GOAL 4 | LESSON PLAN | MIDDLE SCHOOL

Life At War

GRADES: Middle School

APPROXIMATE LENGTH OF TIME: 50 Minutes

GOAL: Students will be able to explain the day to day life of a Civil War soldier.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Students will be able to describe the use of equipment, uniforms, weapons, and other items that soldiers carried.
2. Students will be able to identify three reasons why battles happened in certain locations.
3. Students will be able to discuss the role of the African American soldier, using primary and secondary sources.
4. After reading portions of soldiers’ letters, students will be able to identify and discuss hardships soldiers faced.

MATERIALS:

1. Life at War Worksheet
2. Life at War PowerPoint
3. Where Battles Happen
4. Samuel Cabble Letter
5. George P. McClelland Letter
6. John Sweet Letter
7. Zachariah Benefield Letter
8. William Norton Letter
9. Analyzing a Primary Source Letter
10. Journey of a Slave Lithograph
11. Exit Pass
ANTICIPATORY SET/HOOK:

1. Discuss with students what they think a soldier did on a day-to-day basis during the Civil War. Were they always fighting battles? What do students think soldiers did when they weren’t fighting battles? Do they think life was hard or easy for a Civil War soldier?

PROCEDURE:

Print out the PowerPoint with notes prior to class. There are notes included with the slides that can be on the printed slides, but won’t be seen by your students during the presentation.

Activity 1

1. Pass out the *Life at War Worksheet* to each student.
2. Read and discuss the *Life at War PowerPoint* with your class, discussing different aspects of soldiering.
3. Have students complete the *Life at War Worksheet* during the presentation.

Activity 2

1. Pass out *Where Battles Happen* and discuss as a class why battles happen in relation to railroads, waterways, and capitals, filling in the boxes.
2. Discuss the second question, “Where else might a battle occur?”

Activity 3

3. Break students into five small groups, giving each one of the following letters:
   a. *Samuel Cabble Letter*
   b. *George McClelland Letter*
   c. *John Sweet Letter*
   d. *Zachariah Benefield Letter*
   e. *William Norton Letter*
4. Have students read their letters silently and independently.
5. In their groups, have students analyze their letter using *Analyzing a Primary Source Letter*.
6. Have each group share its primary source letter and responses with the class.

Activity 4
Pass out *Journey of a Slave Lithograph*, and have the students write a new caption under each scene describing the action occurring in each picture.

**CLOSURE:**

1. Have students each write down two hardships a soldier would face during the Civil War on the *Exit Pass*.

**ASSESSMENT IN THIS LESSON:**

1. Completed *Life at War Worksheet*
2. Informal assessment through responses to the anticipatory set questions
3. Informal assessment through responses to PowerPoint questions
4. Informal assessment through the *Where Battles Happen* page
5. Completed *Primary Source Letter Analysis*
6. New captions for *Journey of a Slave Lithograph*
7. Completed *Exit Pass*, providing two hardships a soldier would face
Life at War Worksheet

Directions: While viewing the PowerPoint, use the words in the word bank to fill in the blanks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word Bank:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>drilling</td>
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<tr>
<td>adventure</td>
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<td>letters</td>
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The age of the average Civil War soldier was between __________ and __________ years of age.

One reason why someone might sign up to fight in the Civil War would be:
________________________

Hardtack and salt pork are examples of ____________________ eaten by Civil War soldiers.

Civil War soldiers kept in touch with family by writing ____________________.

The majority of a soldier’s time was spent ____________________ in camp, not fighting on the battlefield.

____________________ men died in the Civil War.

Most men died of ____________________, not war wounds.

Hospitals were set up in any ____________ structure, including houses and barns.

______________ came to help nurse the men back to health.

Soldiers faced ______________ of the war for the rest of their lives.
All of a soldier’s personal possessions were carried by the soldier, often in his haversack. Identify and briefly write about five items in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>What it was used for</th>
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1. [Image of haversack and items]
Where Battles Happen

Near Railroads

Near Waterways

Richmond, VA

Washington, DC
Why did Civil War battles occur near or around these areas?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Railroads &amp; Waterways</th>
<th>Capitals</th>
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Where else might a battle occur? Why?
Samuel Cabble, a private in the Fifty-fifth Massachusetts Infantry (colored), was a slave before he joined the army. He was twenty-one years old.

Massachusetts
1863

Dear Wife i have enlisted in the army i am now in the state of Massachusetts but before this letter reaches you i will be in North Carlinia and though great is the present national difficulties yet i look forward to a brighter day When i shall have the opertunity of seeing you in the full enjoyment of fredom i would like to no if you are still in slavery if you are it will not be long before we shall have crushed the system that now opreses you for in the course of three months you shall have your liberty. great is the outpouring of the colored peopl that is now rallying with the hearts of lions against that very curse that has seperated you an me yet we shall meet again and oh what a happy time that will be when this ungodly rebellion shall be put down and the curses of our land is trampled under our feet i am a soldier now and i shall use my utmost endeavor to strike at the rebellion and the heart of this system that so long has kept us in chains . . . remain your own affectionate husband until death—Samuel Cabble

Samuel Cabble returned to Missouri for his wife, and together they moved to Denver, Colorado.
George P. McClelland Letter

A Letter by George P. McClelland, Union Soldier
Virginia
December 19, 1863

Dear Sister Lizzie,

The weather has been very cold and the duty of the men is severe. They hardly have time enough to obtain sufficient wood to keep themselves warm.

We have a very strong guard; one half of the Regiment on duty every day for the reason we have an important post to guard and guerillas are as plenty as blackberries in summer. No one durst stray half a mile from camp or he will be “gobbled” up. It is really dangerous as we are liable to be picked off by murderous assassins at any time. I would sooner be in “front” – that is, with the main Army.

Pardon this scribble. I never take time to punctuate. I require a lecture from you or somebody else, then I’ll be better.

Ever Your Brother,
George
John Sweet Letter

Letter from John Sweet, Confederate Soldier, to His Parents
Tennessee
November 1863

We have just returned from a trip into East Tenn where we got big amounts of everything to eat and everything we eat is so good to me as I had been starved out so long on some bread & beef, all that we got while we were here besieging Chattanooga. up there we got sweet and Irish potatoes, chickens, molassas, wheat bread and everything that was good for a poor soldier. Oh, how I do wish that I could be at home now, for it is getting late in the evening and I have had nothing to eat since breakfast and no telling when we will get rations for our rations are out, since we left our ration wagons behind in coming here to this place, for I know you have all had a good & plentiful dinner. I know you will say poor John, but this is only a chapter in military service which we often read, but I am content and will be more so when we get rations. The independence of the bounty is what I want and I am willing to suffer for something to eat many, many days if it will only send me to my dear parents, a full and independent boy.

John H. Sweet
Zachariah HJ Benefield Letter

Letter from Zachariah HJ Benefield, Confederate Soldier, to His Wife
Tennessee
April 1864

Mrs Sary Jane Benefield

Dear beloved wife I seat myself this morning to drop you A few lines to let you know that I am well at this time and hoping this few lines may --- ---- to hand and find you enjoying the best of health Jane I have no mise of intrust to write to you Only we have had A hard march we marched five days it snowed and rained every day we are camped a- Zolicofer Tennessee Eleven miles from the line of Virginia. When you hear from me again I will be in Virginia. I reckon We have stopped at Zolicofer to rest A few days on Tuesday the 22 of March the snow fell two feet deep hear & it has been snowing & raining every since We are on our rode to Virginia I think

Jane we are faring very bad for something to eat we get flour with the brand in it & it is half oats & man can’t hardly eat it we don’t get half enough if it We steal a little & parish a little. We can’t buy nothing our money ant no count... Give my love and best respects to all friends I must close so no more at present Only remains your truly husband until death

Write soon Good Bye When this you See remember Me

Z H J Benefield
William Norton Letter

A Letter from William Norton, Union Soldier, to His Mother
Hilton Head, South Carolina
Oct. 8th, 1862

My Dear Mother,

Hearing that there is a mail going out this afternoon I thought I would improve the opportunity and write you a few lines.

I am sorry to tell you I am not very well at present. I was taken sick about three weeks ago with chronic diarrhea, and have been in the hospital about a fortnight. I have been pretty sick but I am getting better now and hope to be well in a few days.

I would like to have you send me some things which will come better in a barrel than in anything else. I should like some good fresh eggs, a bottle of preserves, some lemons if you can get some good ones, some ginger root. Some butter would be very nice, it will come better in a tin can than in anything else. I would like some sugar too. I wish you would send a bottle of good Cider Vinegar also-

I would like some pickled onions, and some dried apples. Some prepared chocolate would taste first rate, as we do not get good tea and coffee.

A towel and a couple of handkerchiefs will be very acceptable also. If there is any room for anything else I wish that you would fill it up with onions and good sound apples that are not quite ripe that they will keep better. Direct to the care of Capt. Sanford, Co C, 7th Regt. Conn Vols. _____ DD Tompkins Esq Asst. Q M General No 6 State St. N.Y. Please send it as soon as possible.

I have not heard from you since I have been here but should like to do so every mail. If convenient please send $5.00 the next time you write.

Give love to all enquiring friends, and believe me -

Ever your aff son

William Norton
Analyzing a Primary Source Letter

Group Member Names:  

1. What is the name of the person who wrote the letter?  

2. If you are able to tell, when was the letter written?  

3. Where was the author when he wrote the letter?  

4. Was the author a Union soldier, Confederate soldier, or civilian?  

5. What was the author’s background (that is, was he a native born white, a slave, a freeman, or an immigrant)?  

6. What relationship does the author have to the recipient of the letter?
7. Why do you think this letter was written?

____________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________

8. What questions would you like to ask the author of this letter?

____________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________
Journey of a Slave Lithograph

The following images depict the experience of an African American during the Civil War. Write a brief caption for each image.

1.

2.

3.
8.

9.

10.
How do you think African Americans felt about fighting for the United States?

_____________________________________________________________________
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11.

12.
Exit Pass

Exit Ticket: Life at War

Describe two hardships experienced by Civil War soldiers.

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Exit Ticket: Life at War

Describe two hardships experienced by Civil War soldiers.

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Exit Ticket: Life at War

Describe two hardships experienced by Civil War soldiers.

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