

“Social Studies / History Activity”

“Life on the Home Front”

Background

The Civil War impacted the lives of every American. As husbands, sons and loved ones left the home for war women were required to emerge as heads of the family. Women were needed to care for the children, cultivate crops, manage livestock and serve as slave masters. The war brought economic hardships as market values crashed and food became scarce. Migrating troops foraged the countryside and bushwhackers pillaged families at will. However, not all women remained at home. Some women were active participants in the Western Sanitary Commission, assisting wounded soldiers. Others masqueraded as men and enlisted as soldiers or served as spies or bushwhackers.

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 and activity for their individual classroom. Students will be partnered together and correspond through letters as fictional individuals who lived through the Civil War. Their letters will be focused around three specific events that happened during the war: The Battle of Wilson’s Creek, The 4th of July, 1863, and the Presidential Election of 1864. Students should consider the following issues: impact of war on daily life such as: availability of goods, market prices, guerrilla warfare, lack of men to assist with farming and protection, and military occupation, perception of neighbors, and family members with different political views, and their role in the war or war effort. Participants will be required to complete research outside of the resources provided in this packet to answer questions and complete the activity. Students are expected to provide verbal or written feedback.

Show-Me Knowledge Standards Addressed

SS 2 (knowledge of) continuity and change in the history of Missouri, the United States and the World

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)

CA 1 (knowledge of) speaking and writing standard English (including grammar, usage, punctuation, spelling, capitalization)

CA 3 (knowledge of) reading and evaluating nonfiction works and material (such as biographies, newspapers, technical manuals)

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CA 4 (knowledge of) writing formally (such as reports, narratives, essays) and informally (such as outlines, notes)

CA 6 (knowledge of) participating in formal and informal presentations and discussions of issues and ideas

Show-Me Performance Standards Addressed

1.2 conduct research to answer questions and evaluate information and ideas

1.5 comprehend and evaluate written, visual and oral presentations and works

2.1 plan and make written, oral and visual presentations for a variety of purposes and audiences

2.3 exchange information, questions and ideas while recognizing the perspective of others

3.1 identify problems and define their scope and elements

4.1 explain reasoning and identify information used to support decisions

4.3 analyze the duties and responsibilities of individuals in societies

Activities

Students are going to be put into pairs. Each pair will choose imaginary identities for themselves. Assign each pair to write as either a soldier or a civilian at home.

-Each pair of students must decide:

- What are your imaginary names?
- How do you know one another, or how are you related? (e.g. mother/son, father/daughter, sister/brother, husband/wife, engaged couple, etc.)
- How old is each of you?
- Where does each of you live? What are your addresses (no zip codes needed back then!)

-Pass out index cards and ask each pair to write on the top their real names and below to write down the answers to the above questions.

-Once their identities have been approved, assign each student (in consultation with their partner) to write a biographical description of themselves, based on the following list:

- Describe your home.
- Describe the most important members of your family in some detail.
- Explain your upbringing and the extent of your education.
- Tell what your livelihood was or how you were financially supported before the Civil War began.
- Describe your reasons for supporting the position of either the Union or the Confederacy.
- If you are a man, explain what compelled you to enlist to fight. If you are a woman, explain how you feel about your writing partner joining up to fight.
- Select the most pressing concern in your life, your hopes and dreams, before the war broke out.
- Discuss the ways in which you fear the war will change your life.

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-Next, ask each student to get a photograph of their character. They can use a downloaded image from the web, or take a photo of themselves dressed in costume. You can post their biographical descriptions and photographs under the index cards for all class members to read and see.

-Students in each pair will write their first letter simultaneously and exchange. Their next letter will be in response to the first letter they received from their partner. This assignment could be completed as homework. After the pairs have responded to the letters, call up pairs to read aloud their letters, or put students in groups of four (a northern pair and a southern pair) to read each other's ongoing correspondence. The students will write their letters based on the three civil war events listed.

Round 1 Topics: Battle of Wilson's Creek, August 10, 1861

Select two or three of suggested topics to write about in your letter:

- What happened at the Battle of Wilson's Creek
- Your predictions about the prospects for ending the war.
- Your response to soldiers using the Ray's house as a hospital.
- The Confederate army now in control of Springfield and the entire southwest corner of Missouri; your reaction.
- Your fears and concerns now that fighting has actually begun.
- Your efforts in the war; battlefield or home front.
- Personal news, news from relatives and friends.

Round 2 Topics: July 4, 1863.

Select two or three of suggested topics to write about in your letter:

- July 4th; it's meaning to the cause you support.
- Military progress this spring; revised predictions.
- Death of Stonewall Jackson on May 10; your feelings about it and what it means for the future.
- The Battle of Gettysburg. Write what you have heard about it in newspapers or word of mouth if you were not there.
- In May and June of 1863, Maj. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant's armies converged on Vicksburg, entrapping a Confederate army under Lt. Gen. John Pemberton. On July 4, Vicksburg surrendered after prolonged siege operations. Your reaction.
- Union Victory at Helena, Arkansas. Lt. Gen. Theophilus Holmes's troops attacked Helena in an attempt to relieve pressure on Vicksburg. Although the Rebels had more troops and did initially capture some of the fortifications, the Union forces repelled them. Your reaction.
- Somewhere you have seen first-hand an important military or political leader. Describe the situation and experience.
- The Union begins a military draft. Your reaction, the reaction of others (Note: NYC Draft Riots will erupt July 11.)
- The effort of women you know to support the cause.

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- A terrible personal loss (a child, a soldier, aging parent, etc. related or not related to the Civil War.)
- Your wishes for the person to whom you are writing.

Round 3 Topics: Election of 1864

Select two or three of suggested topics to write about in your letter:

- Who are you supporting/hoping wins the presidential election
- What would be the effects if Lincoln won? What would be the effects if he did not?
- Price's 1864 expedition into Missouri to regain the state for the Confederacy. What stories and rumors have you heard about it? Do you support his mission or are you against it.
- Discuss the enlistment of African American soldiers; work of African American women.
- Experience of a hospital either as patient or nurse (if you have not written about one yet).
- Ongoing personal news about family and friends you know health and finances, hopes, dreams and fears for the future.
- Your revised predictions for the future of the war.

*Remind students to write about the events below in character (and not in essay style). Also remind students to write about their ongoing personal lives – romances, finances, family stories and so forth.

- Time: 2 class periods
- Additional material that students may use for reference and inspiration located on *Community and Conflict: The Impact of the Civil War in the Ozarks* www.ozarkscivilwar.org
 - Confederate Girlhood
 - Lizzie Gilmore Collection
 - Rebecca Stirman Davidson Collection
 - Hunter-Hagler Collection
 - Bushnell Collection
 - Henry Skaggs Collection
 - Elizabeth Ewing Letter
 - Lyman Gibson Bennett Collection
 - Minos Miller Letter

Discussion Questions

(4th Grade)

- *Describe the problems women faced being without men at home.*
- *State what issues soldiers had to deal with while away from their homes.*
- *Did it make a difference where you lived during the Civil War? Where would you have wanted live, on a farm or in a city?*
- *What are the problems with communicating by letter during the Civil War?*

(8th Grade)

- *Describe the struggles women who were left all alone when their husbands went off to fight had to face.*
- *Explain problems that soldiers had to deal with on a daily basis.*
- *Did it make a difference where you lived during the Civil War? What part of the country would you have preferred to live in and would have rather lived on a farm or in a city? List the advantages and disadvantages of each location.*
- *What are the problems with communicating by letter during the Civil War? How has communicating with soldiers today changed from the time of the Civil War?*

(High School)

- *Describe the struggles women who were left all alone when their husbands went off to fight had to face. What roles did they have to adapt to in order to survive?*
- *Explain the problems that soldiers had to deal with on a daily basis in camp.*
- *Identify dangers women on the home front had to encounter. What dangers did soldiers face?*
- *Did it make a difference where you lived during the Civil War? What part of the country would you have preferred to live in and would have rather lived on a farm or in a city? What were the advantages and disadvantages of each location?*
- *What are the problems with communicating by letter during the Civil War? Do those problems still exist today? How has technology improved communication?*

(Role Play)

- *Have you ever been separated from a family member or loved one for a long period of time? How did that make you feel? What were your reactions when you saw that person again?*