball down the barrel. When the rifle was fired, the powder in the cartridge burned, producing hot gas that caused the minie ball to expand and fill the barrel. The grooves in the base of the ball then fit into the grooves of the barrel.

The combination of speed and accuracy meant that infantry fighting was deadlier than ever before. A competent marksman could hit his target from 200 yards away, and the minie ball traveled fast enough to shatter bone on impact. The balls were also soft, not hard-jacketed, and so they spread on impact, making a larger hole and causing more damage and bleeding.

Strategy

The rifle and minie ball gave a new advantage to the defense in a battle. Older muskets — without rifling — had a much smaller range, and allowed soldiers to get close enough together to fight hand to hand, with bayonets. In the Civil War, armies engaged each other at greater distances. Artillery also became less important, because cannon crews could be picked off by distant marksmen. As a result, an army with a good position could simply mow down enemy soldiers making a frontal assault.

Yet most generals in the Civil War clung to older theories of warfare that valued offense rather than defense — in part because that was what they had learned at West Point, and in part because their sense of honor demanded a willingness to fight. But frontal assaults, however heroic they might sound in books, were suicidal now. In Pickett's Charge at the Battle of Gettysburg, almost 6,000 Confederate soldiers were killed or wounded as they advanced uphill over a mile of open ground toward entrenched Union positions.

Disease

If you look at the table above, you'll see that twice as many men died of disease as were killed in battle. So many men living in close quarters, under great stress and often with poor nutrition, were subject to epidemics. Diseases such as measles, mumps, and whooping cough swept through the camps. Near swamps, mosquitoes brought malaria. And already-weakened soldiers who caught a common cold often developed pneumonia.

But the biggest cause of disease was a lack of sanitation. Open latrines, decomposing food, and manure attracted disease-carrying insects and contaminated drinking water. The Union army reported that more than 995 out of every 1,000 men contracted chronic diarrhea or dysentery during the war. Typhoid fever, caused by salmonella bacteria in food and water, was responsible for as many as a quarter of all non-combat casualties in the Confederate army.

Disease was, sadly, an expected part of war in the nineteenth century. Not until World War II would the U.S. fight a war in which more soldiers died of battle wounds than of disease.

Medicine

Not only were the causes of disease still poorly understood in the 1860s, but by today's standards, army surgeons — military doctors were all called "surgeons" — were not skilled at treating disease or at repairing wounds. They operated in conditions we would find primitive, with no antibiotics, no painkillers, and no means of sanitizing surgical tools. Since the germ theory of disease (that disease and infection are caused by microorganisms) hadn't yet been developed and accepted, doctors wouldn't have sterilized their tools in any case.

Of all the wounds soldiers received to their arms and legs, about one in six could not be repaired and resulted in amputation. Amputation could lead to gangrene, in which the flesh rots from lack of blood flow, or to various kinds of infections. Despite these dangers, three-fourths of amputees survived. Given the constraints of the time, army surgeons did well to save as many lives as they did.

A. CIVIL WAR CASUALTIES

Primary Source 1

Letter from M.W. Parris to Jane Parris, July 3, 1862.

July the 3 1862 peters burg, va dear wife I one time mor take my pen in hand to let you now that I am well at this time hoping thes lines may find you well and doing well the last leter I received was dated June the 7 it give mee great Sattis faction to hear from you that you was well though I am sorry to tel that Som of our brave boys has got kild and Severl wounded in the great battle at richmond which Commenct last wensday and is Still fiting yet we have not got a correct information of all the file neither Can I tel all ded and wonded but I will [deleted] tel what I have larnd a bout it giled long and John B. queen was Seen fall in the first of the fite that is all that we now of though thar was a great many missing [Eith ?] kild of or lost now I will give the names of what was wonded Joseph moody got to fingers shot off William Cogdal wonded in the neck leander hall in the lage harris hooper in the thy or lage [deleted] Samuel Parker Slitly wonded in the finger though hot his Sholder out of place and from what he Ses a bout the redgment it is but all up parker left them yesterday morning and ses that the redgment looks a bout as big as as four or five Companys our Cournel got five or six holes Shot threw his Cote and one Cut his face major frances badly wonded in the Sholder w william beard badly wonded threw the hips

Capt Coalman his head shot off with a ball that is all I have heard of the 16 redgment our men has whipt them evry fite and has drove them Severl miles and has taken a Site of prisners with som six Jennerls and has kild Scors of them I under Stand that all of our men is bured but the is laying in piles and not bered a tall I think that we will the victry but dearly bought Severl of our men got ther gun Shot in too in thier hands the the boys has lost ther blankets in the fite tha have bin gon a about eight days frm Camp I Cant tel when tha will Com back and one of our men did in the hospitel da befor yesterday david wilson and severl is in the hospitel yet A W parris is with the rest in the fite I hant heard any thing a bout him parker did not now hoo all was mising this is all I Can find out a bout the fite I was left to gard Camp James is not well he has bin puny Severl weeks I hant any thing Elce to write at this time mor then I want to See you verry bad but I Cant tel when I will be blest with that blesing it wont be long tel my time will be out a gin but I Cant tel whether I will gt git to Com or not I hant heard any thing sed a bout that times is two hot her now I am a frade for mee to git off I will rite a gin in a few days so nothing mor may the lord bles you and thake Care of you is my prays and has bin ever sence I left you

M W Parris to Jane Parris

A. CIVIL WAR CASUALTIES

Primary Source 2



At Cold Harbor, Virginia, African American men gather up the bones of soldiers killed in battle. (Photograph by John Reekie)

A. CIVIL WAR CASUALTIES

Primary Source 3



At Antietam, dead Confederate soldiers lie on the ground near a fence on the Hagerstown Road. Photograph by Alexander Gardner

A. CIVIL WAR CASUALTIES

Debriefing Questions

The Dramaturge will lead your group in discussing the following questions. The Dramaturge should also take detailed notes regarding your group's thoughts answers on notebook paper, as this information will be used throughout the rest of the activity.

Debriefing the Reading:

- Create a list of what your group found most surprising and/or interesting from the reading.
- What are some of the most important points made in the reading?
- What questions do you have regarding the reading?
- What information most stands out from what is shared in the first two charts - *Deaths in US Wars* and *Civil War Casualties* – and why?
- How did the amount of deaths occurring during the Civil War compare to deaths occurring during other wars? What were the various reasons for this variance?
- Summarize the advances in technology that the article describes.
- What impact did the technologies described have on the Civil War?
- How would you characterize strategy during the Civil War?
- What were sanitary conditions like during the Civil War? What impact did these conditions have on the Northern and Southern armies?
- If you were wounded or ill during the Civil War, what were your chances like for survival and why?

Debriefing the Primary Sources:

- What do you first notice about the images (Primary Sources 2 & 3)? What comes to mind when viewing them?
- Based on these images, how would you describe the Civil War?
- What facts shared in the reading do these images relate to or confirm? What else can these images teach us about the Civil War?
- What important information does Parris share in his letter (Primary Source 1)?
- What can M.W. Parris's letter teach us about life as a soldier during the Civil War?
- Based on what you have learned, what do you think will become of the wounded soldiers Parris mentions?
- Based on what you read in the letter or saw in the photos, what would be most frightening about being a soldier during the Civil War?

Culminating Thoughts:

- Why is this an important topic to consider when studying the Civil War?
- What is most important from the reading and primary sources that you need to teach your classmates about in your soap opera? (List at least five things.)

B. MEDICINE & DISEASE

Introduction

Nearly 200,000 men lost their lives from enemy fire during the four years of the war. However, more than 400,000 soldiers were killed by an enemy that took no side — disease.

From our modern perspective, medicine during the Civil War seems primitive. Doctors received limited medical education. Most surgeons lacked familiarity with gunshot wounds. The newly-developed minie ball produced grisly wounds that were difficult to treat. The Northern and Southern medical departments were ill-prepared for removing wounded men from the battlefield and transporting them to hospitals. Systems to provide hospital care for the sick and wounded had not been developed. Blood typing, X-rays, antibiotics, and modern medical tests and procedures were nonexistent.

Open latrines, decomposing food, and unclean water were the rule in the camps. Diarrheal diseases affected nearly every soldier and killed hundreds of thousands of men. Although surgeons used ether and chloroform routinely as anesthetics, surgery was performed with unwashed hands and unclean instruments, resulting in infected wounds. The most effective drugs were the pain-killers opium and morphine, while many of the other available drugs were useless or harmful. Despite these limitations, Civil War doctors achieved some remarkable successes in treating the wounded and comforting the sick.

Popular but generally incorrect images of Civil War medicine involve surgery-amputations without anesthesia, piles of arms and legs, the surgeon as a butcher. By modern standards, wartime surgery was limited. Despite the lack of both surgical experience and sanitary conditions, the survival rate among those who underwent the knife was better than in previous wars. Amputation was not the only surgical recourse available. Surgeons also extracted bullets, operated on fractured skulls, reconstructed damaged facial structures, and removed sections of broken bones.

As bullets hit their victims, shattered bone and shredded flesh became the calling cards of the minie ball. Most of the surgeons who had come from civilian practices had little or no experience in dealing with such wounds. They quickly became aware of the surgical options: remove the limb, remove the fractured portions of bone, or clean the wound and apply a dressing. Union surgeons documented nearly 250,000 wounds from bullets, shrapnel, and other missiles. Fewer than 1,000 cases of wounds from sabers and bayonets were reported.

B. MEDICINE & DISEASE

Primary Source 1a & 1b

1 a - Walt Whitman describes a battlefield hospital

Falmount, Va., opposite Fredericksburgh, December 21, 1862. —

Begin my visits among the camp hospitals in the army of the Potomac. Spend a good part of the day in a large brick mansion on the banks of the Rappahannock, used as a hospital since the battle — seems to have receiv'd only the worst cases. Out doors, at the foot of a tree, within ten yards of the front of the house, I notice a heap of amputated feet, legs, arms, hands, &c., a full load for a one-horse cart. Several dead bodies lie near, each cover'd with its brown woolen blanket. In the door-yard, towards the river, are fresh graves, mostly of officers, their names on pieces of barrel-staves or broken boards, stuck in the dirt. (Most of these bodies were subsequently taken up and transported north to their friends.) The large mansion is quite crowded upstairs and down, everything impromptu, no system, all bad enough, but I have no doubt the best that can be done; all the wounds pretty bad, some frightful, the men in their old clothes, unclean and bloody. Some of the wounded are rebel soldiers and officers, prisoners. One, a Mississippian, a captain, hit badly in leg, I talk'd with some time; he ask'd me for papers, which I gave him. (I saw him three months afterward in Washington, with his leg amputated, doing well.) I went through the rooms, downstairs and up. Some of the men were dying. I had nothing to give at that visit, but wrote a few letters to folks home, mothers, &c. Also talk'd to three or four, who seem'd most susceptible to it, and needing it.

— Walt Whitman, *Specimen Days*

1 b - Enduring amputation

Walter Waightstill Lenoir to Thomas Lenoir, April 8, 1863, in the Lenoir Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Dear Thomas

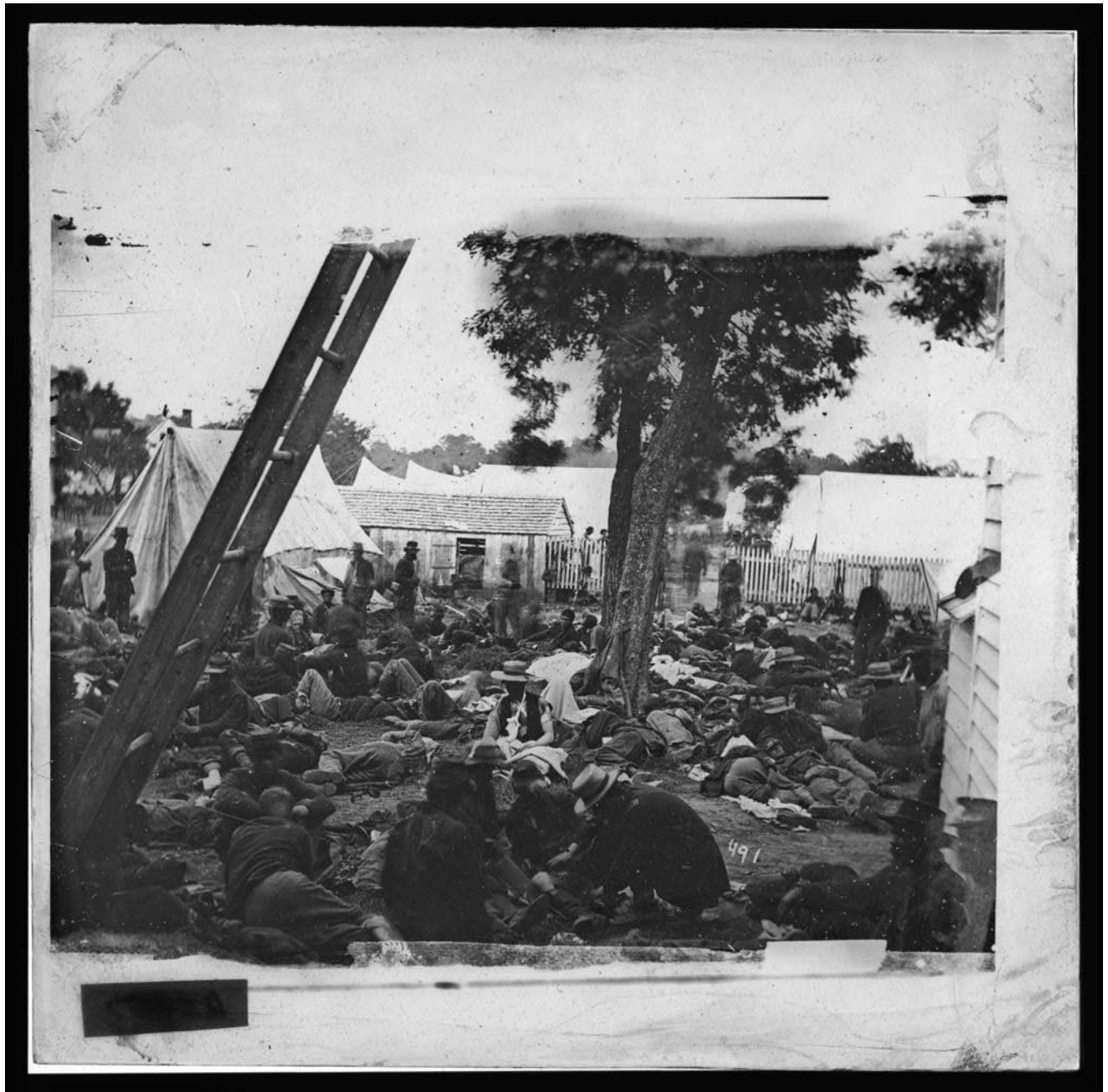
My leg is finished at last, and I have been using it for over a week. It is, I suppose, as good as they make 'em,' but it is a [wretched](#) substitute for the one that I left in Virginia. It will take me a good while to become enough accustomed to it to know how it will do, as the skin and flesh where the weight is received will have to become hardened by degrees. At present I can't walk near as well with it as I could with the one Rufus made me; but as I learned that others had the same difficulty at first in using such legs I will not get out of heart yet. I will have to make up my mind however to take very little exercise and to do very little work, which goes hard when I think how much I ought to do. I am greatly pleased to find that I can ride with ease, though I will have to have a gentle and sure footed horse to ride in safety. I can sit, too, much more comfortably with the new leg than I could with the old one.

Your Brother
WW Lenoir

Source: <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/nchist-civilwar/4800>

B. MEDICINE & DISEASE

Primary Source 2



A U.S. Army field hospital in Savage Station, Virginia, during the Peninsular Campaign of May–August 1862. (Photograph by James F. Gibson in *Civil War photographs, 1861-1865*, compiled by Hirst D. Milhollen and Donald H. Mugridge (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1977), No. 0090

Source: <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/nchist-civilwar/4694>

B. MEDICINE & DISEASE

Primary Source 3



An ambulance crew loads soldiers into a horse-drawn ambulance.

B. MEDICINE & DISEASE

Debriefing Questions

The Dramaturge will lead your group in discussing the following questions. The Dramaturge should also take detailed notes regarding your group's thoughts answers on notebook paper, as this information will be used throughout the rest of the activity.

Debriefing the Reading:

- Create a list of what your group found most surprising and/or interesting from the reading.
- What are some of the most important points made in the reading?
- What questions do you have regarding the reading?
- How would you describe the medical treatment available during the Civil War?
- In what ways were Civil War hospitals and staff unprepared for the great numbers of sick and wounded during the war?
- What impact did unsanitary conditions have during the war?
- Why was the minie ball so dangerous? What was a Civil War surgeon's capability to deal with such a wound?
- What do you find most disturbing regarding medicine and disease during the Civil War?

Debriefing the Primary Sources:

- What are some specific things Whitman sees at the battlefield hospital (Primary Source 1a)?
- Based on Whitman's account, how would you characterize the hospital?
- How would you feel if you were a patient at the hospital described and why? How would you feel if you were witnessing all of this, as Whitman did, and why?
- What has happened to Walter Lenoir (Primary Source 1b) and how would you describe his attitude about it?
- How do you think Walter's life will be impacted by this wound? If you were Walter, what would you be most worried about?
- What do you first notice about the images (Primary Sources 2 & 3)? What comes to mind when viewing them?
- Based on these images, how would you describe the Civil War?
- What facts shared in the reading do these images relate to or confirm?
- What else can these images teach us about the Civil War?

Culminating Thoughts:

- Why is this an important topic to consider when studying the Civil War?
- What is most important from the reading and primary sources that you need to teach your classmates about in your soap opera? (List at least five things.)

C. CONSCRIPTION

Introduction

The United States first employed national conscription (a military draft) during the Civil War.

The Confederate president Jefferson Davis proposed the first conscription act on March 28, 1862, and the act was passed into law the next month. Resistance was both widespread and violent, with comparisons made between conscription and slavery. A year later, in March of 1863, President Lincoln passed the National Conscription Act for the Union, which made all single men aged twenty to forty-five and married men up to thirty-five subject to a draft lottery. Quotas for military enlistment were assigned in each state, and if the number of volunteer soldiers didn't meet the quota, the state was required to draft the remaining soldiers needed. Both the Southern and Northern versions of the Acts allowed drafted men to avoid conscription entirely by supplying a substitute (someone to take their place); families often used the substitute provision to select which man should go into the army and which should stay home. A man drafted could also pay the government a three hundred-dollar exemption fee to get out of going to war. Not surprisingly, only the wealthy could afford to buy their way out of the draft.

Resistance to the draft was particularly evident in New York City, where the draft was to be enforced beginning in July. The draft was especially unpopular among New York's white working class, many of whom were recent immigrants from Germany and Ireland and resented the war effort, which brought economic hardship and increasing unemployment to the city's working-class neighborhoods. They were also resentful because the draft unfairly affected them while sparing wealthier men, who could afford to pay a \$300.00 Commutation Fee to exclude themselves.

At 10 AM on Monday, July 13, 1863, ten days after the Union victory in the Battle of Gettysburg, a draft was to take place on Third Avenue in New York City. A furious crowd of 500 showed up in protest and began throwing large paving stones through windows, then burst through the doors and set the building ablaze. This was the official beginning of what became known as the New York City draft riots, the largest civil insurrection in American history apart from the Civil War itself.

As the riots continued over the next few days, African Americans unfortunately became the target of the rioters' anger. Many immigrants and poor whites viewed freed slaves as competition for scarce jobs and saw African Americans as the reason why the Civil War was being fought. African Americans who fell into the mob's hands were often beaten, tortured, and/or killed, including one man who was attacked by a crowd of 400 with clubs and paving stones, then hung from a tree and set on fire.

The number of people killed throughout the protests from July 13 to July 16, 1863 is unknown, but it is estimated that at least 150 civilians lost their lives, with thousands more being injured and over a million dollars of damage done to the city. President Abraham Lincoln had to send several regiments of militia and volunteer troops to control the city and bring the riots to an end.

C. CONSCRIPTION

Primary Source 1

NOTICE OF DRAFTING

The quotas of certain of the Townships of the County
of Camden for the

NINE MONTHS SERVICE

Not having been filled by

VOLUNTEERS.

I shall proceed to make a draft to fill such deficiency, at

THE COURT HOUSE,
IN THE CITY OF CAMDEN,

At **TEN o'clock** in the forenoon of the following
days; for the Townships of

NEWTON, GLOUCESTER, WASHINGTON and WATERFORD, on

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 5.

FOR THE TOWNSHIPS OF

WINSLOW, CENTRE, DELAWARE, and STOCKTON, on

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 6

And until the days above designated for draft in each township, VOLUNTEERS will be received, and if the quota of any township shall be filled, no draft will be made in such Townships.

The drafting will be public, and open to all persons who may desire to attend.

The **CITY OF CAMDEN**, and the Townships of **UNION** and **MONROE**, having furnished their quotas, will not be liable to a draft. This is in accordance with instructions from the Governor.

WILLIAM P. TATEM,
COMMISSIONER.

September 2, 1864.

S. Chase Printer, "West Jersey Press" Office, Market Street, below Front, Camden, N. J.

C. CONSCRIPTION

Primary Source 2a & 2b

a.

WANTED! WANTED!
Wanted!
1000
SUBSTITUTES!

To whom the Highest Cash Price will be given. Apply immediately to

TURNER, ENGLISH & CO.
Substitute and Volunteer Agents,
No. 10 MARKET St., CAMDEN

Steampress Job Printing Establishment, 8. W. Owner of Third and Chestnut Streets, Philada.

b.

Volunteer! Volunteer!
AVOID THE DRAFT!



121st REGIMENT, P. V.
Accepted for Three Years or the War,
COL. CHAPMAN BIDDLE.

\$160 BOUNTY
And 1 Month's Pay in Advance.

RECRUITS WANTED FOR COMP'Y D
AT THE
Anderson House, 1529 South St.
OPPOSITE EATER MARKET.
J. G. ROSENGARTEN,
RECRUITING OFFICER.

C. CONSCRIPTION

Primary Source 3

The Raleigh Standard protests conscription

January 22, 1864

If the civil law is to be trampled under foot by the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus, and every able-bodied man placed in the army from sixteen to sixty-five, — if no man is to have a hearing before a State Judge, as to the right of the enrolling officer to seize him, and if the rights of the States are to be ignored and swept away by the mere creature of the States; the common Government, *the people of North Carolina will take their own affairs into their own hands, and will proceed, in convention assembled, to vindicate their liberties and their privileges.* They will not submit to a military despotism. They will not submit to the destruction of their rights, personal and civil, in this or any other war.... Woe to the official character who shall attempt to turn the arms of the Confederate soldiers against the people of this State! North Carolina will not be the slave of either the Congress at Richmond or Washington. She is this day, as she has been from the first, the keystone of the Confederate arch. If that stone should fall, the arch will tumble....

Is it not an outrage on every principle of free government for men of desperate fortunes, professing to represent other States on whose soil they dare not set their foot, to make and enforce odious and oppressive laws on our people?...

Trust them no longer. Remember their fair promises. The dwellers in the garden of Eden, when they listened to the tempting promises of Satan, were not worse deceived and ruined than were the people of the fair, happy, and blooming South when they listened to the fair promises of those arch deceivers, Yancey, Wise & Co.

A heretofore contented, prosperous, and happy people were told by them that we must withdraw all connection from our Northern taskmasters, who were making us pay one dollar and fifty cents for shoes, ten cents per yard for shirting, two dollars per sack for salt, ten cents per pound for sugar, the same for coffee, &c. And these same reckless men, who are now for putting *all* into the army, (except for themselves and a few favorites,) then told us that *secession would be peaceable, and there would be no war*; that we were to have a nation of our own, free from extortioners — a perfect paradise with the tree of life, the cotton plant, in our midst, before which all nations were to bow down and worship, and from which rivers of free trade were to flow to the ends of the earth, on the bosom of which the rich merchandise from every clime was to be freighted and poured down in our laps free of taxation. How have they deceived us? The blood of hundreds of thousands of our poor children, smoking from the many battlefields, and the cries of starving women and children tell the tale. Will our people be longer deceived by those false prophets and arch-deceivers? Or will they not command the peace, and staunch these rivers of blood?

Source: <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/nchist-civilwar/4685>

C. CONSCRIPTION

Debriefing Questions

The Dramaturge will lead your group in discussing the following questions. The Dramaturge should also take detailed notes regarding your group's thoughts answers on notebook paper, as this information will be used throughout the rest of the activity.

Debriefing the Reading:

- Create a list of what your group found most surprising and/or interesting from the reading.
- What are some of the most important points made in the reading?
- What questions do you have regarding the reading?
- Why do you think people compared the Civil War draft to slavery? Is this a fair comparison?
- How could someone avoid conscription entirely, or if drafted, get out of serving?
- Why was resistance to the draft so extreme?
- In what way did New Yorkers make their anger regarding the draft evident?
- Why did African Americans become the target of anger surrounding the draft in New York?
- What is your personal opinion of a military draft (for past wars and for today?)

Debriefing the Primary Sources:

- What is the purpose/goal of these documents (Primary Source 1, 2 a, and 2b)?
- Where might you have seen such documents during the Civil War?
- What persuasive techniques are being used? Do you think the intended goal was accomplished? Why or why not?
- What can these documents teach us regarding conscription during the Civil War?
- What is the tone of the writing that appeared in the Raleigh Standard (Primary Source 3)?
- What message is the author trying to convey?
- Who is the author angry with and why?
- What phrases stand out the most, or best make the author's point?
- If you were to write a response to this piece for the paper, what would you want to say and why?

Culminating Thoughts:

- Why is this an important topic to consider when studying the Civil War?
- What is most important from the reading and primary sources that you need to teach your classmates about in your soap opera? (List at least five things.)

D. PRISON

Introduction

While the Civil War etched the names Gettysburg, Antietam, and Vicksburg into the historical consciousness of the United States, a more subversive skirmish went by almost unnoticed.

Although precise figures may never be known, an estimated 56,000 men perished in Civil War prisons, a casualty rate far greater than any battle during the war's bloody tenure.

The high mortality rate was not deliberate, but the result of ignorance of nutrition and proper sanitation on both sides of the conflict, according to scholars. "Intent and malice were never intended," said James Robertson, a history professor at Virginia Tech, in Blacksburg.

Yet ignorance—coupled with shortages of food, shelter, and clothing—produced a cauldron of disease and death for inmates. While previous wars harbored similar prison conditions, the Civil War was unique in the sheer numbers of men confined.

"Americans had never been faced with what to do with more than 100 men in captivity before," said Robertson. The hundreds of thousands of men imprisoned simply exceeded either side's ability or will to manage.

Prisons often engendered conditions more horrible than those on the battlefield. The Union's Fort Delaware was dubbed "The Fort Delaware Death Pen," while Elmira prison in New York saw nearly a 25 percent mortality rate. The South's infamous Camp Sumter, or Andersonville prison, claimed the lives of 29 percent of its inmates.

More than 150 prisons were established during the war. All were filled beyond capacity, with inmates crowded into camps and shelters with meager provisions.

The North incarcerated most of their POWs in an array of coastal fortifications, existing jails, old buildings, and barracks enclosed by high fences. But early on, both sides realized that less formal, make-shift facilities would be required to house the overwhelming numbers of POWs. Union prisons such as Maryland's Point Lookout housed soldiers in tent cities walled in by high fences. While the South, lacking the means to build adequate structures, forced men into crowded stockades.

Andersonville, by far the most notorious Civil War prison, housed nearly 33,000 men at its peak—one of the largest "cities" of the Confederacy. Inmates crowded into 26.5 acres (11 hectares) of muddy land, constructing "shebangs," or primitive shelters, from whatever material they could find. Lacking sewer or sanitation facilities, camp inmates turned "Stockade Creek" into a massive, disease-ridden latrine. Summer rainstorms would flood the open sewer, spreading filth. Visitors approaching the camp for the first time often retched from the stench. The prison's oppressive conditions claimed 13,000 lives by the war's end.

Prison diets consisted of pickled beef, salt pork, corn meal, rice, or bean soup. The lack of fruits or vegetables often led to outbreaks of scurvy and other diseases. In many northern prisons, hungry inmates hunted rats, sometimes making a sport of it. Starvation and poor sanitation inflamed outbreaks of diseases like smallpox, typhoid, dysentery, cholera, and malaria. Sores, left untreated, led to gangrene—a disease curable only by amputation. Of all these diseases, perhaps the most

dangerous was depression.

"A good number of the prisoners became catatonic and most realized it was all over when they reached this state," Robertson said. Prisoners often wasted away. Some elected for suicide, taunting guards to shoot them.

Despite these insufferable conditions, prisoners on both sides coped as best they could. Inmates at Johnson's Island prison in Lake Erie formed a YMCA, a debating society, and a thespian troupe to pass the time. When snow was present, some even held snowball fights. At some prisons, such as those in the Richmond area, prisoners published their own newspapers and established libraries. Prisoners whiled away days at a stretch with games like chess, cards, and backgammon.

At Andersonville, inmates formed societies and ethnic neighborhoods. A polyglot of languages could be heard throughout the camp. German, Swedish, and Norwegian prisoners often conversed in their own tongues. In prison neighborhoods, barter systems developed as tradesmen and merchants sold primitive trade goods.

Of all the pastimes, perhaps none was as popular as prison escape, or at least the thought of it. Some attempts were elaborate. POWs often feigned sickness or sometimes death in the hope that they would be carried outside the stockade walls and left for dead. Once outside, prisoners would simply walk away. At Camp Douglas in Illinois, inmates darkened their skin with charcoal and walked out with the black servants. The ruse was attempted so many times that wardens abolished the use of African Americans as prison labor.

Tunneling was, by far, the most widespread method of escape. In one of the most famous prison breaks, known as the "Great Yankee Tunnel," 109 Union prisoners crawled to freedom from Libby Prison in Richmond, Virginia, after digging a 60-foot (18-meter) tunnel with clam shells and case knives. (However, as many as half were later recaptured.)

Escape attempts continued throughout the war. But the majority of them failed. Prisoners unlucky enough to be caught were punished severely. Penalties included hard labor, hanging by the thumbs, and other forms of torture. Despite such threats, Union and Confederate POWs continued their attempts to break free.

Some civilians in the North and South were appalled by the treatment of war prisoners. Despite their protests, neither army relented to improve conditions. Only the war's end stopped the suffering of inmates.

A Union propaganda campaign following the war decried the dire conditions of Confederate prisons, while ignoring its own. According to James McPherson, a history professor at Princeton University, the sole person executed for war crimes was Major Henry Wirz, the Confederate commandant of Andersonville.

Over time, the cruel legacy of Civil War prisons on both sides has been revealed. The healing process for all Americans continues with every generation. It is the understanding and the benchmark of suffering set during the Civil War that continues to shape our perspective on modern day wars

Source: *National Geographic News* - <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/pf/34127396.html>

D. PRISON

Primary Source 1



D. PRISON

Primary Source 2



Source: <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/nge/Multimedia.jsp?id=m-9734>

Union prisoners of war are pictured at the Andersonville Prison in Macon County on August 17, 1864. Malnutrition and poor sanitary conditions at the camp led to the deaths of nearly 13,000 of Andersonville's 45,000 prisoners, the highest mortality rate of any Civil War prison

D. PRISON

Primary Source 3

From the Diary of John Beck, Capt.
Co. E., 45th Regiment, Pa. Vet. Vol.
Centre Line, Centre County, Penna.

Sunday, January 1, 1865

The morning was very clear and cold got corn bread at 10 AM. It was the gloomiest New Years day that ever shone upon me being shut up in a Southern Hell. Had bean soup at 2 PM with 2 lbs. of pork boiled along for 439 hungry men. The rumr was that we were getting pork and beans which came out the little end of the horn. The skye was clear all day but the air very cold. I read 10 chapters in Mathew. T he air became more moderate during the night.

Monday, January 2, 1865

The morning was a clear and cold but had the appearance of a fine day. Had wheat bread at 9 AM and bean soup at 2 PM. Read 3 chapters in Mark and read some in the book of familiar science. They skye clouded over and the air became colder.

Tuesday, January 3, 1865

The morning was cloudy and cold. Had snowed some during the night. Had corn bread at 9 AM. 3 recaptured officers were brought in who had escaped from Columbia SC and were recaptured in the mountains. Got bean soup at noon. Read 4 chapters in Mark. Snowed some more toward evening.

D. PRISON

Debriefing Questions

The Dramaturge will lead your group in discussing the following questions. The Dramaturge should also take detailed notes regarding the group's answers on notebook paper, as these will be used in the next steps of the activity.

Debriefing the Reading:

- Create a list of what your group found most surprising and/or interesting from the reading.
- What are some of the most important points made in the reading?
- What questions do you have regarding the reading?
- Describe the conditions of Civil War prisons within the following categories:
 - Shelter
 - Diet
 - Sanitary conditions
 - Disease
- What were some of the strategies prisoners used to try and cope with their imprisonment?
- In your opinion, would it be worse to be on the battlefield or in a prison during the Civil War? Explain.

Debriefing the Primary Sources:

- What do you first notice about the images (Primary Sources 1 & 2)? What comes to mind when viewing them?
- Based on these images, how would you describe prison life and conditions during the Civil War?
- What facts shared in the reading do these images relate to or confirm?
- What else can these images teach us about prisons during the Civil War?
- What types of information does John Beck share in his journal (Primary Source 3)? Why do you think he chooses to share this particular information?
- Based on his journal, how would you describe John Beck's day to day life in prison?
- What is Beck's diet like? How would you feel eating this diet each day, with no end in sight?
- Overall, what can John Beck's journal teach us about Civil War prisons?

Culminating Thoughts:

- Why is this an important topic to consider when studying the Civil War?
- What is most important from the reading and primary sources that you need to teach your classmates about in your soap opera? (List at least five things.)

E. LIFE OF A SOLDIER

Introduction

The life of a soldier in the 1860s was an arduous one, and for the thousands of young Americans who left home to fight for their cause, it was an experience none of them would ever forget. Military service meant many months away from home and loved ones, long hours of drill, often inadequate food or shelter, disease, and many days spent marching on hot, dusty roads or in a driving rainstorm burdened with everything a man needed to be a soldier as well as baggage enough to make his life as comfortable as possible. There were long stretches of boredom in camp interspersed with moments of sheer terror experienced on the battlefield. For these civilians turned soldiers, it was very difficult at first getting used to the rigors and demands of army life. Most had been farmers all of their lives and were indifferent to the need to obey orders. Discipline was first and foremost a difficult concept to understand, especially in the beginning when the officer one had to salute may have been the hometown postmaster only a few weeks before. Uniforms issued in both armies were not quite as fancy as those worn by the hometown militias, and soldiering did not always mean fighting. There were fatigue duties such as assignments to gather wood for cook fires. Metal fittings had to be polished, horses groomed and watered, fields had to be cleared for parades and drill, and there were water details for the cook house. Guard duty meant long hours pacing up and down a well-trod line, day or night, rain or shine, always on watch for a foe who might be lurking anywhere in the hostile countryside. A furlough was hard to come by as every man was needed in the field and few men ever had a chance to visit home.

Summer and winter quarters

A soldier's home in camp was a rectangular piece of canvas buttoned to another to form a small two-man tent or dog tent as the soldiers called them. First introduced in 1862, every Union soldier was issued one for use during active campaign and the men joked that only a dog could crawl under it and stay dry from the rain. The tent could be easily pitched for the evening by tying each end to a rifle stuck in the ground by the bayonet or by stringing it up to fence rails. Confederates did not receive shelter tents though some Confederate units were issued a variation of the tent, which they pitched as a lean-to or shelter. As the war progressed it was very common for a Confederate camp to be filled with captured Union tents as well as captured blankets, canteens, and haversacks. Confederates especially prized the Union rubber blankets, which were not manufactured in the south and were ideal as a ground cloth or overhead shelter.

Army camps were like a huge bustling city of white canvas, sometimes obscured by smoke from hundreds of campfires. Camps were considered temporary throughout the year until the winter months when the armies would establish winter quarters. The soldiers would construct log huts that were large enough to accommodate several men, made of trees taken from any nearby source. The logs were laid out on stones underneath the bottom log, in a rectangle and notched to fit tight at the corners and stones, brick, or mud-covered logs were formed into a small fireplace in one end. Mud filled the gap between the logs and inside of the chimney over the fireplace. A roof made from tents or sawn boards and wooded bunks built inside finished the hut. Soldiers often named their winter huts after well known hotels or restaurants back home such as "Wiltshire Hotel" or "Madigan's Oyster House." The armies quartered in these small huts through the winter months and then it was back to the field and dog tents.

Drill and discipline

The singular purpose of the soldier was to fight a battle and win. There were a variety of small arms used during the Civil War. The average infantryman carried a muzzle-loading rifle-musket manufactured in American arsenals or one purchased from foreign countries such as England. The bayonet was an important part of the rifle and its steel presence on the muzzle of the weapon was very imposing. When not in battle, the bayonet was a handy candle holder and useful in grinding coffee beans. The typical rifle-musket weighed eight and one-half pounds and fired a conical shaped bullet called the Minie Ball. Bullets were made of very soft lead and caused horrible wounds which were difficult to heal. The artillery was composed of both rifled and smoothbore cannon, each gun served by a crew of fourteen men including the drivers. The role of the artillery was to support the infantry while the infantry role was to either attack or defend, depending on the circumstances. Both branches worked together to coordinate their tactics on the field of battle. Cavalrymen were armed with breech loading carbines, sabers, and pistols. Cavalry was initially used for scouting purposes and to guard supply trains. The role of mounted troops had expanded by the time of Gettysburg, with cavalry divisions acting as skirmishers and fighting mounted and on foot in pitched battles such as Brandy Station, Virginia on June 9, 1863. Other branches of the armies included the signal corps, engineers, medical and hospital corps, as well as supply organizations including the quartermasters.

Marching and fighting drill was part of the daily routine for the Civil War soldier. Infantry soldiers drilled as squads and in company formations, each man getting accustomed to orders and formations such as marching in column and in a "company front," how to face properly, dress the line, and interact with his fellow soldiers. After an hour of drill on that level, the company moved onto regimental level drills and parades. The soldier practiced guard mount and other procedures such as the Manual of Arms, which infantrymen learned for the rifle-musket. Veterans of the war often remarked how they could recite the steps of loading and priming for many years after the war, thanks to the continual drill. The drill was important for the infantry for they used tactics that had changed little since the time of the American Revolution or the age of Napoleon: infantry fought in closely knit formations of two ranks (or rows) of soldiers, each man in the rank standing side by side. This formation was first devised when the single-shot, muzzle loading musket became the normal weapon on the battlefield, the close ranks being a necessity because of the limitations of the musket. Yet, by 1861, new technology had made the old fashioned smoothbore musket nearly obsolete with the introduction of the rifle musket. By the time of the Gettysburg Campaign, the rifle musket made up the majority of infantry weapons in both the Union and Confederate armies though it took much longer for the tactics to change. Even with the advance of the rifle musket, the weapons were still muzzle loaders and officers believed that the old-fashioned drill formations were still useful to insure a massing of continuous firepower that the individual soldier could not sustain. The result of this slow change was a much higher than anticipated rate of casualties on the battlefield.

Cavalrymen drilled with their sabers, both on foot and horseback, while artillerymen drilled with their cannons limbered up to the team of horses and unlimbered, ready to fire. Oddly enough, marksmanship on a rifle range did not take precedence over other drill the soldiers learned for several reasons — the military believed that each man would shoot accurately when told to and the war departments did not wish to waste ammunition fired on random targets.

For the infantry, drums were used to announce daily activities, from sunrise to sunset. Reveille was sounded to begin the day at 5 AM, followed by an assembly for morning roll call and breakfast call. Sick call was sounded soon after breakfast, followed by assemblies for guard duty, drill, or to begin the march. Drummers were also important on the march to keep soldiers in step during parades and to call them to attention. In battle, drums were sometimes used to signal maneuvers and give signals

for the ranks to load and fire their weapons. The artillery and cavalry relied solely on buglers who were as important in their roles as the drummers were to the infantry. When not playing for their respective regiments, musicians were often combined with regimental or brigade bands to play marching tunes or provide field music for parades, inspections, and reviews.

Discipline in the military was very strict. The Provost Marshal of the army was responsible for enforcing military rules, but regimental commanders also had the authority to dole out punishments for minor offenses. Petty offenses such as shirking camp duty or not keeping equipment in good order were usually treated with extra duties such as digging latrines, chopping wood, or standing extra hours on guard duty. Insubordination, thievery, cowardice, or other offenses were more serious and the guilty party was usually subjected to embarrassing punishments such as carrying a log, standing on a barrel, or wearing a placard announcing his crime. "Bucking and gagging" was also a common punishment — the soldier's limbs were bound and he was gagged so he could not speak. In the artillery, the guilty person might be tied to the spare wheel on the back of a caisson. Desertion, spying, treachery, murder, or threats on an officer's life were the most serious offenses to which the perpetrator was condemned to military prison or shot by a firing squad. Crimes committed against civilians were also punishable by the army and felons were executed by hanging before a formation of soldiers.

Source: <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/nchist-civilwar/5513>

E. LIFE OF A SOLDIER –

Primary Source 1

Camp Near Winchester Va. Octr 11th, 1862.

Govr. Z. B. Vance,

I lay before you for your consideration the destitute condition of our Regt. with the hope that you, who have experienced some of the severe trials of a soldiers life, may hasten up the requisite relief ~

We have present Six hundred & nineteen men rank & file in the 48th Regt. N.C. Troops – There are of that number Fifty one who are completely & absolutely Barefooted – & one hundred & ninety four who are nearly as bad off, as Barefooted, & who will be altogether so, in less than one month. There are but Two hundred & ninety seven Blankets in the Regt. among the 619 men, which is less than one Blanket to evry two men.

In truth there is one Compy (I) having 66 men & only Eleven Blankets in the whole company – The pants are generally ragged & out at the seats – & there are less than three cooking utensils to each Company – This sir is the condition of our Regt. upon the eve of winter here among the mountains of Va. cut off from all supplies from home & worn down & thinned with incessant marchings, fighting & diseases – can any one wonder that our Regt. numbering over 1250 rank & file has more than half its no. absent from camp, & not much over one third 449 of them fit for duty? The country is filled with Stragglers, deserters, & sick men & the hospitals are crowded from these exposures. A spirit of disaffection is rapidly engendering among the soldiers which threatens to show itsef in general Stragglng & desertion, if it does not lead to open mutiny.

Add to this that our surgeons have no medicines & don't even pretend to prescribe for the sick in camp, having no medicines & you have an outline of the sufferings & prospective trials & difficulties under which we labor....

Want we most pressingly need just now is our full supply of *Blankets*, of *Shoes* & of *pants* & *socks*. We need very much all our other clothing too. But we are in the greatest need of these indispensable articles & Must have them, & have them Now. Otherwise how can the Government blame the soldier for failing to render service, when it fails to fulfil its stipullated & *paid for* contracts? A contract broken on one side is broken on all sides & void....

The soldiers of the 48th N.C. & from all the State will patriotically suffer & bear their hardships & privations as long as those from any other State, or as far as human endurance can tolerate such privations, But it would not be wise to experiment to far in such times & under such circumstances as now surround us upon the extent of their endurance. With Lincolns proclamation promising freedom to the slaves, What might the suffering, exhausted, ragged, barefooted, & dying *Non* slaveholders of the South, who are neglected by their government & whose suffering families at home are exposed to so many evils, begin to conclude? Would it not be dangerous to tempt them with too great trials?

Dear Sir... I feel the very earnest & solemn responsibility of my position as commander of this Regt. at this critical period & under these trying circumstances & wish to do all I can... to remove the evils by seeking a speedy supply of Blankets, Shoes & clothing. & therefore beg your earnest attention to the premises & your zealous & I hope efficient aid to supply our necessities....

Your Excellencys most obt Servt.

S. H. Walkup Lt. Col. [Commanding], 48th Regt. NC Troops

Source: *A plea for supplies, Lt. Col. S. H. Walkup to Gov. Zebulon Vance, October 11, 1862, in the Governors Papers, North Carolina State Archives: <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/nchist-civilwar/4692>*

E. LIFE OF A SOLDIER –

Primary Source 2



A portrait of young Confederate soldier, Private Edwin E. Jennison, who was later killed at Malvern Hill during the United States Civil War; ca. 1861-1865

Source: <http://www.corbisimages.com/Enlargement/BE001094.html>

E. LIFE OF A SOLDIER –

Primary Source 3a & 3 b

3a



This Mathew Brady photograph of a Union army's winter camp shows soldiers' log huts as well as a corduroy road built of logs

3b

View of Civil War encampment at Cumberland Landing, Virginia. Photograph taken from a hill looking down on the encampment.



Source:
<http://www.learnnc.org>

E. LIFE OF A SOLDIER

Debriefing Questions

The Dramaturge will lead your group in discussing the following questions. The Dramaturge should also take detailed notes regarding your group's thoughts answers on notebook paper, as this information will be used throughout the rest of the activity.

Debriefing the Reading:

- Create a list of what your group found most surprising and/or interesting from the reading.
- What are some of the most important points made in the reading?
- What questions do you have regarding the reading?
- Why was it often difficult for soldiers to get used to the demands of army life?
- What types of duties did soldiers perform?
- Describe the living conditions in summer and winter Civil War camps. Considering what summer and winter temperatures can be like, would you characterize Civil War shelter as comfortable? Why or why not?
- What types of drills did soldiers have to complete? What do you think the purpose of such drills were?
- What was discipline like in the military during the Civil War? How do you think Civil War discipline compares to today's military?
- What types of punishments might soldiers experience during the Civil War?
- Based on what you read, what skills would you say a Civil War soldier needed to make it through each day, on and off the battlefield?
- What would have been most difficult about being a soldier in the Civil War?

Debriefing the Primary Sources:

- According to Lt. Col. Walkup (Primary Source 1), what are conditions like in his camp?
- Of all the issues he notes, what do you think would be hardest to deal with as a soldier and why?
- In an ideal world, how would the Governor respond to this letter? In actuality, how do you think he responded and why?
- How would you characterize the soldier pictured in Primary Source 2? What age would you guess he is?
- What emotions might this soldier be feeling and why?
- What became of this young soldier?
- What do you notice regarding the Civil War camps pictured? (Primary Source 3a and 3b)
- What can these images teach us regarding life as a soldier in the Civil War?

Culminating Thoughts:

- Why is this an important topic to consider when studying the Civil War?
- What is most important from the reading and primary sources that you need to teach your classmates about in your soap opera? (List at least five things.)

F. CIVIL WAR SPIES

Introduction

During the Civil War era in the U.S., spying was rampant, and it was no wonder; important cities like Washington D.C., not to mention border states like Kentucky, Missouri, and West Virginia, often housed both Federal and Confederate sympathizers separated by fences or even walls.

While the very secretive nature of espionage makes it difficult to determine the number of spies who operated during the Civil War, much less have any historical record of their activity, intelligence played a critical role throughout the Civil War.

In particular, many brave black American men and women risked their lives to learn and share intelligence vital to the success of the Union, playing an important role in the outcome of the Civil War. Slaves and freed African-Americans were an invaluable resource to the Union, providing information on the Confederate forces. They became known as the “black dispatches.”

The dispatches were most commonly obtained from debriefing slaves—either runaways or those who had come under Union control. And some brave black Americans learned important intelligence about Confederate plans through behind-the-lines missions or by serving as an agent-in-place.

Notable African American Spies

- When Jefferson Davis, president of the Confederacy, realized someone on his staff was leaking information to the Union, the last person he suspected was the nanny, slave **Mary Elizabeth Bowser**. Often called the Legal League, or Lincoln’s Loyal Legal League, a network of African American spies and saboteurs used deception and their own form of communication to undermine the Confederate effort and pass on information to the Union. Bowser was a prime example. She never told anyone she could read or write. When she was hired as Davis’ nanny, she would eavesdrop on his conversations and glance at important papers on his desk. In 1995, she was inducted into the U.S. Army Military Intelligence Corps Hall of Fame.
- Africans-Americans who could serve as agents-in-place were a great asset to the Union. They could provide information about the enemy’s plans instead of reporting how the plans were carried out. **William A. Jackson** was one such agent-in-place who provided valuable intelligence straight from Confederate President Jefferson Davis. Jackson served as a coachman to Davis. As a servant in Davis’ home, Jackson overheard discussions the president had with his military leadership. His first report of Confederate plans and intentions was in May 1862 when he crossed into Union lines. While there are no records of the specific intelligence Jackson reported, it is known that it was important enough to be sent straight to the War Department in Washington.
- When it comes to the Civil War and the fight to end slavery, **Harriet Tubman** is an icon. She was not only a conductor of the Underground Railroad, but also a spy for the Union. In 1860, she took her last trip on the Underground Railroad, bringing friends and family to freedom safely. After the trip, Tubman decided to contribute to the war effort by caring for and feeding the many slaves who had fled the Union-controlled areas. A year later, the Union Army asked Tubman to gather a network of spies among the black men in the area. Tubman also was tasked with leading expeditions to gather intelligence. She reported her information to a Union officer commanding the Second South Carolina Volunteers, a black unit involved in guerrilla warfare activities. After learning of Tubman’s capability as a spy, Gen. David Hunter, commander of all Union forces in the area, requested that Tubman personally guide a raiding party up the Combahee River in South Carolina. Tubman was well prepared for the raid because she had key information about Confederate positions along the shore and had discovered where they placed torpedoes (barrels filled with gunpowder) in the water. On the morning of June 1, 1863, Tubman led Col. James Montgomery and his men in the attack. The expedition hit hard. They set fires and destroyed buildings so they couldn’t be used by the Confederate forces. The raiders freed 750 slaves. The raid along the Combahee River, in addition to

her activities with the Underground Railroad, made a significant contribution to the Union cause. When Tubman died in 1913, she was honored with a full military funeral in recognition for work during the war.

- **Mary Touvestre** was a freed slave who worked as a housekeeper for a Confederate engineer who was repairing and transforming the USS *Merrimac* into the *Virginia*, the Confederate's first ironclad warship. She overheard the engineer talking about the importance of the ship and realized that it could be a significant weapon against the Northern blockade. At great personal risk, Touvestre stole the plans for the ship and fled to Washington, where she met with the Department of the Navy. Upon seeing the plans and hearing Touvestre's report, the Union Navy sped up the construction of its ironclad, the USS *Monitor*. It is believed that if Touvestre had not alerted the Union of the Confederacy's activities, the *Virginia* might have caused enough damage to the blockade to allow much needed supplies from Europe to slip through.
- **John Scobell** was a freed slave who was recruited by Union intelligence chief Allan Pinkerton to spy behind Confederate lines. Scobell was intelligent and a good actor. He took on several identities, including food vendor, cook and laborer. Scobell often worked with two of Pinkerton's best agents—Timothy Webster and Carrie Lawton—posing as a servant. Scobell provided valuable information about Confederate order of battle, status of supplies and troop morale. He also sought out leaders in the black community to collect information about local conditions, fortifications, and troop dispositions.

The stories above are just a few examples of the amazing acts of bravery carried out by black Americans during the Civil War. To learn more about the "black dispatches," read our publication [Black Dispatches: Black American Contributions to Union Intelligence During the Civil War](#).

Sources:

<http://www.civilwar-pictures.com/articles/civil-war-spies/civil-war-spies/>

<https://www.cia.gov/news-information/featured-story-archive/black-dispatches.html>

F. CIVIL WAR SPIES

Primary Source 1

The following is an account of the Dabney's, a black husband and wife Civil War spy team. The account was written by a Union officer in 1863; at the time, the Union Army was encamped on the banks of the Rappahannock River in Virginia, under the command of Union General Hooker.

“There came into the Union lines a Negro from a farm on the other side of the river, known by the name of Dabney, who was found to possess a remarkably clear knowledge of the topography of the whole region; and he was employed as a cook and body servant at headquarters. When he first saw our system of army telegraphs, the idea interested him intensely, and he begged the operators to explain the signs to him. They did so, and found that he could (readily) understand and remember the meaning of the various movements.

Not long after, his wife, who had come with him, expressed a great anxiety to be allowed to go over to the other side as a servant to ... The request was granted. Dabney's wife went across the Rappahannock, and in a few days was duly installed as laundress at the headquarters of a prominent Confederate General.

Dabney, her husband, on the north bank, was soon found to be wonderfully well informed as to the rebel plans. Within an hour of the time that a movement of any kind was projected, or even discussed, among the rebel generals, Hooker knew all about it. He knew which corps was moving, or about to move, in what direction, how long they had been on the march, and in what force; and all this knowledge came through Dabney, and his reports always turned out to be true.

Yet Dabney was never absent, and never talked with the scouts, and seemed to be always taken up with his duties as cook and groom about headquarters. How he got his information remained for some time a puzzle to the Union Officers. At length, upon much solicitation, he unfolded his marvelous secret to one of the officers.

Taking him to a point where a clear view could be obtained of Fredericksburg, he pointed out a little cabin in the suburbs near the river bank; and asked him if he saw that clothes-line with clothes hanging on it to dry. ‘Well’ said he, ‘that clothes line tells me in half an hour just what goes on at Lee’s headquarters. You see my wife over there; she washes for the officers, and cooks, and waits around, and as soon as she hears about any movement or anything going on she comes down and moves the clothes on that line so I can understand it in a minute. That there gray shirt is Longstreet [a Confederate general]; and when she takes it off, it means he’s gone down about Richmond. That white shirt means Hill [a Confederate general]; and when she moves it up to the west end of the line, Hill’s corps has moved upstream. That red one is Stonewall [Confederate general]. He’s down on the right now, and if he moves, she will move that red shirt.’

One morning Dabney came in and reported a movement over there. ‘But’ says he, ‘it don’t amount to anything. There’re just making believe.’

An officer went out to look at the clothes-line telegraph through his field-glass. There had been quite a shifting over there among the army flannels. ‘But how do you know that there is something in it?’

‘Do you see those two blankets pinned together at the bottom?’ said Dabney. ‘Yes, but what of it?’ said the officer. ‘Why, that her way of making a fish-trap; and when she pins the clothes together that way, it means that Lee is only trying to draw us into his fish trap.’

As long as the two armies lay watching each other on opposite banks of the stream, Dabney, with his clothes-line telegraph, continued to be one of the most prompt and reliable of General Hooker’s scouts.”

Source: Spies and Spymasters of the Civil War by Donald E. Markle

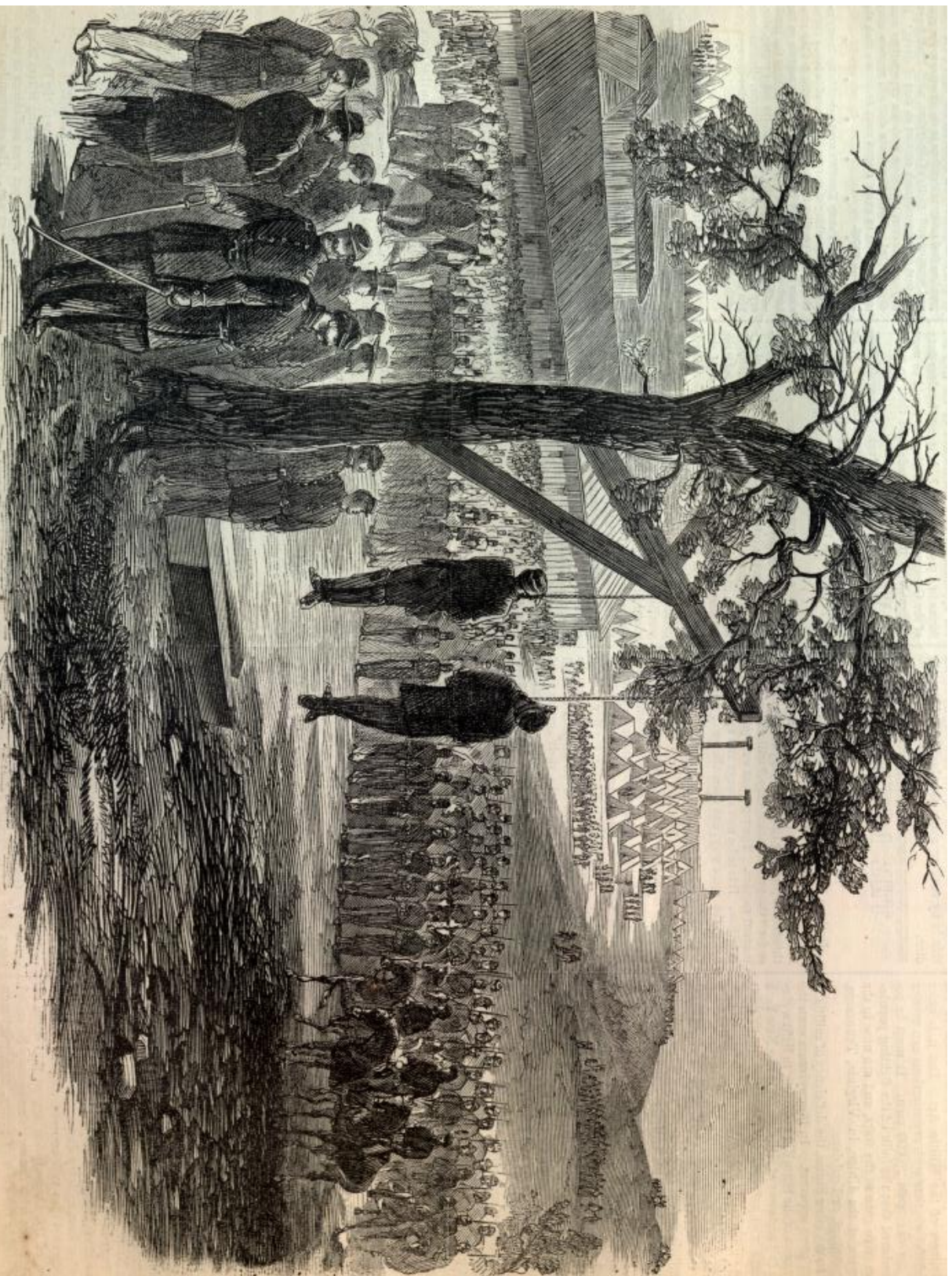
F. CIVIL WAR SPIES

Primary Source 2



F. CIVIL WAR SPIES

Primary Source 3



EXECUTION, BY HANGING, OF TWO REBEL SPIES, WILLIAMS AND PETERS, IN THE [ARMY OF THE CUMBERLAND](#), JUNE 9, 1863.-
[SKETCHED BY MR. JAMES K. MAGIE]

F. CIVIL WAR SPIES

Debriefing Questions

The Dramaturge will lead your group in discussing the following questions. The Dramaturge should also take detailed notes regarding your group's thoughts answers on notebook paper, as this information will be used throughout the rest of the activity.

Debriefing the Reading:

- Create a list of what your group found most surprising and/or interesting from the reading.
- What are some of the most important points made in the reading?
- What questions do you have regarding the reading?
- What role did spies play during the Civil War?
- What did a spy risk by agreeing to collect and share secret information?
- Why do you think so many brave African Americans served as spies when there were so many risks involved?
- Of the specific spies noted, who did you find most interesting and why?

Debriefing the Primary Sources:

- How did the Dabney's work together to get and share information about the Confederate plans and share the information with the Union? (Primary Source 1)
- Based on what you read about the Dabney's and the risks they took, how would you characterize them?
- What impact do you think the Dabney's had on the war?
- What strikes you first regarding the two images (Primary Source 2 & 3)? What do they have in common?
- Based on these two images, what did people risk by serving as spies?
- What can these images teach us (or confirm) regarding life as a spy during the Civil War?

Culminating Thoughts:

- Why is this an important topic to consider when studying the Civil War?
- What is most important from the reading and primary sources that you need to teach your classmates about in your soap opera? (List at least five things.)