



Lesson 10.3 “Life of a Civil War Soldier”

Unit 10: New Hampshire and the Civil War

Lesson Objectives

- Students will practice a close-looking technique as a class with an historical object.
- Students will take notes from primary and secondary sources on the life of a Civil War soldier based on a close-looking technique.
- Students will create a drawing of the life of a Civil War soldier in groups.

Lesson Competencies

- I can analyze primary and secondary sources and draw appropriate conclusions. (Moose SS)
- I can explain that historical perspectives vary based upon the time period in which the person lived and that those perspectives shaped the historical sources they created. (Moose SS)
- I can locate, organize, and analyze information from print and non-print sources to support my development of central ideas and subtopics. (ELA 8)
- I can integrate information, distinguish relevant-irrelevant information (e.g., fact/opinion), and (visually, orally, in writing) present what was learned. (ELA 8)

Essential Questions

How has New Hampshire come to be the way it is?
How has New Hampshire been shaped by many voices?

Focus Questions

What did New Hampshire soldiers experience during the Civil War?

Estimated Time

Three 40-minute class sessions

Materials & Equipment

“Civil War Soldier's Mess Kit” for projection and printed
Quick Connect handout for projection and class set
Class set of “Life of a Civil War Soldier Notes”
Sources printed out and posted or put in stations
Class or group set of “Drawing the Life of a Civil War Soldier”
Materials for students to create their drawings: big paper, colored pencils, markers



Educator Introduction & Rationale

Like the rest of the nation, New Hampshire was ill-prepared for war, although when Lincoln's initial call to arms asked for 780 men, more than 2,000 volunteered. Before the war ended in 1865, about 34,000 men from the state served in the war, representing more than 10% of the state's population and fielding 18 infantry regiments. All of these men had to be provisioned with food, weapons, ammunition, uniforms, and medical supplies. The state government provided some of this material, but most towns contributed as well. Further supplies were organized by the hastily formed New Hampshire Soldiers' Aid Society, which offered clothing, food, and medical supplies.

Each regiment that was formed had their own characters and experiences. The Tenth, for example, was composed mostly of Irish recruits from Manchester. The Sixth Regiment was drawn entirely from the western part of the state. The Seventeenth Regiment was disbanded even before it had fully formed, and its men reshuffled to other regiments. The Fifth, sometimes known as the "Fighting Fifth," participated in nearly every major battle in the Virginia theater of the war between the summer of 1862 and the spring of 1865, including Antietam, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, Cold Harbor, Petersburg, and Appomattox. With such a list of engagements, it is hardly surprising that it suffered the highest number of combat fatalities of any regiment in the Union Army.

In addition to the state's 18 infantry regiments, New Hampshire men also served in the Navy and Marines during the war, as well as a variety of special units, like the New Hampshire Light Battery, the First New Hampshire Cavalry, the U.S. Sharpshooters, and the First New Hampshire Heavy Artillery. Please see the [Educator Overview](#) for more information.

This is the third lesson in Unit 10: New Hampshire and the Civil War. It can stand alone from the unit, although students will need a basic understanding of why the Civil War was fought and when. In this lesson, students start by practicing a close-looking technique called Quick Connect. They Encounter the source and observe it, Investigate the source and ask questions about it, then Build on their knowledge and interact personally with it. Armed with this technique, students then take notes in a graphic organizer on what a soldier's life was like in the Civil War using a variety of primary sources and the Quick Connect thinking routine. Students process their knowledge in a small group while drawing an illustration of the life of a Civil War soldier using their notes.

Teaching tips: There is one published book used in the project, Marek Bennett's *The Civil War Diary of Freeman Colby*. These few pages on weather, work, and a soldier's outfit supplement the archival sources. If desired, this graphic novel can be used for more background information to support your students' analysis of the primary sources.

Reinforcements and extensions are suggested throughout the lesson and focus on primary source analysis, learning more about the Civil War through graphic novels and for fictional writing. Please adapt all the material in this lesson, as necessary, to meet the needs of the students in your classroom. Please note, lesson vocabulary and definitions are at the end of this document. You may wish to preview these with your students.

Learning Activity

Activation & Discussion

Modeling Quick Connect. Tell students that they are going to spend time as history detectives so that they can discover what life was like for a soldier in the Civil War. Historians often use primary sources to get information about the past, and one can get more knowledge from a picture or object than it seems like at first glance. Project the “Quick Connect” handout and review the three categories with students. What’s the difference between the Encounter, Investigate, and Build tasks? How does each type of task help them gain more familiarity and information about the source?

Project “Civil War Soldier’s Mess Kit” and model using the Quick Connect tasks. Decide for your class whether you will show them the caption. Instead of choosing one of the Build tasks, tell students that they are going to be gathering information to answer the question, How can this source help you understand the life of a Civil War soldier?

After doing Encounter and Investigate, invite ideas for the Build question and record them. Students might include the following for how the mess kit helps them understand the life of a Civil War soldier:

- These look like dishes and pots and pans for eating, similar to what we use today.
- They are made out of metal, probably so they are not breakable.
- The items are worn and used, so they were important.
- This was probably just for one Civil War soldier, which means they had to carry it as part of their pack.
- It’s possible the soldiers had to cook their own food. They very likely had to wash and take care of their own plates, cups, and silverware.
- The group of items seem simple but useful. They are important day-to-day items that show the soldiers had to care for their own needs.

Guided Practice

What was the life of a Civil War soldier like? Tell students that the objects and photographs they will see are all from the Civil War. Students will use their observations and claims to create a picture of what life was like for a Civil War soldier. Decide for your class if you will group sources into several stations or if you will post the sources throughout the classroom so that students examine them one by one. Also decide for your class if students will work in pairs, small groups, or individually.

Distribute “Life of a Civil War Soldier Notes.” Best practice is to have all students have their own note sheet, even if they will draw their picture in groups, so that all can contribute to the final product. Review the categories of notes and remind students that one source might give them information for different categories. Either post or hand out additional copies of the Quick Connect handout.

Teaching tip: Photography was just invented in the decades before the Civil War, so while we are lucky to have images of this time, they are sometimes hard to make out.

Give students time to visit the sources and add to their notes. Circulate to prompt them, ask questions to help them process their observations, and encourage them in working with primary sources.

Grades 3–5 Reinforcement: Analyze It! Have students choose one of the sources to analyze further using the [Analyze It!](#) section on the student side of the “Moose on the Loose” website. Scroll down and select the kind of source (object or photograph) under “Think Like a Historian.” Each source provides a worksheet for how to deeply engage in working with that kind of source.

Grades 6–8 Extension: Freeman Colby. Artist Marek Bennett used Freeman Colby’s diary of life during the Civil War to create his graphic novels *The Civil War Diary of Freeman Colby*, volumes 1, 2, and 3. All three volumes are historically accurate, accessible for upper elementary grades, and riveting.

Student Reading

New Hampshire’s people and the Civil War. Reinforce the knowledge students gain from examining the primary sources by directing them to read Unit 10: Learn It! “[New Hampshire Fights](#),” pages 1 to 4 and 7 to 8.

Guided Practice

Creating a picture of the life of a Civil War soldier. When students have finished taking notes on the sources, put them in their working groups and give them “Drawing the Life of a Civil War Soldier.” Give them materials and time to work. Consider providing larger pieces of paper for final drafts, either 11x17, pieces of chart paper, or smaller pieces taped together.

Grades 6–8 Extension: Nathan Gove. Nathan Gove was a drummer in the 3rd New Hampshire Regiment Volunteers during the American Civil War. He was 11 years old when he enlisted in 1861. Give students the sources about Nathan Gove and have them write historical fiction about his life.

Reflection

Life of a soldier. When the final drafts are done, create a gallery showing your work. Consider inviting other classes, families, or adults in the community. Students should compare the art works’ rendering of the life of a Civil War soldier and/or write a paragraph highlighting what they think are the most important aspects of life for soldiers during the Civil War.

Supporting Materials

New Hampshire Historical Society Resources

1. Cook's Galley, 1862
2. Civil War Encampment, 1862
3. Civil War Soldiers Eating, 1862
4. Civil War Soldiers Hospital Detail, circa 1862–1863
5. Civil War Encampment, circa 1862–1863
6. Tenting on the Old Campground, 1864
7. Civil War Soldier Identification Tag, circa 1862–1865
8. New Hampshire Union Soldiers on Morning Duty, circa 1890
9. Civil War Rifle Musket, 1864
10. Drummer Boy's Uniform, circa 1862
11. Medicine Case, circa 1861–1865
12. Civil War Bandages, circa 1862–1865
13. Civil War Soldiers in Formation, 1862
14. Letter from a Civil War Nurse, 1863
15. Nathan Gove, circa 1861–1865
16. Civil War Drum, 1863
17. New Hampshire Regiment Band, 1862

Other Resources

- Building Winter Housing, circa 1864–1865; Civil War Photographs, 1861–1865, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division
- Civil War Battle, 1862; Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division
- Civil War Soldiers Near Richmond, 1865; Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division
- *The Civil War Diary of Freeman Colby, volume 1*, by Marek Bennett, pages 59, 79–80, 275–276.
- Civil War Soldier's Mess Kit, circa 1861–1865; Virginia Dell Sours Atkinson, C. F. Ray Sours, and John A. Sours, National Museum of American History, ©Smithsonian Institution

Standards

“Moose on the Loose” Content:

- ✓ Students will understand that the Civil War affected the whole nation. They will understand that New Hampshire supported the Union during the war in various ways. (3-5.T4.3)

“Moose on the Loose” Skills:

- ✓ Gathering, Interpreting, and Using Evidence (3-5.S1.1, 3-5.S1.2)
- ✓ Communicating and Critiquing Conclusions (3-5.S2.1, 3-5.S2.2)
- ✓ Effective Historical Thinking (3-5.S3.1)

New Hampshire Social Studies Frameworks:

- ✓ US / NH History: Contacts, Exchanges & International Relations (SS:HI:4:2.1)
- ✓ US / NH History: World Views and Value systems and their Intellectual and Artistic Expressions (SS:HI:4:3.1)
- ✓ US / NH History: Social/Cultural (SS:HI:4:5.2)

NCSS Themes:

- ✓ Theme 2: Time, Continuity, and Change
- ✓ Theme 4: Individual Development and Identity

C3 Frameworks:

- ✓ Determining Helpful Sources (D1.5.3-5)
- ✓ Change, Continuity, and Context (D2.His.2.3-5, D2.His.3.3-5)
- ✓ Historical Sources and Evidence (D2.His.9.3-5, D2.His.10.3-5, D2.His.12.3-5, D2.His.13.3-5)
- ✓ Causation and Argumentation (D2.His.16.3-5, D2.His.17.3-5)
- ✓ Gathering and Evaluating Sources (D3.1.3-5)
- ✓ Developing Claims and Using Evidence (D3.3.3-5)

Common Core ELA Grade 3:

- ✓ Craft and Structure in Informational Text (RI.3.5)
- ✓ Integration of Knowledge and Ideas in Informational Text (RI.3.7, RI.3.9)
- ✓ Research to Build and Present Knowledge (W.3.8)
- ✓ Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas (SL.3.5)
- ✓ Knowledge of Language (L.3.3)

Common Core ELA Grade 4:

- ✓ Integration of Knowledge and Ideas in Informational Text (RI.4.7)
- ✓ Research to Build and Present Knowledge (W.4.8, W.4.9)
- ✓ Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas (SL.4.5)
- ✓ Vocabulary Acquisition and Use (L.4.6)

Common Core ELA Grade 5:

- ✓ Integration of Knowledge and Ideas in Informational Text (RI.5.7, RI.5.9)
- ✓ Research to Build and Present Knowledge (W.5.8, W.5.9)
- ✓ Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas (SL.5.5)
- ✓ Vocabulary Acquisition and Use (L.5.6)

Lesson Vocabulary

canteen	(noun) A container that holds drinking water
Civil War	(noun) A war that lasted from 1861 to 1865 between the northern states and the southern states. The northern states were fighting to preserve the United States as one country, while the southern states wanted to create their own country called the Confederate States of America.
Confederate Army	(noun) The armed forces of the southern states during the Civil War; this army was the military force of the Confederate States
fortification	(noun) A defensive structure built to strengthen a position against attack
guard duty	(noun) When a person stands watch to protect people from an attack
haversack	(noun) A small backpack
musket	(noun) A gun with a long barrel
picket line	(noun) A boundary established around an encampment of soldiers; guards walk along this line to protect the other soldiers
regiment	(noun) A organized group of soldiers, usually 1,000 men serving under a colonel
roll call	(noun) The calling of attendance
trench	(noun) A long, narrow ditch
Union Army	(noun) The armed forces for the northern states during the Civil War; this army was the military force of the United States