

## Step Into History: Gettysburg Photographs Lesson Plan Teaching Guide

### ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How did photographers create images at Gettysburg in 1863 and what were some of the story or ideas they wanted to convey in their photographs?

### OVERVIEW

The American Civil War is considered the first major conflict to be extensively photographed. The Battle of Gettysburg—fought July 1-3, 1863—and the dedication of the Soldiers' National Cemetery at Gettysburg on November 19, 1863, provided opportunities for northern photographers to create visual primary sources. Cameras were advanced enough to photograph fighting during a battle, but photographers pictured fallen soldiers and battlefield landmarks within days of the fighting's end. The images that these photographs created were widely displayed and sold in ever larger quantities nationwide.

Photographers such as Mathew Brady, Alexander Gardner, Timothy O'Sullivan, and the Tyson Brothers found enthusiastic, home front audiences for their images as the shockingly realistic medium piqued America's interests. For the first time in history, citizens on the home front could view the actual carnage of far away battlefields, like Gettysburg.

### OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this lesson, the students will be able to:

1. Knowledge
  - Understand some of the influence of photographs during the Civil War
  - Discuss how photographers created images at Gettysburg after the battle or during the dedication of the National Cemetery.
2. Comprehension/Application/Analysis
  - Examine photographs taken in Gettysburg in 1863 and read a primary source to analyze the stories photographers were trying to capture or tell.
3. Evaluation
  - Consider how photography at Gettysburg has shaped our own understanding of the battle and what the Civil War meant.

### ACTIVITIES

1. Watch the [Gettysburg Animated Map](#) for an overview of the battle and to gain contextual knowledge.
2. Distribute the [primary source worksheet](#) and point out that photographs are visual primary sources to discover and study.
3. Select a Step Into History Video (see options on [Lesson Plan Page](#)) to watch as a class or divide students into groups to view different videos; students can use the worksheet questions in Section 1 to take notes from the video.
4. Read a primary source related to the Step Into History Video. Suggestions to pair with videos or use “Brady’s Photographers of the Scene of the Conflict” generally.
  - a. The Rebel Sharpshooter at Gettysburg video – “The Home of the Rebel Sharpshooter” primary source
  - b. Confederate Prisoners video – “In Company with an Army Photographer”
  - c. Gettysburg Address video – “Getting a Negative of the Large Crowd at the Cemetery Ground” primary source
5. Have students fill out Section 2 of their worksheet from the written primary source.
6. It may be helpful for students to view [the photograph\(s\) again](#) while filling out Section 3 of their worksheet.
7. Invite the students to share their findings or their reflections from Part 3 in a classroom discussion.

## STANDARDS

Please visit the [Lesson Plan Page](#) and select the “Common Core and NCSS Standards for Social Studies” to view the details.

## RESOURCES

[Visit the Lesson Plan Page](#) to find all resources in one convenient place. You’ll find everything mentioned or linked in this Lesson Plan along with additional videos, articles, primary sources, and biographies.

### Quick Links

- [Students’ Worksheet](#)
- [Links to photographs on Library of Congress](#)

## OPTIONAL HOMEWORK/ASSESSMENT/ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES:

### *Option 1: Civil War Photography*

Learn more about the process of creating photographs during the Civil War. Watch the [In4Minutes: Civil War Photography](#) video and/or read the articles [10 Fact: Civil War Photography](#) and [Photography and the Civil War](#).

Have students write a letter as though they are a photographers’ assistant and describe to a friend the process of staging and taking photographs in a Civil War camp or battlefield.

***Option 2: Local Photographers in Gettysburg***

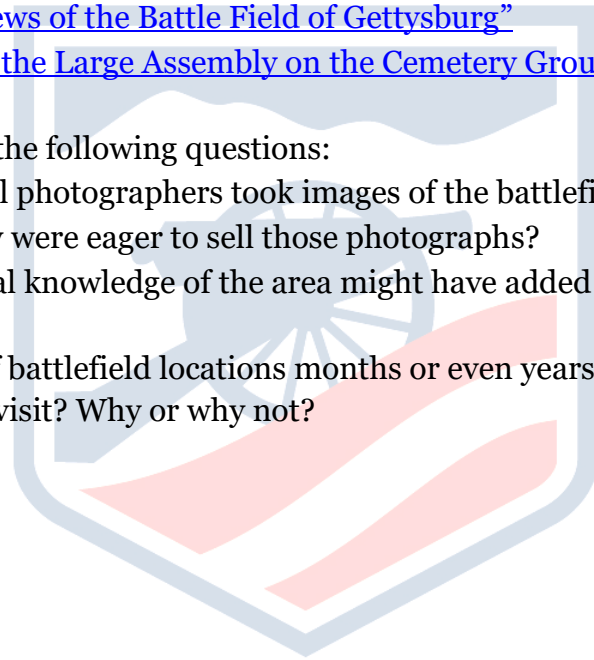
While many of the most famous battlefield photographs at Gettysburg were created by photographers who traveled to the area after the battle, there were also local photographers who created images.

Learn more about some of these men by examining the following sources:

- [“Our Photographic Views of the Battle Field of Gettysburg”](#)
- [“Getting a Negative of the Large Assembly on the Cemetery Ground”](#)
- [William H. Tipton](#)

Discuss or write answers for the following questions:

- Why do you think local photographers took images of the battlefield?
- Why do you think they were eager to sell those photographs?
- Do you think their local knowledge of the area might have added different perspectives to the photographs? How?
- Would photographs of battlefield locations months or even years after the battle have encouraged people to visit? Why or why not?



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