

Teaching American History Seminar: A More Perfect Union

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English Language Arts – Grades 5-8

Social Studies/International Relations – Grade 12

Journalism – Grades 11/12

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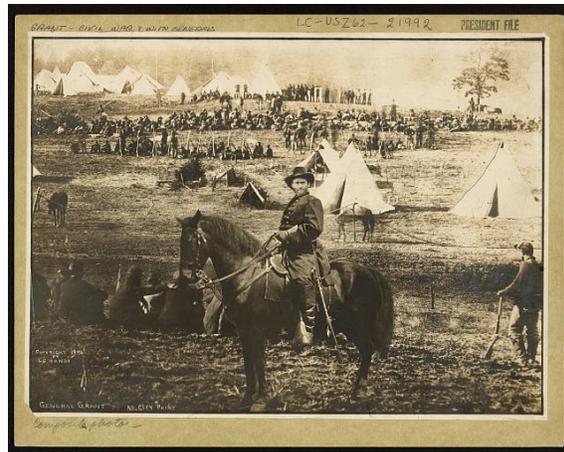
Curriculum Unit:

Using visual art to deepen historical understandings and integrating English Language Arts skills with Social Studies themes within the context of the American Civil War.

"There are always two people in every picture: the photographer and the viewer". Ansel Adams



What does the photo tell you about life during this period?



How does this photo present Grant to the public?

Background Narrative

The photography of the Civil War is one aspect that sometimes is taken for granted. Civil War texts feature original war photographs used mainly as illustrations, and omit the hidden story of why a specific image was taken and how that image might have been used to influence a point of view. The same can be said of works of art. In this lesson students will explore issues of media literacy and examine how visual art can be used to affect meaning and convey bias. Photographs from the Library of Congress and a New York Times article about a famous Civil War painting, will be used to help students build content knowledge, as well as apply critical thinking skills when analyzing historical events

Using primary sources will also expose students to an inquiry approach that can examine different perspectives. The great issues of history have often been debated by both the actual participants and by future historians. Primary sources set the historical stage for students to examine both sides of these debates.

Goals for this unit include designing those essential questions necessary to focus students on recognizing the influence the media has in forming public opinions especially in times of war: What is the responsibility of the journalist/photographer? What has been the role of the media in interpreting historical / current events? How can a photograph or a famous painting influence one's thinking, or how does what we see influence how we think? How can we recognize media bias?

Most of my students tend to think that whatever they see or read in print is factual and true. The same can be said for internet websites. Students have difficulty questioning the accuracy of information and questioning or verifying sources. Students need to be made aware that a source of information may have a cultural, racial, or religious bias and information presented will be presented within that preconceived framework.

Key Questions

1. What is the difference between fact and opinion?
2. Why is it important to recognize point of view in visual presentations?
3. What role has photography played in presenting historical events?
4. How can archival photographs deepen content knowledge of an historical period?
5. Can a primary source misrepresent an event, and how can we use primary sources to be 'history detectives' ?

Objectives and Student Learning Outcomes

1. Students will learn to think more critically when viewing paintings or photographs.
2. Students will be able to recognize media bias.
3. Students will be able to understand how the media can influence public opinions.
4. Students will be able to analyze and interpret information in a non-fiction text, and distinguish between main ideas and supporting details.
5. Students will be able to develop hypotheses, and draw conclusions after synthesizing and applying information read or discussed.
6. Students will identify important individuals and their impact on historical events.
7. Students will become independent learners, capable of conducting research on a specific topic.
8. Students will become familiar with the resources available from the Library of Congress

Social Studies Standards:

- *Chronology and Cause: Students will understand the chronological order of historical events, the interaction of diverse forces, ideas, and choices and the complexity of historical cause and effect.
- *Human Alteration of Environments: Students will describe the ways in which human activity has influenced and changed the world..

English Language Arts Standards :

- **Understanding a Text*: Students will identify basic facts, main ideas and supporting details in a text and use them as the basis for interpretation and analysis.
- **Writing for Different Purposes*: Students will write with a clear focus, be able to develop a topic, organize ideas in a logical sequence and use common English conventions.
- *Media Literacy: Students will recognize the role of the media in society, and how both words and photographs can influence the public.

INSRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES USED

- *Jigsaw – cooperative learning
- *Concept/Definition Mapping
- *Accessing Prior Knowledge
- *Direct Instruction
- *Learning Centers
- *Tiered Assignments
- *Technology: Inspiration for graphic webbing
Power Point
Photo Story
- *Power Notes

ASSESSMENT TOOLS

- *Tests and Quizzes (both teacher and student generated)
- *Essays and journal writings
- *Portfolios and Photo Essays
- *Homework and Classroom assignments
- *Projects
- *Class discussion participation
- *Student Folders with NOTES

METHODS USED TO INCREASE/ EXTEND STUDENT LEARNING

- *SPACE: - Learning centers are placed in back and side of room
 - Computer Lab utilized and Media Center for internet and reference Books
 - Promethean White/Smart Board for accessing archives from the Library of Congress.
 - Charts placed with photo collages and ‘chunked’ information for student recall purposes
- *TIME: -Approximately one week of five 45 min. classes, but extended into additional block one day to enhance interdisciplinary approach and for project development time
 - Support time from Media Specialist for research and technology help.

Lesson One

Two Generals, Many Perspectives

Exploring the Changing Legacies of General Grant and General Lee

Grades: 6-8, 9-12

Subjects: American History, Social Studies, English Language Arts

Overview / Objectives:

In this lesson, students will compare and contrast the personal traits, leadership skills, life experiences and legacies of Generals Grant and Lee and examine how interpretations of the two generals have changed over time by **reading about a Civil War exhibit and analyzing a painting.**

Suggested Time Allowance: 2- 3 class periods

Activities

1. Class Discussion / Journal Writing

*On the SMART BOARD, project the painting "Let Us Have Peace, 1865," found online at: http://www.nytimes.com/slideshow/2008/10/17/arts/1017-HIST_4.html or provide each student with a printed copy of the painting found below on page 6 of this unit.

*Ask students to answer the following questions in their journals:

- What do you think is happening in this painting?
- How do you think the artist is depicting each of the two primary subjects?
- What thoughts do you have about each man based on what you see?

*If the students have not guessed, tell them what the painting is depicting. Ask them which man they think won the war based on what they see. Why do they think this? Do they think an artistic work can be a persuasive tool in shaping opinions about people, issues or events? Why or why not? After discussing student interpretations, provide them with the real information about the painting and its subjects.

2. Building Background and Finding Information in a Text:

First, have students spend class time researching the lives of Grant and Lee, presenting their findings to the class by choosing one of the following: Inspiration Webbing, Photo Story, or Power Point.

As a class, read and discuss the article "Two Generals, Still Maneuvering," This article is reprinted here on pages 7-9 below. The article may also be accessed by using the New York Times website.

(http://www.nytimes.com/learning/teachers/featured_articles/20081020monday.html). While students read, have them use one colored pencil to underline information about General Lee and another colored pencil to underline information about General Grant. Discuss the article focusing on the following questions and have students submit short answer written responses using well constructed sentences and evidence from the text.

SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS:

- a. What organization is hosting this exhibit and what is the function of this organization?
- b. How have General Lee and General Grant traditionally been remembered?
- c. What influence has art had on how these two Generals have been remembered by history?
- d. How and why are historians' interpretations of these Generals changing?
- e. What connections are drawn between the Civil War and present day in the exhibit? Why do you think the curators thought that these were interesting and informative connections?

3. Collaborative Group Work

After reading and discussing the article, have students work in pairs to complete a Venn diagram, found online at http://graphics8.nytimes.com/learning/teachers/studentactivity/Venn_Diagram.pdf, comparing the personal traits, leadership skills, life experiences and legacies of General Grant and General Lee. To complete this diagram, students should use the information that they underlined in the Times article and/or use information they gathered from their research.

4. Additional online resources to use:

<http://www.nps.gov/arho/historyculture/robert-lee.htm> and http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/grant/peopleevents/p_ugrant.html to supplement their knowledge of the two generals.

5. Critical Thinking Writing Response Pieces - Have students choose one of the following:

- A. Write a long composition comparing the generals as they were viewed during their time period to the way that we remember them today. How have interpretations changed? What has stayed the same?
- B. Compare how 'history' views the American involvement in Vietnam during the 1960 – 1970 time period to the way we now think about that conflict. How did television and photography influence public opinion?

.6. Extended Learning

Students can continue reading further via the following articles about Generals Grant and Lee that were written during their time period: General Lee's obituary, found online at <http://www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/big/1012.html#article> and/or an article written about General Grant the day after his death, found online (in PDF format) at <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=9F00EED91039E533A25757C2A9619C94649FD7CF&scp=1&sq=Ulysses+S.+Grant&st=p>.

While reading these articles for homework, students should underline any subjective opinions about the character or talents of each general and add this to the Venn diagram exercise or include in their writing response piece.

Note: This lesson was developed using the New York Times Learning Network and modified from a lesson posted by Susan Kavanagh

Grant and Lee in War and Peace



The scale had so far tilted that by 1920 or so, when John Leon Gerome Ferris painted his famous depiction of the surrender at Appomattox, “Let Us Have Peace, 1865” — which is in the show — he put Lee, bathed in light, in the center of the picture, while a shadowy, supplicant Grant approaches from the left. If you didn’t know better, you would think Lee had won.

Photo: Virginia Historical Society

To be used with the Lesson Plan: Two Generals, Still Maneuvering, and the New York Times article

The New York Times

EXHIBITION REVIEW | 'GRANT AND LEE IN WAR AND PEACE' Two Generals, Still Maneuvering

By CHARLES McGRATH
Published: October 16, 2008

“Grant and Lee in War and Peace,” which opens on Friday at the [New York Historical Society](#) is a rejiggering of an exhibition mounted last year by the Virginia Historical Society in Richmond, where it was called “Lee and Grant.” The flip-flop in billing is partly a nod to local bias and to the fact that Grant is, after all, buried right here in New York, where he was a bit of a substance abuser and lost a fortune on Wall Street — he was one of us, in other words — while in Richmond they prefer the white-bearded patriarch who seemingly had no faults at all. But the title switch is also a reflection of the way these two generals, implacable opponents on the battlefield, have been linked by posterity in push-me-pull-you fashion, so that the reputation of one can’t go up unless the other’s sinks.

For most of the last 140 years Lee, or a romanticized version of him, has been on top. This Lee is the tragic and valorous embodiment of the Lost Cause, a mythic South that fought not so much to defend slavery as to protect states’ rights and a noble, superior way of life, while Grant becomes a drunken butcher, a slaughterer of his own men and a failed, scandal-plagued president who belongs in the company of Warren G. Harding.

The scale had so far tilted that by 1920 or so, when John Leon Jerome Ferris painted his famous depiction of the surrender at Appomattox, “Let Us Have Peace, 1865” — which is in the show — he put Lee, regal and imposing, bathed in light, in the center of the picture, while a shadowy, supplicant Grant, in muddy boots, approaches from the left. If you didn’t know better, you would think Lee had won.

Only in the last few years have historians tried to address the balance a little — demolishing the long-cherished notion that Lee was personally opposed to slavery, for example, and arguing that it was he who was reckless about casualties and that over aggressiveness contributed to his defeat. In this light Grant starts to look a little better. Even his drinking has been exaggerated, some biographers now claim. The Historical Society show incorporates some of the latest scholarship pointing to Grant’s advanced views on civil rights and Indian policy, and even suggests that the failures of Reconstruction were not his so much as those of the nation, which lacked the political will to follow his lead.

But “Grant and Lee” does not, strictly speaking, weigh the merits of one versus the other; nor is it really a Civil War show. Die-hard buffs and Civil War re-enactors seeking to learn more, say, about campfire cookery or latrine excavation at Manassas will probably be a little disappointed, though there is an

extensive display examining the Wilderness campaign of 1864-65. And, as always at the New-York Historical Society, there is a lot of excellent stuff on view, some of it borrowed, some of it from the society's own vast troves.

Looking for one of Zachary Taylor's spurs or a shako from the Mexican War? No problem. The New-York Historical Society has everything you need right there in the attic at 170 Central Park West. Also on display are Lee's tiny dancing slippers (he was a compulsive flirt and ladies' man), his sword and revolver (courtesy of the Museum of the Confederacy) and Grant's high-pommeled Mexican saddle. There are some audiovisual presentations, and a computer screen that lets you flip through a sketchbook kept by Capt. Abner Doubleday during the Mexican War, a few years after he supposedly invented baseball.

"Grant and Lee" tries to take a longer view of the two men, putting them in a context that carries right up to the present. As Louise Mirrer, the president of the Historical Society, said last week, the organization recently did two big shows on slavery and felt that it had to offer something that went beyond the traditional Civil War narrative. So the new show explores larger questions about the origins and growth of the military in the United States and about the proper role of the army in a civilian, democratic society.

The exhibition begins at West Point, pointing out that when Grant (Class of 1843) and Lee (Class of 1829) went there it was as much an engineering school, where cadets learned to sketch, paint, survey and draw maps, as it was a proving ground for future soldiers. (There are samples of both men's work, and Grant, though otherwise a dismal, demerit-ridden student, turns out to have been a better artist than Lee, just as he proved to be by far the better writer.)

And fully a third of the show looks at the Seminole Wars, the crisis of Bleeding Kansas and the Mexican War in ways that are meant to draw parallels with American involvement in Vietnam and in Bosnia and Kosovo, and with current debates over immigration.

It's a provocative arrangement, especially at the end of the show, where the viewer is encouraged to think about the challenges of Reconstruction in light of American efforts to stabilize and rebuild Iraq. And yet thinking about the army this way, as a tool of policy, risks underplaying the degree to which the Civil War was not just another military engagement, but, as Drew Gilpin Faust has argued in her recent book "The Republic of Suffering," something approaching massacre on an organized scale.

This was a conflict that fundamentally changed the nature of the American military, turning it into a bureaucracy dependent on political favor and patronage, and that changed the nature of warfare itself. Slaughter became ruthlessly efficient, as did economic war, and in the brand-new arena of public relations, battles began to be waged of the sort that provoke museum exhibitions a century and a half later.

Though the exhibition doesn't dwell on the personalities of the two generals, they keep asserting themselves nonetheless. The differences between them are apparent in the very first gallery, where a portrait of Lee, the West Point graduate, commissioned by his wealthy plantation family, hangs next to a reproduction of a little daguerreotype that was all the Grant family of Point Pleasant, Ohio, could afford.

Lee, brown-haired and clean-shaven except for a dashing mustache, looks like a Byronic hero, while Grant appears to be squirming under a pair of epaulets the size of scrub mops. Lee's uniform coat, in a case down the hall, is trimly tailored and festooned with gold braid; Grant's, next to it, is made of shapeless black sackcloth and is devoid of decoration. Unlike Lee, Grant never looked the part of a general — he sometimes seemed uncomfortable in his own skin, let alone in a uniform — and that he was so good at generalship is something of a miracle. The wall labels play down the extent to which he had been a failure at just about everything else.

The show suggests that the style of each general was partly shaped by his commanding officer in the Mexican War, in which Lee's mentor was Winfield Scott, Old Fuss and Feathers, while Grant was a protégé of Zachary Taylor, Old Rough and Ready, but the viewer senses that the differences were deeper than that.

In some photographs taken near the end of his life, Lee already looks marmoreal — a statue of himself — as if he has become trapped in a myth of his own making, while Grant remained a pragmatist and a self-inventor to the end. In 1884, broke and dying of throat cancer, Grant reluctantly sat down and wrote his autobiography, hoping it would sell well enough to leave his wife a legacy.

Fittingly, a copy of his "Personal Memoirs," which became one of the best-selling books of the 19th century, is in a case at the end of the show, though the wall label quotes from Whitman and not from Grant's own prose, which was something new at the time, free of the false piety and flannel-mouthed rhetoric that characterized so much Civil War literature. Grant's book, like its author, was clear, concise, no-nonsense and scrupulously honest, and it's the best exhibit we have of what this war was really like. The only thing he was wrong about was his conviction that it would deter us from ever having another one.

Lesson Two

Teaching the American Civil War with archival Photographs

Grades: 6-8, 9-12

Cross Curricular Subjects: American History, Social Studies, English Language Arts, Technology

Overview / Objectives:

In this lesson, students can view the American Civil War through a medium that was emerging in the mid-19th century: photography. The National Archives and the Library of Congress have made available thousands of digitized images from this period. Students will view and examine photographs using a Photograph Analysis Worksheet to gain a deeper understanding of life during the Civil War.

Suggested Time Allowance: 2- 3 class periods

Activities

1. **GETTING STARTED:**
Access prior knowledge about the Civil War by questioning students and engaging them through class discussions.
2. **INTRODUCE** students to the Library of Congress website for Civil War archival photos using the Smart Board:
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/cwphme.html>
3. **VIEW SELECTED PHOTOS** and instruct students that these images are actual documents which they will learn to 'read' by completing the PHOTOGRAPH ANALYSIS WORKSHEETS. (attached below)
4. **ASSIGN** or have students choose two photographs each to analyze using the photo analysis worksheets.
5. **ARRANGE** students in flexible groups so they can compare and contrast different photos using information from the worksheets.
6. **PHOTO ESSAYS** – Ask students to compile a list of adjectives that describe their photographs and then write a three paragraph photo essay interpreting what they have learned about life during the Civil War from these images and from discussions with other students. Each photo should have its own essay; allow students to be creative in their interpretations. At the end of the lesson, if resources permit, all the photo essays can be bound into one book. **GUIDE** students with thought provoking questions and direct them to incorporate their responses into their photo essays: Why did the country decide to fight this war? What was the life of a soldier on the battlefield? What was life for those left behind at home? What were the long reaching effects of the war?
7. **INTEGRATE TECHNOLOGY** into the curriculum by having students choose one of the following as an assessment instrument:
 - Post their photo essays into a POWER POINT presentation....or....
 - Post photo essays using PHOTO STORY software....or.....
 - Use INSPIRATION to produce a graphic 'webbing' of photos and captions.

EXTENDED LEARNING: Choose a Civil War novel to read and have students compare the realities depicted in the photographs with how the war is portrayed in the novel.

Photo Analysis Worksheet

Learning to 'read' the photograph and discover the story behind the image.

Step 1. Observation

- A. Study the photograph for two minutes. First, form an overall impression of the photograph, then examine individual items. Next, divide the photograph into quadrants, enlarge and study each quadrant to see what new details emerge.
- B. Key questions to ask and answer:
- *What specific elements went into the making of this image?
 - How did the photographer 'frame' the image?
 - Why was the background chosen?
 - How are lighting and composition used to convey a point of view?
 - What specific information can be learned from gestures, expressions, props, clothing and positioning?
 - *How are these elements used to communicate an idea?
 - *Who are these characters, and what is the photographer trying to tell us about them?

- C. Use the chart below to list specific and relevant information.

People	Objects / Props	Key Elements: lighting, etc.	What does this tell you?

Step 2. Inference

Based on what you have observed, list three things you might infer from this photograph.

[Go to CCC TAH Web Site](#)