

The Home Front During the Civil War

Traveling Trunk Lesson #4

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

What was life like for Americans on the home front during the Civil War?

OVERVIEW

The American Civil War greatly impacted those on the home front. Sending necessities to loved ones, offering aid and support after battles, and providing supplies for the war effort was critical to both armies. Women, children, and other individuals not fighting took on the responsibilities that the men, now off fighting, once held. Their own farms and lives were at risk as the workload remained but the strongest family member(s) were now off at war. Additionally, meeting the demands of both armies put an incredible burden on civilians. Feeding, clothing, caring for, and accommodating the armies took a huge toll on the entire country. In the Confederacy, daily life during the war proved to be more difficult with battles waged in and around homes and the Union war plan to blockade ports, cut-off supplies, and level industrial hubs left destruction and refugees in its wake.

Civilians had influence over the soldiers, often asking them when they would be home, informing them of the state of affairs on their homesteads, and sharing their personal views on the politics of the day. For those on the home front and the battlefield, the dissemination of news was crucial to stay informed of the war's progression politically and militarily. The communication methods of the period were limited and slow, but with letters, newspapers and other publications, most were able to stay abreast of recent developments.

OBJECTIVES

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

1. Knowledge
 - Describe roles that families on the home front played during the Civil War.
2. Comprehension/Application/Analysis
 - Students will be able to appropriately discuss the impact that the Civil War had on families and civilians.
3. Evaluation
 - Evaluate the importance of the civilian effort during the war.

TRUNK MATERIALS

- Dress
- Bonnet
- Cotton Boll
- Bonnie Blue Flag

- Small Flag Set
- Letters

ACTIVITIES

Motivational Activity:

1. Handout *Lesson 4- Handout #1 Forms of Communication* to each student or group.
2. On a piece of chart paper or on the board, draw a vertical line creating two columns for lists. As a class, write down ways in which we communicate or spread news today (examples: cell phones, email, newspapers, television, online news, social media, etc.). Leave the other side blank; this will be filled out by students at the end of class.

Procedure:

1. As a class, view the PowerPoint presentation.
 - a. The slide notes can be printed prior to class to help the teacher guide class discussions.
2. Next, show the students the trunk materials listed above (dress, bonnet, cotton boll, flags, and letters).
 - a. Take time to discuss each item and its importance to or use in 19th century society.
 - b. Discuss the roles women and children were required to assume as the war progressed.
 - i. Making clothing for family members. This would include shirts and socks for enlisted family members.
 - ii. Slaves were forced to pick the cotton which was then refined and distributed for household use or made into fabrics.
 - iii. Flags were produced on the home front and women often were responsible for making flags.
 - iv. Explore the distribution of news to those on the home front. Newspapers and letters were the best form of communication at the time and offered loved ones updates on the war efforts.
3. As a class, watch the In4 video covering [Women's roles in the Civil War](#).
4. After viewing and discussing the PowerPoint presentation and In4 video, distribute a copy of *Lesson 4- Handout #2 J. Henry Blakeman Letter* to each student.
5. You may choose to read the letter as a class or allow students to work with a partner to read through the letter. The transcription is included.

Summary Activity:

Have students brainstorm and prepare discussion points on the following questions. Share questions and discussion points as a way to formally assess students.

- What were some of the difficulties in communication during the Civil War?
- Why were women, children, and non-enlisted men so important to the war effort on the home front?
- What roles did women play in regard to the war effort?
 - Small scale clothing production
 - Small scale flag production
 - Farming/harvesting crops
 - Overall breadwinners

Homework/Assessment:

Develop questions you have about civilians during the civil war.

Writing Prompt:

Choose one of your questions, develop a hypothesis or guess on the answer. Find an answer to your question and answer the question.

STANDARDS

Common Core State Standards

- Key Ideas and Details:
 - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.1
 - Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
 - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2
 - Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.
- Craft and Structure:
 - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.4
 - Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.
 - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.6
 - Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts)
- Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.8
 - Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text

Social Studies - National Council for the Social Studies

- Theme 1: Culture
- Theme 2: Time, Continuity, and Change
- Theme 3: People, Places, and Environments
- Theme 4: Individual Development and Identity
- Theme 5: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
- Theme 7: Production, Distribution, and Consumption
- Theme 8: Science, Technology, and Society



AMERICAN
BATTLEFIELD
TRUST ★ ★ ★

PRESERVE. EDUCATE. INSPIRE.

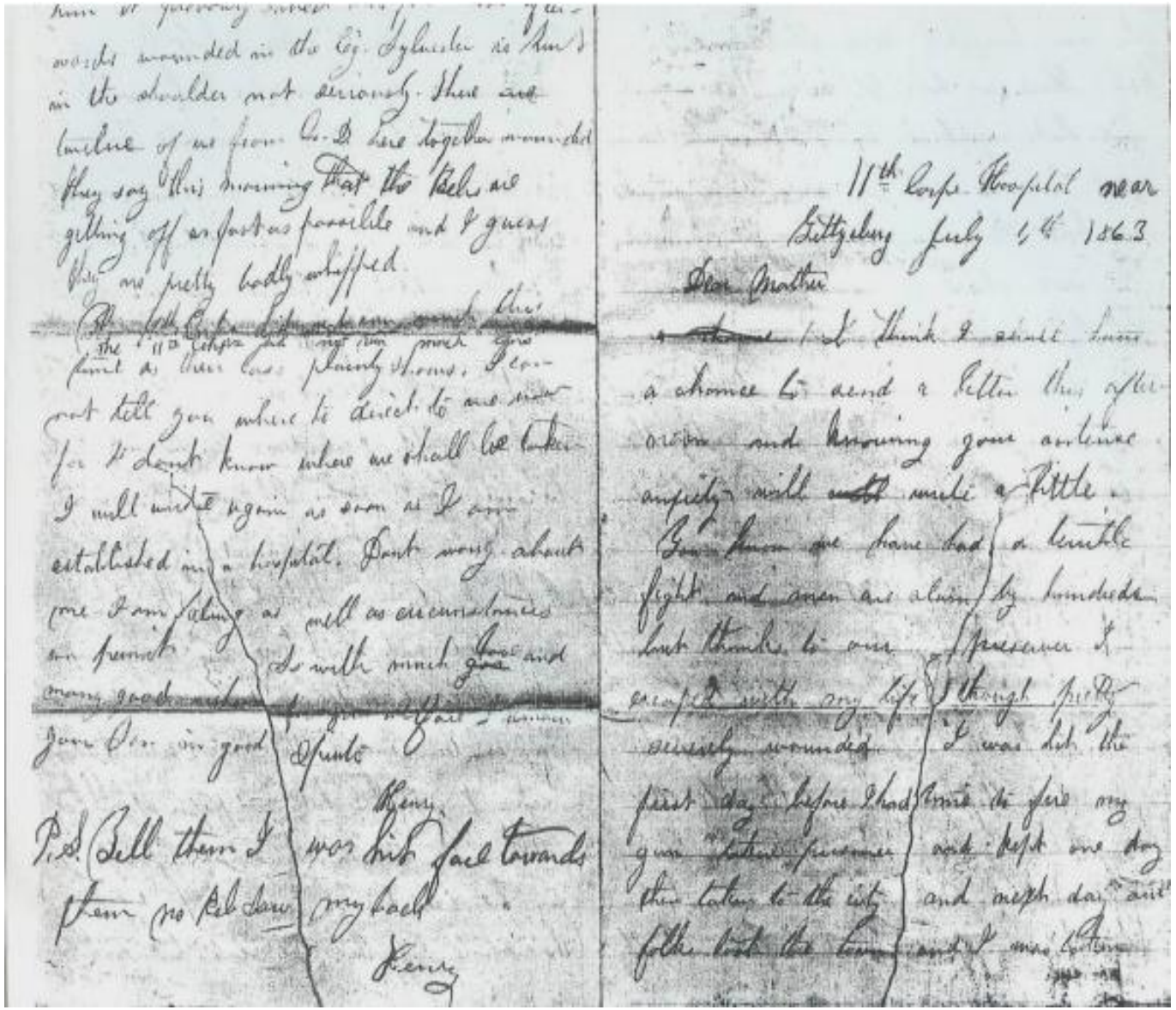
Lesson 4- Handout #1
Forms of Communication

Modern forms of communication	1860's forms of communication
Modern Reasons for Communication	1800's Reasons for Communication

Lesson 4- Handout #2

J. Henry Blakeman Letter

This Civil War letter was written by J. Henry Blakeman, a private in Company D of the 17th Connecticut Volunteers. He wrote it to his mother the day after the Battle of Gettysburg. The original letter is in the U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center at Carlisle, Pennsylvania. See if you can read the letter in Henry's original handwriting before looking at the typed transcript.



From an 11th Corps Hospital near Gettysburg (probably the Spangler Farm), on July 4, 1863, J. Henry Blakeman would write home to his mother in Stratford, Connecticut:

11th Corps Hospital near Gettysburg July 4, 1863

Dear Mother,

I think I shall have a chance to send a letter this afternoon and knowing your intense anxiety will write a little. You know we have had a terrible fight and men are slain by hundreds but thanks to our preserver I escaped with my life though pretty severely wounded. I was hit the first day before I had time to fire my gun, taken prisoner and kept one day and then taken to the city and the next day our folk took the town and I was taken to our hospital some three miles back. Here we have to lie on the ground and last night we had a terrible rain so I am as wet as water can make me but that is good for the wound. I was struck by a rifle ball in the left side between the hip and ribs passing through the flank. Dr. says he thinks it did not enter the cavity and if not it will heal soon. Do not worry about me for it will do no good. I don't mind it much can get up and walk around quite spry and have a good appetite. I can hardly bring my mind to tell you that Stephen was killed by the same volley that wounded me. He was within three feet of me and was shot through the head and killed instantly. Stephen was liked by the whole company and will be much mourned. I know it will almost kill his mother but reality is better than suspense and what I tell you can depend upon. I saw Selah yesterday morning for a few minutes he escaped unhurt. Our Regt is badly cut up they numbered only eighty yesterday. Co. D. only five besides Lieut. Peck. Col. Arrived yesterday morning and had command of the Brigade. Col. Fowler is killed Maj Brady is wounded and Capt Burr in command of the Regt. I lost everything I had but my canteen and little water. Even lost my cup. I got this sheet of paper of Stiles Wells. It was in a small portfolio in his breast and a ball passed through the whole fifty thickness but did not hurt him it probably saved his life. He was afterwards wounded in the leg. Sylvester is hurt in the shoulder not seriously. There are twelve of us from Co. D here together wounded they say this morning that the Rebs are getting off as fast as possible and I guess they are pretty badly whipped. The 11th Corps did not run much this time as their casualties plainly show. I cannot tell you where to direct to me now for I don't know where we shall be taken. I will write again as soon as I am established in a hospital. Don't worry about me I am feeling as well as circumstances can permit. So with much love and many good wishes for your welfare I remain your Son in good spirits.

Henry

P.S. Tell them I was hit face toward them no reb saw my back. Henry

Lesson 4- Handout #3
Letter Writing

Pennsylvania



Formatting your letter:

Date

Salutation (Dear....)

Introduction (why you are writing)

Body (descriptions of places, events,
information about the topic, ideas)

Conclusion

Closing (Sincerely, Yours truly....)

Signature

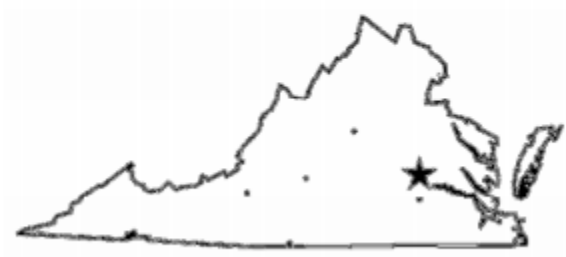
You are a child living in Gettysburg. You have just experienced the Battle of Gettysburg, a bloody three-day engagement that at times spilled into the town. During the battle, a Confederate soldier even stayed at your home. Write a letter to your aunt in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Date the letter August 1, 1863, one month after the battle.

Use the space below to gather your ideas and topics you will include in your letter:

PRESERVE. EDUCATE. INSPIRE.

Lesson 4- Handout #3
Letter Writing

Virginia



Formatting your letter:

Date

Salutation (Dear....)

Introduction (why you are writing)

Body (descriptions of places, events, information about the topic, ideas)

Conclusion

Closing (Sincerely, Yours truly....)

Signature

You are a young mother of three small children living in the city of Richmond, Virginia. Due to the war, food is becoming scarce and you participated in the bread riot on April 2, 1863. You are so very desperate to feed your children. Write a letter to your husband who is serving the Confederate Army under General Robert E. Lee. Date the letter April 6, 1863 and explain why you took part in the riot.

Use the space below to gather your ideas and topics you will include in your letter:

PRESERVE. EDUCATE. INSPIRE.

Lesson 4- Handout #3
Letter Writing

Massachusetts



Formatting your letter:

Date

Salutation (Dear....)

Introduction (why you are writing)

Body (descriptions of places, events, information about the topic, ideas)

Conclusion

Closing (Sincerely, Yours truly....)

Signature

You are a 14-year old boy living in Boston, Massachusetts. The year is 1862 and your father and older brother are fighting for the Union. Your mother is working but cannot support the two of you without your father's help. You decide to take a job in a munitions plant. Write to your father and explain your decision to work. You know that he will not be happy, but you really want to help your family. Date your letter February 10, 1862.

Use the space below to gather your ideas and topics you will include in your letter:

PRESERVE. EDUCATE. INSPIRE.

Lesson 4- Handout #3

Letter Writing

Mississippi



Formatting your letter:

Date

Salutation (Dear....)

Introduction (why you are writing)

Body (descriptions of places, events,
information about the topic, ideas)

Conclusion

Closing (Sincerely, Yours truly....)

Signature

You are the widowed mother of four sons who enlisted with the Confederate Army. They are all serving your home state of Mississippi and all four sons were all assigned to different regiments. Letters take time to reach your sons so you want to be sure that you ask about all of the important information. Write a letter to your oldest son, and ask him for any information he can provide. Ask him to update you on his three younger brothers. You are desperate to know if they are safe after the bloody battle of Antietam. Date your letter October 25, 1862 which would have been nearly a month after the battle.

Use the space below to gather your ideas and topics you will include in your letter: