

LESSON TITLE: Civilian Life During the Civil War

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Special Education, Social Studies

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TEACHING TRADITIONAL AMERICAN HISTORY PROGRAM

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<http://www.chillhistoryproject.com/>

Lesson Overview: *This lesson will enable students to see the impact of war on civilians and transfer that understanding to present day wars occurring in foreign countries. Additionally, the students will see how war in their homeland would disrupt an economy especially in the areas of scarcity and factors of production.*

Essential Question(s):

1. *How does war in your homeland affect the lifestyles of civilian citizens?*
2. *How would your life change if a war was being fought on your country's soil?*
3. *What do the terms "scarcity" and "factors of production" mean?*
4. *How would the country's economy be affected if a war were being fought in the United States?*

Objectives: *After completing this lesson, the student will be able to:*

1. *Analyze the impact of war in the United States on the economy*
2. *Evaluate lifestyle changes that occur as a result of war in a person's homeland*

Assessment: *The student will make a scrapbook that covers a one week time period describing their life as it might be if they had been living during the Civil War. The student will choose a civilian role to assume, for instance, store owner, parent, banker, police officer...etc. It will cover all aspects of daily life for that one week including food, supplies, activities, living situations, and the economy that could have developed as a result of a war "in their backyard." On a back page of the scrapbook, the student will write a short essay describing how their current life (as a high school student) would be changed, using the issues mentioned, if there was a war being fought in the United States. A scoring guide is attached to this lesson plan.*

Materials:

- 1. An overview of the American Civil War from a textbook of choice*
- 2. Paper and pencils for making a list of current daily activities and items used on a daily basis*
- 3. Handmade books to use as a scrapbook*
- 4. Handouts of the stories that appear at the end of this lesson plan*
- 5. Computers for individual research*

Class Time: *1 to 2 – ninety minute class periods*

Teacher Input:

- 1. Read an overview of the American Civil War that includes causes, major locations, and outcome.*
- 2. Have students fold a piece of notebook paper in half lengthwise. On one side have them list, in detail, the activities they do on a regular basis including weekends. In the other column, have the students list items they use or buy regularly either out of necessity or personal wants. Discuss these things as a class.*
- 3. Read the attached stories as a class. There are numerous examples and more available on the internet.*

Activities:

1. Define the following:
 - a. scarcity (*limited resources and unlimited wants and needs*)
 - b. factors of production (*human resources, natural resources, capital resources; resources used in the production of goods and services*)
2. As a class, discuss the above economic factors and how they were affected by war.
3. Have each student find additional civilian stories on the web. If you prefer, they could also look for stories of civilians in Afghanistan and Iraq or other foreign countries living with war within their borders.

The following websites will help the students' research issues:

1. <http://score.rims.k12.ca.us/activity/manswar/>
2. <http://library.duke.edu/specialcollections/bingham/guides/civilwar.html>
3. <http://www.civilwarliterature.com/>

Questions for review:

1. Based on the readings and additional research, brainstorm ways that the students' lives would be affected by war.
2. What do you think life is like for children your age in Afghanistan and Iraq today?
3. What could you do to protect yourself and your family in this situation?
4. Would you have the money to flee the area? Where would you go?

Closure: Allow for any questions or discussions the students might have after the completion of this unit. It might be beneficial to have some of the students share their scrapbooks with the class. Another closure activity might be to have students look for articles in the newspaper dealing with civilian life in Iraq or Afghanistan. The following websites contain articles discussing civilian life in war torn areas of the world:

1. <http://www.cbc.ca/world/story/2007/04/11/redcross-iraq-070411.html>
2. <http://www.ned.org/grantees/shra/3-5-98/impact.html>
3. <http://society.guardian.co.uk/aidforiraq/story/0,,951518,00.html>

Extension: *The following books give a thorough picture of civilian life during the Civil War:*

1. *At Gettysburg, or What a Girl Saw and Heard of the Battle* by Tillie Pierce Alleman
2. *Days of Uncertainty and Dread* by Gerald R. Bennett

References: *References for this lesson appear after the short stories provided.*

Graphics: *The following pictures are areas discussed in the stories as they appear today.*



Poffenberger Farm where Union soldiers (about 12,000) camped the night before the battle. According to an Antietam guide, the soldiers took all the food from the house and garden and used whatever they needed that was in the house. When the family was able to return, they suffered

severe food shortages for several months after the battle.



This is the area on the Poffenberger Farm used as a Union encampment by approximately 12,000 soldiers. The troops were camped from this front yard area to the far tree line.

Bullet hole in the side of the Shriver home





A view of Little Roundtop (left background) and Big Roundtop (right background). It was between these two mountains where the Shriver's fled to avoid war in Gettysburg. They ended up being in the center of the fighting.

STORIES OF CIVILIANS IN THE CIVIL WAR

1.

(Bennett, 2002)

"Every hour was one of uncertainty and dread," was a description of the time surrounding the first three days of July when war broke out in Gettysburg. A local newspaper editor was a little more specific. In his paper, the *Adams Sentinel*, he wrote, "Remembering that our town was the dividing line between two opposing forces...We can do nothing less than gratefully and reverently acknowledge the Divine favor which has watched over our lives and our homes."

Rarely, fortunately the United States, have the citizens had to endure war in their homeland. It is a sad to report that it is difficult to find articles reporting the struggles of civilians caught up in this or any other battle of the Civil War. One only needs to think about how their life would change if he/she were facing similar circumstances. Then imagine the circumstances of life in the mid-1800s.

Rarely have historians discussed the actual town of Gettysburg which included about 450 buildings, a population of about 2,400. Gettysburg, economically and socially, was at the center of a war during that July. The small town of Gettysburg was deluged by the arrival of 163,000 men and 15,000 animals. Imagine life with men dying all around. Imagine bullets and cannonballs flying. Imagine trying to protect a family when the enemy is occupying the town. Then imagine the destruction and work that remained after the battle. There was approximately 21,000 wounded requiring care that they could not provide for themselves. There was the matter of burying the dead; over 50,000 had died in the battle at Gettysburg not to mention dead horses. It does not seem right that many of these stories have not been told and still remain in the background of the larger issue of battle strategy.

2.

(Ernst, 2007)

“The true skedaddlers were already long gone by Tuesday, September 16, the day before the battle. They were safe across the Pennsylvania line, squeezed into hotels or in-laws’ spare bedrooms, or sleeping beside northern roads with their valuables jammed into wheelbarrows and saddlebags.” (2) The residents of Sharpsburg had been told they should flee. It was the day before the battle. Bullets were already heard in the area.

One family, the Housers, and their children had left most of their possessions behind and were walking down a road to safety. As they were walking, a bullet hit a fence close to them. This made a lasting impression on the children, especially.

Another family, the Grices, packed some of their possessions and also left the area with one horse. They could only find refuge in a cave.

The Pipers, wealthy farmers and slave owners, had their property overtaken by some confederate generals and their staff and troops. The Pipers served dinner to the generals and then were told they should leave the vicinity. The family packed quickly, only taking what could be carried in a cart. They buried some more valued possessions in a pile of ashes

Meanwhile, Union commanders and troops had settled on the Poffenberger farm. They advised the family to leave and then used the house and grounds as an encampment. The troops took whatever they needed from the Poffenberger house and gardens. After the battle, as the residents were returning, the Poffenbergers found their grounds ransacked. For several months after the battle ended, food shortages were a constant challenge for the family.

3.

(Bennett, 2002)

Breakfast preparations were ongoing at the home of Louis and Georgia McClellan. They were in the middle of a fight, as were many people in the town of Gettysburg. Bullets were hitting the McClellan home and some were entering as they broke through the windows. Mrs. McClellan was in an upstairs bedroom with her newborn son. Her mother and sister were getting breakfast

ready for the household. At one point there was a loud crash. A bullet had torn through a door of the house. It had enough power to pass through the door and Jennie Wade, Mrs. McClellan's sister. As it traveled through her body, it pierced her heart. Needless to say, Jennie died instantly. Jennie's mother was in shock and only able to announce to the others that Mrs. McClellan's sister was dead. This announcement was matter of fact with almost no emotion. Almost unbelievably, this young woman was the only civilian fatality in this battle.

4.

(The Shriver House Museum, 2007)

The Shrivvers had just purchased a new home before the Civil War broke out. Shortly after moving in, Mr. Shriver enlisted in the Union army.

About 2 years later Confederate soldiers were across the Pennsylvania line and headed for Gettysburg. Mrs. Shriver was very nervous but did not want her two daughters to become afraid. She tried to continue with her normal routine.

One morning they woke up and realized that overnight things had escalated. As the noise increased, Mrs. Shriver decided that they might be safer at her parent's farm in the country since everyone thought the battle would be fought in the town. She contacted her next door neighbors before leaving. The Pierces thought leaving would be a good idea and asked Mrs. Shriver to take their daughter, Tillie, with her.

Mrs. Shivers parents' farm was in between Little Round Top and Big Round Top. This was where some of the worst fighting occurred. The noise of the battle was so loud that the families had to shout to hear each other. After the battle, wounded and dead soldiers and horses were all around them. The Shriver's decided to stay and help care for the wounded that were unable to care for themselves.

A few days later, Mrs. Shriver decided it was time to return to their home in town. The view along the way would be remembered for the rest of their lives. More than 52,000 soldiers had been killed or wounded in the battle at Gettysburg. In addition, there were more than 5,000 horses killed. Most of the

Union dead and wounded had been removed from the field. It would take quite a while to bury the dead. As they approached the town, they realized the destruction. Houses and buildings were damaged or laid in ruins. The Shriver home had bullet holes in the sides. Everyone seemed to be in a state of confusion.

Mrs. Shriver realized that confederates had occupied her home while she was gone. Neighbors had told her they saw them entering. One neighbor told Mrs. Shriver that confederate sharp shooters had hidden in her attic and were taking shots at Union soldiers going through town.

5.

(Alleman, 1889)

Tillie Pierce, a neighbor of the Shrivens kept a diary reporting the time leading up to, during, and after the battle. She reported the town filling up with soldiers and their searches for food and supplies. She wrote, "They wanted horses, clothing, anything and almost everything they could conveniently carry away." In addition, she stated that they did not ask permission from individual citizens. They took what they needed. According to her diary, the soldiers did make demands of the town's leaders. They asked for the town to supply them with flour, meat, groceries, assorted clothing, and last but not least, barrels of whiskey. If the town could not give them these supplies, the men said they would accept five thousand dollars instead.

References

Alleman, T. P. (1889). *At Gettysburt, or What a Girl Saw and Heard of the Battle*. New York: Butternut and Blue.

Bennett, G. R. (2002). *Days of "Uncertainty and Dread"*. Littlestown: Gerald R. Bennett.

Ernst, K. (2007, July). *Too Afraid to Cry Preview*. Retrieved July 19, 2007, from The Distaff Side: <http://www.distaff.net/ketacpv.htm>

The Shriver House Museum. (2007, April). *The Shriver House*. Retrieved July 11, 2007, from The Shriver House Museum: http://www.schrivhouse.com/the_shrivers.htm

Scoring Guide Scrapbook and Essay

	4	3	2	1	0
Accuracy	Accurate, fully supported by history	1 historical error	2 historical errors	3 historical errors	4 or more historical errors
Perspective	Student stayed in role and was convincing to the reader/reviewer	—————→			Out of role and scrapbook articles were not convincing
Historical Creativeness	The student chose artifacts unique to their role	—————→			Artifacts were common and showed little creativity
Artifacts Pertaining to food, supplies, activities, living situations, and economy	Artifacts are well labeled and document all issues	Artifacts are well labeled but only cover 4 of 5 issues	Artifacts are labeled but only cover 3 of 5 issues	Artifact labels are insufficient and only cover 2 of 5 issues	Artifacts are not well labeled and most issues are not covered
Essay Writing Mechanics	No mechanical, grammatical, or spelling errors	1 or 2 errors in mechanics, grammar, or spelling	3 errors in mechanics, grammar, or spelling	4 errors in mechanics, grammar, or spelling	More than 4 errors in mechanics, grammar, or spelling
Essay relates to current day	Essay addresses 5 issues that would be realistic today for their lifestyle	—————→			Does not address most issues that would relate to student's life today