

## “Social Studies / History Activity” “Guerrilla Warfare and the Impact on Civilians: The Hunter-Hagler Collection”

### **Background**

The roots of guerrilla warfare in the Ozarks can be traced to the 1850s. The passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854 opened the territory of Kansas to settlement, and a popular vote on allowing slavery in the territory. Many Missouri residents believed they could influence the territorial elections in Kansas by crossing the border and casting pro-slavery votes. Hatred grew along the Missouri/Kansas line as Free-Statists arrived from the North to battle the Missourians. Both sides crossed the border, often committing depredations on the civilian population, in the bloody struggle over the entry of Kansas into the Union. Kansas ultimately became a free state, and the “Bleeding Kansas” era laid the foundation for an even more brutal and vicious guerrilla war in the 1860s.

In 1862, Confederate General Thomas Hindman authorized the formation of guerrilla bands to operate against Union forces to contest their control of Missouri and Arkansas. These small bands, composed of both legitimate soldiers and those seeking adventure and plunder, conducted raids, “hit and run” type attacks, to weaken the Union forces and their collaborators. Success was not measured in combat, but rather in preventing the Union from gaining further control and forcing them to spend resources in non-combat situations.

The names “Bushwhackers” and “Jayhawkers” were applied to guerrilla combatants from specific regions. “Bushwhacker” was originally a complimentary term coined by Washington Irving. Writing for *Knickerbocker* Magazine in the late 1840s, Irving described hearty frontiersmen as “gallant bush-whackers and hunters of raccoons.” The stalking tactics of game hunters were not appreciated when those frontier skills were applied to hunting soldiers. “Jayhawker” was a term well known to Missourians during the “Bleeding Kansas” era. Used to describe Kansas Free Statists, Missourians considered it a perfect description of their hated enemy. Though no such bird exists, it recognized the voracious hawk and the pesky jay, who, in the form of Kansas soldiers plundered Missouri farms. Charles R. Jennison famously led Kansas Jayhawkers on raids into Missouri.

Both bushwhackers and jayhawkers attacked military combatants and civilians alike. Civilian property of all types was stolen or burned. Unexpected and unpredictable attacks spread fear among civilians. Homes were burned, property and livestock stolen, men executed and kidnapped, and women and children verbally abused. The Hunter Family living in McDonald and Jasper County, Missouri documented the devastating effects bushwhackers had on the region in their family letters.

The Hunter-Hagler collection provides letters written by Elizabeth Hunter and her daughters, Priscilla A. Hunter and Charlotte Elizabeth (Hunter) Hagler. The Hunters write Margaret Hunter Newberry, who married and left the family farm. The letters describe how the Hunter family

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survived harsh winters, sold goods at the market, and provide graphic details of murder, theft and destruction caused by bushwhackers in Jasper and Lawrence Counties. Perpetual violence caused the Hunter family to leave their beloved homestead, and flee to Illinois in late 1864.

The collection does not contain any of Margaret's letters, but it appears she may have been a secessionist. Elizabeth's passionate belief in the Union and graphic news from home may have caused a rift among her family. It is unknown how Elizabeth's letters were received, but through their context it becomes clearer Margaret did not always feel loved by her family's correspondence. Despite Margaret's political thoughts, Elizabeth remained adamant about her feelings; she believed the suffering of her family, friends and neighbors was the fault of the Confederates and their deplorable tactics. The Hunter-Hagler letters are a powerful collection depicting the hardships many families faced in a politically torn region as neighbors and even families turned on one another.

### **Task**

This task is designed for use at the fourth, eighth and high school grade levels. Questions and activities corresponding with the respective levels are located with each activity. Teachers are encouraged to use or adapt the provided sample questions for their individual classroom. Participants will explore the impact of guerrilla warfare on civilians through the Hunter-Hagler family letters. Students are required to read the excerpts from five letters written by Elizabeth Hunter and Priscilla Hunter to Margaret Hunter Newberry. They date from July 1864 to January 1865. The full letters are available online. URLs are provided in the excerpt worksheet. Students will reflect on the hardships facing the Hunter Family in Missouri during the Civil War. Next, students will answer questions corresponding to the information within the letters. They are expected to provide verbal or written feedback regarding the primary source documents. Finally, the students will complete a map of the locations described in the letters and the significant events that happened in those areas. Participants will be required to complete research outside of the resources provided in this packet to answer questions and complete the activity.

### **Show-Me Knowledge Standards Addressed**

- SS 2 (knowledge of) continuity and change in the history of Missouri, the United States and the world
- SS 5 (knowledge of) the major elements of geographical study and analysis (such as location, place, movement, regions) and their relationships to changes in society and environment
- SS 6 (knowledge of) relationships of the individual and groups to institutions and cultural traditions
- SS 7 (knowledge of) the use of tools of social science inquiry (such as surveys, statistics, maps, documents)

### **Show-Me Performance Standards Addressed**

- 1.2 conduct research to answer questions and evaluate information and ideas

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- 1.5 comprehend and evaluate written, visual and oral presentations and works
- 1.7 evaluate the accuracy of information and the reliability of its sources
- 2.3 exchange information, questions and ideas while recognizing the perspective of others
- 3.1 identify problems and define their scope and elements
- 3.3 develop and apply strategies based on one's own experience in preventing or solving problems
- 4.1 explain reasoning and identify information used to support decisions
- 4.3 analyze the duties and responsibilities of individuals in societies

## **Activities**

Watch a clip from the movie *Ride with the Devil* (**Only for 8<sup>th</sup> Grade and High School**)

- Time: 3:35 min
  - o Scene available on YouTube
    - [<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q76fAWLiC9w>]

Read the excerpts of five letters written by Elizabeth Hunter and Priscilla Hunter to Margaret Hunter Newberry. (**See Resource Packet**)

- Time: 20 min
  - o Transcripts may be viewed from *Community and Conflict: The Impact of the Civil War in the Ozarks*
    - [[www.ozarkscivilwar.org/archives/1044](http://www.ozarkscivilwar.org/archives/1044)]
- Answer discussion questions and complete map worksheet.

## **Discussion / Worksheet Questions**

### **(4<sup>th</sup> Grade)**

- *Why did the Hunter Family move away from their home?*
- *What daily activities do the Hunter women describe doing?*
- *Why were the Hunter women afraid?*
- *Why did Elizabeth write about the 1864 presidential election? Why was it important?*
- *Why are Elizabeth and her daughter Margaret fighting? What does Elizabeth say to settle the disagreement? Have you ever had a disagreement with your parents or a friend? How did this affect your relationship?*
- *What were Bushwhackers?*

### **(8<sup>th</sup> Grade)**

- *Why did the Hunter Family leave their home?*
- *What fears do the women describe in their letters? What do they do to try and protect themselves and their belongings? If you were in a situation similar to this, what might you do?*
- *In Elizabeth's letter written in November of 1864 she refers to an election. What election took place at this time? What were her thoughts about the election?*

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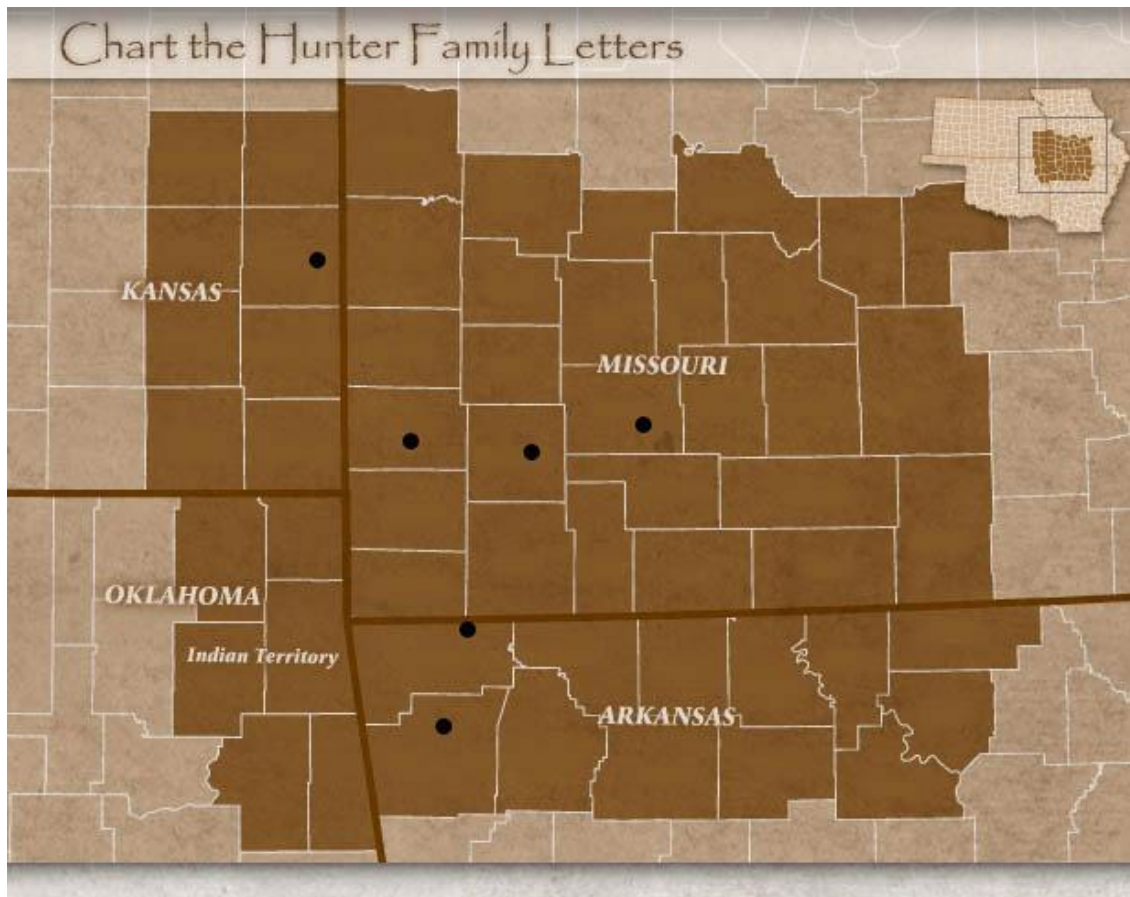
- *Who did Elizabeth Hunter favor in the 1864 election? What specific examples in her letter support this? Are there individuals mentioned in the letters who have a different political belief?*
- *Why are Elizabeth and her daughter Margaret fighting? What does Elizabeth say to settle the disagreement? Have you ever had a disagreement with your parents or a friend? How did this affect your relationship?*
- *What were Bushwhackers?*
- *In the film, how did the Bushwhackers decide that the store owner was a Union supporter?*

### **(High School)**

- *Why did the Hunter Family abandon their home and relocate to a different area?*
- *What political party does the mother, Elizabeth Hunter support? What specific examples in her letter support this? Are there individuals mentioned in the letters who have a different political belief?*
- *What does Elizabeth say to settle the differences with her daughter Margaret? Have you and a family member or friend ever had a major difference of opinion? How might you resolve the differences in opinion? How did that affect your relationship?*
- *Why do you think Elizabeth wrote about the destruction of property and bushwhacker killings?*
- *What fears do the women describe in their letters? What do they do to try and protect themselves and their belongings? If you were in a situation similar to this, what might you do?*
- *In Elizabeth's letter written in November of 1864 she refers to an election. What election is she referencing and what is its significance? What were Elizabeth's thoughts about the election? What influence did the election have on her family?*
- *What were Bushwhackers? How could you identify a Bushwhacker from a Union soldier?*
- *In the film, how did the Bushwhackers decide that the store owner was a Union supporter?*
- *Choose 1 line from each letter that you feel best sums up the writer's attitude and explain why.*

### **(Role Play)**

- *How would you feel if your mother wrote you a letter about your friends and neighbors being killed and robbed?*
- *What would you have done if someone stole your clothes and set your bed on fire? Where would you go and where would you sleep?*
- *Would you have moved back after the war ended?*
- *Speculate on Margaret's reaction to the letters she received from her mother and sisters.*



**Place the following locations on the map above**

Mount Vernon, MO	Springfield, MO	Greene County, MO
Fayetteville, AR	Pea Ridge, AR	Bourbon County, KS
Carthage, MO	Fort Scott, KS	Lawrence County, MO
	Benton County, AR	Jasper County, MO

**Answer the following questions**

1. What locations did Elizabeth Hunter live at during the course of the war? Circle these places on your map.

2. Draw on your map the location of the Wire Road. What is the Wire Road?

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3. Name one significant Civil War event that happened at each of the following towns:  
Springfield, Carthage, and Pea Ridge

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4. Why were the states' borders prone to guerilla warfare?

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5. Was Missouri a Pro-Union or Pro-Confederate state? Explain.

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# Resource Packet

## **Hunter-Hagler Letter Collection: Letter Excerpts**

(Links to the full letter is provided with each excerpt)

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### **Priscilla Hunter letter to Margaret Hunter Newberry – ca. July 1864**

<http://cdm.sos.mo.gov/cdm4/document.php?CISOROOT=/mack&CISOPTR=728&REC=11>

Mag we have had bad times ever since you left. I do not think iT will be any better soon, the rebels have bin going north a great dal, we hear that there is ten bushwhackers up there to one down here. I think they will go South in the fall and give us fits as they go down I do not know what will become of us if times dont get any better by fall I think most of the familes will leave here but I do not know where they will go to...

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### **Elizabeth Hunter and Priscilla Hunter letters to Margaret Hunter Newberry – August 11, 1864**

<http://cdm.sos.mo.gov/cdm4/document.php?CISOROOT=/mack&CISOPTR=733&REC=1>

...our cuntry is in a bad condition I dont know what is to become of us we still have enough to eat and wear for which we aut to be truly thankful i fear it wont last long...

... we hear of horse steeling every week or too Motly's horses was stoled a few nights ago all they had at home they went to the Sarcoxie mill last week and told the miller if he ground another grain he would kill him so the mill is standing the water is so low wee can hardly git grinding done atal we hear the drouth is awful in the north part of the state and the rebbels killing burning and destroying worse than they are here Jenison [Charles Jennison] is let loose among them I hope he will give them justice the rebels are under no law and the malitia is bound down not to pester any thing that belongs to a sworn secish they can ride fine horses but if we go we have to walk we can't keep a horse here the union party is on the decline we cant keep nothing for the bushwhacks but the secish is let alone Mag I cant be a secesh there is no use trying I am funder from it all the time to see how they are killing our men distroying our cuntry who can claim them for there party. They have killed Mr Clark Peter Baker Mr Seymore Brice Henry John Blake Pearson Lorence and Alfred Lawrence around here this summer. all honest men I saw four of them after they were killed Seymore left a helpless family a wife and six small children without much means old Mrs Laurence has a young son born 16 July four days old when Pearson was killed Mary has a son born 1 August she is verry weekly cant sit up any not even in the bed...

Dear sister I will write you a few lines this morning as Mother has bin writing The bushwhackers was down on the prairie last night a robing they robed Mr Voss badly they took a dress of Mrs Voss

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and their shoes they took all the mens clothes they took some bed cloths and a horse they inquired the way here but did not come they went to irish wilsons and took john off and robed them I do not know what they took they will come here some time and give us fits I believe do not know what they will do with John Wilson they may kill him it looks like there nothing too mean for them to do...

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#### **Priscilla Hunter letter to Margaret Hunter Newberry – September 25, 1864**

<http://cdm.sos.mo.gov/cdm4/document.php?CISOROOT=/mack&CISOPTR=738&REC=12>

Dear sister I will commence a letter to you this morning, though I dont expect to have an opportunity of sending iT to the office soon you said you reconed we had a loneSome Time you had better bet we have nowhere to go and if there was no way to go as we cant k[MS blotted] a horse well Mag I would love to see you I could tell you many things that I cant write you thought we had hard times here before you left but it is ten times as hard now ther is men being killed every little while, there was four or five men killed over on Spring river about a week ago. The bushwhackers burnt Carthage a few days ago the Malitia was called off from there we heard that there was five hundred rebels at Carthage last friday there was a company of Malitia at the School house and they left after night I expect the troops are all called off we are looking for a rade all the time it may be gone north now the bushwhackers came though this neighborhood last week they robed old Drawin badly then came to Mrs Clarks and cut up at a trrible rate made her give them what money She had and took a good many things. they are afraid of us they go around they went to Loves and took some Things from him he said and then went to Mrs Seymores and robed her gain they are death on the widow woman I am [MS torn] they will call on us next time I have bin trying to weave a little we have a web of janes in the loom we have cut it out twice I do not know who will cut it out next time I dont know how we will get our flannel wove we are afraid to put it in the loom I guess you have quit hiding now we have to hide our thing all the time it is an awful job we have bin drying apples we have about four bushels dried we have had a poor chance.

...the bushwhackers was at Dr Wilsons not long ago they took all of his clothes he hid in the house they pulled a bed off of the stead and burnt it they had shot an old man and he could not go to see him till he got clothes...

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#### **Elizabeth Hunter letter to Children – Nov. 1, 1864**

<http://cdm.sos.mo.gov/cdm4/document.php?CISOROOT=/mack&CISOPTR=825&REC=2>

...wee saw a good many of the rebs they did give us but one robing and that was a pritty severe one they took two or three blankets one thick comfort two sheets and burnt another stript all my pillows Palmyras shoes twelve or fourteen pounds soda all my spice Richards old yellow hat Mags saddle and a lot of other things too tedious to mention they burnt two straw beds on the floor the last one I run out with it when it was about half burnt we had an auful time to save the house the straw smoke was so thick and strong I would work a little while then have to run to the door to [MS torn] my breath I think it was there intention to burn [MS torn] but they were afraid the feds were persueing...

I dont know where wee will go then I cant stay here this winter if they dont burn the house we cant git wood Amy is gone up to miners me and the children has to git wood the best way we can I never would have consented to sell the place but the time has come that I cant stay any longer without help wee cant winter here without wood I think the feds will make the secesh all leave shortly then the others will have to go. Priscilla is going to write some and my pen is so bad I will quit I feel like we are broke up O this awful war. I am so tired of it I want peace most any way so it will be lasting...

Dear Brother and Sisters as Mother has bin writing... Times has changed considerably since you was here we have had some trying times shore you thought it was more than you could bare when you was here but it is a thousand times worse now. I hate to live in such a cuntry and I hate to leave it when I think of the good home we had in it the horrid rebels is cause of it all I have no sympathy for them when I see the distruction around us and know that they are the whole cause of it.

...we hide the few little rags the [MS torn]sh has left us, we have not done our weaveing yet we are afraid to put a web in the loom we have got the yarn colored for 40 yards of flannel we are a going to make the web like that your grandma Jack had we will not weave it till we get away from here we will not let the rebs have the pleasure of getting it if we can avoid it.

Mag you must write to me and I will answer it in due time pray for me tell Mag Newberry I have written 2 or 3 letters to her and have g no answer

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**Elizabeth Hunter letter to Margaret Hunter Newberry – January 10, 1865**

<http://cdm.sos.mo.gov/cdm4/document.php?CISOROOT=/mack&CISOPTR=743&REC=5>

Dear Mag I received a letter from you yesterday it had been a long time since I got a letter from you I have written to you twice and Prissilla once since we mooved here I have been waiting with impatience for a answer I dont know why they dont go we do our part and aint to blame I am always glad to hear from you, dont let such thauts enter your mind that I ever get tired of yet I would like to be with you all the time. I love you with that love that none but a mother knows it distresses me to think that my child has any fears that I have forsaken [MS torn]ntend long as I have a heart to love any thing I will love my children and be there true friend as I have always been, dont think because we differ in opinion in war matters that I aint your friend I can tell you that I think the rebbels and copperheads are all wrong they will see it when I fear it will be to late. We left our home in Jasper in November times was auful hard there a great eal worse tha when you left we had the aufulest time while the raid was in the state the country there was left open to Brushwhacks [bushwackers], for about three weeks but wee had not heard of much being done untill one friday we heard of a big gang going apast Oregon up the river they come verry near gitting George Bowers they got his horse they went up the river and killed Dr Beck & Linz they was starting to go to Mt Vernon when they come in site they started to run Linz jumped the yard fence his father could not get over Linz stoped to help him the old man told him to run and save his life if he could in the time old rusk came up and shot the old man and Linz shot him in the neck and run the old Woman got on her nees and begged them not to shoot the Dr any moore but they shot him to death and several times afterwards they followed Linz about a mile caught him and after stripping him killed him with sabers they burnt Dr Becks house and every thing they had money medicine and all, about a week after that they came to our

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house on sunday evening about one hundred and thirty we saw them comeing on the hill towards Mrs Clarks I told Amy to run but he said she thaut they was feds that is the way they got george she had time to git away with him, they come in the house and about the first thing was my greenback or they would burn my house I told them they would have to burn it for I had none they searcht every where took all they wanted then they cut a hole in my straw bed and lit a match in it I put it out then they took it off the sted at and set it a[MS torn]n the floor it burnt nearly up there injured the bedsted then they burnt [MS torn]ner bed...

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