



THE Civil War Curriculum

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GOAL 5 | LESSON PLAN | ELEMENTARY

The Home Front

GRADES: Elementary

APPROXIMATE LENGTH OF TIME: 50 Minutes

GOAL: Students will be able to list examples of work done on the home front and describe how news traveled to the home front.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Students will be able to discuss the role of women, children, and slaves on the farm and in the home.
2. Students will be able to discuss how women and slaves supported the soldiers at war.
3. Students will be able to identify ways news of the war traveled to the home front, using primary sources such as newspapers, photographs, and letters.

MATERIALS:

1. Children's Voices from the Civil War
2. The Civil War Home Front PowerPoint
3. Absalom Harrison Letter I
4. Absalom Harrison Letter II
5. Letty Barnes Letter
6. Rebecca Barrett Letter
7. Sarah S. Sampson Letter
8. Analyzing a Primary Source Letter
9. My Life in the Civil War

VOCABULARY:

Civilian-a person who is not a soldier or member of the armed forces

ANTICIPATORY SET/HOOK:

1. Read excerpts of *Children's Voices from the Civil War* aloud to the class.
2. Ask students why they think children had these types of experiences.
3. Tell students that today they will determine how the Civil War impacted civilians.

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.

Print out and give a copy of *The Home Front PowerPoint* to each student. Four slides per page leaves room for note taking.

Activity 1

1. Present *The Home Front PowerPoint* presentation, following the discussion questions in the notes section.

Activity 2

1. Divide students into 5 groups.
2. Pass out one of the following primary source letters to each group.
 - a. *Absolom Harrison Letter I*
 - b. *Absolom Harrison Letter II*
 - c. *Letty Barnes Letter*
 - d. *Rebecca Barrett Letter*
 - e. *Sarah S. Sampson Letter*
3. Pass out a copy of *Analyzing a Primary Source Letter* to each group
4. Have each group read its primary source letter and analyze it using the *Analyzing a Primary Source Letter*.

CLOSURE:

1. Read some quotes from *Children's Voices from the Civil War* as a group.
2. Ask students to then write a paragraph discussing their life as a child during the Civil War using *My Life in The Civil War*.

ASSESSMENT IN THIS LESSON:

1. Notes taken during PowerPoint presentation.

2. Informal assessment of responses to questions during PowerPoint presentation.
3. Analysis of primary source letters.
4. Completion of *My Life in the Civil War*.



Children's Voices from the Civil War

"I have seen little of the light heartedness and exuberant joy that people talk about as the natural heritage of youth. It is a hard school to be bred up in and I often wonder if I will ever have my share of fun and happiness."

Emma Le Conte, age 17

"The church yard was strewn with arms and legs that had been amputated and thrown out the windows, and all around were wounded men for whom no place had yet been found."

Charles McCurdy, age 10

"It wasn't nothing to find a dead man in the woods."

James Goings, formerly enslaved, age 6

Cornelia Peake McDonald remembered her three-year-old daughter clinging to her doll, Fanny, and crying that "the Yankees are coming to our house and they will capture me and Fanny."

A Southern girl

"My daddy go away to the war bout this time, and my mammy and me stay in our cabin alone. She cry and wonder where he be, if he is well or he be killed, and one day we hear he is dead. My mammy, too, pass in a short time."

Amie Lumpkin, former slave, South Carolina

"I went to the armory of the Hiberian Guards. They seemed to like me, and I liked them. So together with Jim Butler and Jim O'Reilly, I enlisted with them. My name was first on the company's roll to enlist. I didn't tell them that I was only fifteen. So I became a soldier."

Thomas Galway, Ohio, Union Army

"We are starving. As soon as enough of us get together we are going to take the bakeries and each of us will take a loaf of bread. This is little enough for the government to give us after it has taken all our men."

A young Southern girl, Richmond, Virginia

“The house was full of the wounded. They had taken our sitting room as an operating room, and our piano served as an amputating table....The surgeons brought my mother a bottle of whiskey and told her that she must take some and so must we all. We did...Upstairs they were bringing in the wounded, and we could hear their screams of pain.”

Sue Chancellor, a Southern girl whose house provided the name for the battle of Chancellorsville, Virginia.

Early the next morning, the 16 women and children who were hiding in the basement during the battle were brought upstairs. Sue saw the chairs riddled with bullets, the piles of amputated arms and legs, and the rows of dead bodies covered with canvas. The house suddenly caught fire—probably from a shell burst—and the terrified women and children stumbled out of the building as the pillars collapsed. Her home was completely engulfed in flames, and Sue, her mother, and her five young sisters became homeless refugees.

“I passed...the corpse of a beautiful boy in gray who lay with his blond curls scattered about his face and his hand folded peacefully across his breast. He was clad in a bright and neat uniform, well garnished with gold, which seemed to tell the story of a loving mother and sisters who had sent their household pet to the field of war. His neat little hat lying beside him bore the number of a Georgia regiment...He was about my age...At the sight of the poor boy’s corpse, I burst into a regular boo-hoo and started on.”

John A Cockerill, Sixteen-year-old regimental musician, Union Army

“Day after day and night after night did we tramp along the rough and dusty roads, ‘neath the most broiling sun with which the month of August ever afflicted a soldier;’ thro’ rivers and their rocky valleys, over mountains...scarcely stopping to gather the green corn from the fields to serve as rations...During these marches the men are sometimes unrecognizable on account of the thick coverings of dust which settle upon the hair, eye-brows and beard, filling likewise the mouth, nose, eyes, and ears.”

John Dehaney, Sixteen years old

“I wanted to fight the Rebs. But I was very small and they would not give me a musket. The next day I went back and the man behind the desk said I looked as if I could hold a drum and if I wanted I could join that way. I did, but I was not happy to change a musket for a stick.”

Twelve-year-old drummer boy, Union Army

Fifteen-year-old Tillie Pierce lived in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, and was caught up in the three-day battle that raged around the town and nearby farms. Her parents sent her to a farm three miles south of town, thinking Tillie would be safer there. On the way, Tillie and her companions passed soldiers preparing for battle and came under artillery fire.

“Suddenly we behold an explosion; it is that of a caisson [a carriage carrying ammunition]. We see a man thrown high in the air and come down in a wheat field close by. He is picked up and carried into the house. As they pass by I see his eyes are blown out and his whole person seems to be one black mass... Now the wounded began to come in greater numbers. Some limping, some with their heads and arms in bandages, some crawling, others carried on stretchers or brought in ambulances...it was a truly pitiable gathering. Before night the barn was filled with the shattered and dying heroes of this day’s struggles....”

Tillie takes bread and water to the wounded soldiers. After the last day of battle, Tillie walks back to town to rejoin her family. She described what she saw.

“Horses, swollen to almost twice their natural size, lay in all directions....Fences had disappeared, some buildings were gone, others ruined. The whole landscape had been changed, and I felt as though we were in a strange and blighted land....We reached our homes. Everything seemed to be in confusion, and my home did not look exactly as it did when I left... At first glance even my mother did not recognize me, so dilapidated was my general appearance. The only clothes I had along had by this time become covered with mud...As soon as I spoke my mother ran to me, and clasping me in her arms, said: ‘Why my dear child, is that you? How glad I am to have you home again without any harm having befallen you!’”

For months afterward, Tillie and her family nursed soldiers in their home and in the field hospitals that sprang up around the town.



Absolom A. Harrison's Civil War Letter I

Camp Morton
Near Bardstown, Nelson County, Kentucky
Jan. 19, 1862

Dear Wife,

I take my pen in hand to write you a few lines. I am tolerable well at present and I hope these few lines may find you and the children and all the rest of the folks well. I started to write to you the other day but I had only time to write a few lines. I had to expedition and I had been out two days so I concluded to write again. There is a good many of our men sick and there will be a good sick yet for we have been laying on the wet ground ever since we have been here without any straw under us. And the water runs under us every time it rains. There is only about two thirds of the men fit for duty at this time. The boys from Hardin are all well but David _____. He is at the hospital sick with measles. There is some talk of being disbanded but I don't know whether there is any such good luck for us or not. If we are not disbanded I reckon I will stay here until March. Our camp is four miles from Bardstown on the turnpike leading to New Haven. It was very nice in a woods pasture place when we first came here. But it is knee deep in mud now. You must write as soon as you get this if you have not already wrote. I would like to know how mother is and how you and the children are and if folks are getting along. I would like to be at home but I have got myself in this scrape and I will have to stand it. But if I live to get out of this I will never be caught soldiering again that is certain. We did not know what hard times was until we come to this place. We don't get more than half enough to eat and our horses are not half fed and everything goes wrong. I will tell you what we have to do so you will know how much idle time we have. We get up at 6 o'clock and answer roll call. Then we feed and curry our horses and wash which takes up the time till 7 when we eat our breakfast. Then we water our horses. Then drill on foot until dinner. Then at 1-1/2 o'clock we go out and drill on horseback until four. Then water, feed and curry our horses. Then get wood for the night. By this time it is after dark. So you see they keep us pretty busy. When you write direct your letter to Camp Morton near Bardstown, Nelson Cty., Ky Cal, Boyles Reg., Company D. So nothing more at present but remaining your affectionate husband until death.

A. A. Harrison

P.S. Tell Martha, Jo is well.



Absolom A. Harrison's Civil War Letter II

**Nashville Tenn.
April 9th, 1862**

Dear Wife,

I take my pen in hand to inform you that I am tolerable well at present and hope these few lines may find you are enjoying the same blessing. We have got to this place after a long and tedious march. We got here last Sunday. The country through which we have passed is the worst torn up country I ever saw. The fences are nearly all burnt along the road and lots of the houses deserted and some of these torn all to pieces. We find some Union men down here but they are very scarce in this part of the world. This is a fine country about Nashville. There is some of the finest houses here that I ever saw and plenty of Negroes. We have had two or three insurrections in the regiment. When we fixed to start from Bardstown all the regiment except our company refused to go until they were paid off. But our company took the lead and the rest followed after. Then when we got to Munfordville and got our money they refused to go any further until we got arms and the Colonel went and got some guns that had been refused by several other regiments and told us when we got to Gallatin we should have better arms but we come to this place and this morning the Colonel ordered us to march on to Columbus 45 miles from here and selected our company to take the lead. But they told him plainly they would not go any further without better arms and I have heard that there is no more arms to give out to cavalry. I do not know what will be the result. I have not heard from you since I sent you that money but I hope you have got it. I would like to be at home with you all but I don't know when I can come. There is no chance to get a furlough now. You must write as often as you can and direct your letters to Nashville, Tenn. until I write again. You must be contented as you can and stay where you are until I can get back again and trust to Providence. So nothing more at present but remaining your affectionate husband until death.

A. A. Harrison



Letty Barnes Letter

Letter from Letty Barnes to her husband, Joshua, of the Thirty-eighth United States Colored Infantry

My dear husband

I have just this evening received your letter sent me by Fredrick Finich you can imagine how anxious and worry I had become about you. And so it seems that all can get home once in awhile to see and attend to their family but you I do really think it looks hard your poor old Mother is hear delving and working like a dog to try to keep soul and body together and here am I with two little children and myself to support and not one soul or one dollar to help us I do think if your officers could see us they would certainly let you come home and bring us a little money.

She continues in this vein enumerating the various hardships the family is enduring. At the end of her letter she writes lovingly:

I have sent you a little keepsake in this letter which you must prize for my sake it is a set of Shirt Bossom Buttons whenever you look at them think of me and know that I am always looking and wishing for you write to me as soon as you receive this let me know how you like them and when you are coming home and beleave me as ever

Your devoted wife

Letty Barnes

Joshua Barnes received his buttons and was granted leave to visit his family.



Name: _____

Date: _____

Rebecca Barrett Letter

Letter written by Rebecca Barrett to her son, William, of the Seventy-fourth United States Colored Infantry

My Dear Son

It is with pleasure I now embrace the opportunity of penning you a few lines to inform you that I am received your most welcomed letter for I had despaired of your writing. We are both sick pap is prostrated on his bed and has been so for three months and three weeks he got a little better but it did not last long I am very sorry that you have enlisted again for I wanted to see you once more You say you will send me some money do my son for God sake for I am needy at this time the Doctors are so dear that it takes all you can make to pay thier bill I work when I am able but that is so seldom God only knows what I will [do] this winter for I dont. Everything is two prices and one meal cost as much a[s] three used to cost when the rich grumble God help the poor for it is a true saying that (poverty is no disgrace but very unhandy) and I find it very unhandy for if ever a poor soul was poverty stricken I am one and My son if you ever thought of your poor old mother God Grant you may think of her now for this is a needy time. No more but remain Your mother Rebecca Barrat

William Barrett did send his mother some money.



Sarah S. Sampson Letter

**Nurse, 3rd Maine Volunteer Infantry
Agent, Maine State Soldier's Relief Agency**

**Maine Soldiers Relief Association. 973 F Street, Washington, D.C.
September 15th, 1863**

Gov. Coburn

Dear Sir: I am rather late in sending you this list of "soldiers in our hospitals the first of the month" but have done so with as little delay as possible, as it seemed necessary for me to attend to other duties while obtaining the Report. My daily mail has been so heavy since the Battle at Gettysburg that I have not been able to make the copies myself.

I spent four weeks with our wounded at Gettysburg and returned to Washington only reluctantly though there were others here who had a claim on my attention. From frequent letters in reference to some of our soldiers who are still unable to be moved from Gettysburg, I am thinking to go on again for a short time, in a few days. The agent from New Hampshire has returned and reports that the boards that mark the graves of our soldiers, are many of them displaced by the heavy rains, etc. and need attention. He had carefully replaced all those from his State. I shall be glad when all the members of our association return so that a meeting may be called to make these & other arrangements. I shall visit all the burial grounds & report while I am there.

There is a vacancy at Fairfax Seminary Hospital for Miss Owen of whom you wrote if she desires it.

Very Respectfully &c.
Mrs. Charles A.L. Sampson



Analyzing a Primary Source Letter

Group Member Names:

Directions:

1. Read your group's letter independently and silently.
2. Draw a line down the center of your chart paper to create two columns.
3. In the left column, write the following questions. In the right column, write your answers to these questions.
4. Choose one person to be the main speaker for your group. When we are done your group will present your chart to the class.

Questions:

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

Was the author a Union soldier, Confederate soldier, or civilian? (If you cannot tell, explain why you cannot.)

How does the person writing the letter know the person the letter was sent to?

What events, battles, or other details were discussed in the letter?

How does the letter make you feel, and why?



Name: _____

Date: _____

My Life in the Civil War

You are a child your age during the American Civil War. Write a paragraph about what your life is like on the lines below. Be sure to include:

1. How old you are
2. Where you live
3. What you have to do around the house, farm, or factory
4. How you feel about the war

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.