

Soldiers' Experiences of the Civil War

Created by Lisa M. Renzi
TechBoston Academy (Boston, Massachusetts)

This unit seeks to introduce students to Massachusetts' involvement in the Civil War. It is envisioned that this unit will be incorporated into the 9th grade U.S. History I curriculum subsequent to the explanation of events leading to the war as well as elements in the curriculum describing the Battle at Fort Sumter, but prior to exploration of the timeline of other battles covered in the text and MA state standards.

Topics covered in the unit include: 1. The nature of African American and Irish American recruitment in the Civil War; 2. The wartime experiences of individuals from Massachusetts; and 3. The role of George's Island as a training facility and prisoner camp during the war. I have chosen to plan a Unit Assessment as opposed to individual Lesson assessments.

Lesson One: Recruitment of African Americans and Irish Americans in Massachusetts

Goals & Objective

Students will be able to explain methods the United States government used to persuade groups to enlist in the Civil War. Students will be able to analyze the motivations of these groups in enlisting.

Primary Sources

1. "Major General Banks' Grand Expedition" <http://www.masshist.org/database/2171>
2. "The Glorious 9th! Irishmen to the Rescue" (see end of lessons)
3. "To Colored Men! 54th Regiment"
http://www.masshist.org/database/doc-viewer.php?pid=&item_id=49
4. Contemporary images (sketches) of a cavalry soldier, an Irish soldier, and an African American soldier printed and attached to chart paper.

Activities

1. *Do Now*: Students will have 5 minutes to answer the following reflective question. "Right now, the U.S. government is trying to recruit you and other people to enlist in the military to fight a war. Think about TV commercials, posters, or other ads you have seen or heard about joining the military. What are some of the things the U.S. government says about the armed services to make a person like you want to join? How successful are those ads and why?"

2. *Individual Reading:* Students will be provided with three original recruitment posters from the Civil War and told what they have been given. They will be given 10 minutes to look at the posters, read them silently, and answer one reflective question about each poster in their notebooks.

Reflective Questions:

1. "Major Banks' Grand Expedition." Why do you think the makers of this poster called the war a "grand expedition" and included the picture of the man on the horse? What was the makers' goal?
 2. "The Glorious 9th!" This poster has a lot of information on it. Focus on the first 5 paragraphs. What is the poster saying about Irish people and why would that make Irish Americans want to join the army?
 3. "54th Regiment!" Compare this poster aimed at African Americans to the poster aimed at Irish people. How are the posters different looking? And what is different about what is being said in the posters?"
3. *Speech Bubble Activity:* Students are grouped in pairs or threes for 15 minutes. Each group is provided with 3 speech bubbles. Students are instructed to finish the following sentences on each bubble for a cavalry soldier, Irish American Soldier, and African American Soldier:

"I want to join the cavalry because ..."

"I want to join the 54th Regiment because ..."

"I want to join the 9th Regiment because ..."

Each group should attach their speech bubble to the correct poster.

4. *Discussion and Note-taking:* Students return to their desks. We briefly discuss the main points students have put on the posters. If students are missing elements (particularly for the Irish soldier, since the recruitment poster is complex), the teacher guides students into providing that element through asking them to refer to specific sentences on the poster. We create notes in our notebook together with the following as an exemplar of a student product:

Why Did Soldiers Join Up in MA?

- I. Why did cavalry soldiers join the war?
 - A. To show bravery
 - B. To have an adventure
 - C. It was better than being a regular infantry soldier
- II. Why did Irish Americans join the war?
 - A. To show loyalty to their new country
 - B. To show their bravery as Irishmen
 - C. For money
- III. Why did African Americans join the war?
 - A. To help end slavery and racism
 - B. To show their loyalty
 - C. For money

5. *Exit Slip*: Compare the reasons that people joined the army in the Civil War to the reasons that people join the armed services today. What are the differences and what are the similarities?

Lessons 2 & 3: Georges Island and the Civil War

Goals & Objective

Students will have an understanding of how Georges Island was used as a training facility and as a Confederate prison during the Civil War.

Sources

1. Visit to Georges Island
2. Excerpts from Alexander Stephens' Journal at Fort Warren
3. Jay Schmidt, *Fort Warren: New England's Most historic Civil War Site* (Manchester, N.H.: UBT Press, 2003).

Activities

Day 1 (Lesson 2)

1. *Do Now*: Students will be given 5 minutes to answer the following question: "Imagine you have been captured in the Civil War and you are sent to a remote prison on an island. What do you think life would be like there for you?"
2. *Reading/Individual Work*: Students will be given 15 minutes. They will be provided with a reading comprised of abridged sections of Jay Schmidt's *Fort Warren* from Chapter 5 "Confederate Prison Life" totaling approximately 1-2 pages and including 2 pictures from that chapter. Students will be asked to silently read the selection and answer the following question in their notebooks.

In one paragraph, compare your expectations of what being a prisoner was like from your Do Now to what you have just read. Specifically, comment on food, comfort, contact with home, and disease and death.

3. *Group Work*: (Total time: 20 minutes) Students will be split into pairs or groups of three and each group will be given 1 excerpt of Alexander Hamilton Stephens' journal. (10 available excerpts) After 10 minutes to read and discuss their excerpts, one member from each group will stand and make a brief presentation pretending to be Stephens and starting out:

I'm Alexander Stephens. Today was (insert date). The best thing about today in prison was _____. The worst thing about today in prison was _____.

4. *Exit Slip*: What is your opinion of the character of Alexander Stephens after reading parts of his journal? What were his priorities? Do you admire him or not and why?

Day 2 (Lesson 3) (Field Trip to George's Island)

1. Boat Ride (1/2 hour): Students are provided with excerpts from Jay Schmidt's *Fort Warren*, Chapter 1 and are asked to be ready to discuss whether the Lady in Black is real or not by the time we arrive at the island.
2. Arrival (1/2 hour): Housekeeping matters are attended to (Students are counted. We visit the bathrooms, etc.) We assemble in the Visitors Center and watch the film.
3. Exploring the Island (2 hours): Students are provided with a Scavenger Hunt form, divided into groups of 8-10, and assigned a chaperone. (Scavenger Hunt Form appears at the end of the lessons)
4. Students eat lunch (1/2 hour).
5. Discussion of Scavenger Hunt. (1/2 hour) We sit together and discuss the results of the scavenger hunt.
6. Boat Ride home. (1/2 hour)

Lesson 4: Soldiers' Experiences of War

Goals & Objective

Students will be able to discuss and compare the war-time experiences of a variety of soldiers.

Primary Sources

1. Letter of Edward Pierce to his mother, 2 December 1863 (see end of lessons)
2. Letter of Charles Douglass to Frederick Douglass, 6 July 1863
<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/aahtml/exhibit/aopart4.html>
3. Letter of Hannah Stevenson to friends and family, 8 August 1861
<http://www.masshist.org/database/2163>
4. "Our Women and the War" *Harper's Weekly*, September 6, 1862
<http://americanart.si.edu/collections/search/artwork/?id=37064>
5. John C. Robertson to Sarah Robertson, 27 July 1861
http://www.masshist.org/online/civilwar/index.php?entry_id=604

Activities

1. *Do Now (Interactive)*: We will conduct visual discovery of “Our Women and War” image, questioning what we see, what we read, who is more prominent, actions people are performing.
2. *Reading/Individual Work*: Students will be provided with Hannah’s letter and read it individually for 10 minutes. They will answer this reflective question:
After reading this letter, compare it with the picture we used as our Do Now. How is the experience of Hannah different from what that picture might lead us to suspect?
3. *Group Work*: Students are divided into pairs or threes. Each group is given one of 3 remaining letters. Students should read the letters as groups and be prepared to present to the class on the following question.
What are the priorities of this soldier at the time he is writing? What does he want to say to his family/friend? If he could only get a one sentence message home instead of this letter, what would that sentence be?
4. *Exit Slip*: Based on the presentations you heard and the letters you read, describe what being a soldier in the Civil War was like in one full paragraph.

Unit Assessment: **Blogging the Massachusetts Civil War Experience**

For this unit, students will complete a final assessment in order to gauge their mastery of the content involved. The project is called “**Blogging the Massachusetts Civil War Experience.**” It requires access to the computer and internet and therefore, some class time will be allotted to it. Students may use the materials they have assembled from previous lessons, but it is likely they will want to conduct additional research and they are encouraged to do so by going to the public library or by using reputable internet sources.

Instructions to Students

Your job is to create a fictional Civil War soldier and create a blog that will act as a diary of your soldier’s experience in the Civil War. You should create a standard Wordpress blog. You must provide your teacher with both the User Name and Password for this blog. Although extra credit will be given for the addition and incorporation of images and other media, **NO CREDIT** will be given for custom themes, extra widgets, or other “bells and whistles.” Please note, correct grammar and spelling are expected and no slang or curse words will be permitted.

How to start? First, set up a simple blog and decide who your fictional soldier will be. Since women were not allowed to serve as soldiers, you will have to be male (although you may choose to be a nurse as a female). Your soldier can be an officer or a private. You should create a soldier who is either Irish American or African American. I will give extra credit for students

who add an appropriate picture of their soldier. You **must** fill out the “About Me” section of the blog form so that I can see the basic details of your soldier’s identity.

First Entry: Summer 1861

Create a blog entry of at least 500 words that explains why you are joining the Union Army. You should use the sources, notes, and other information you have been using for this unit. You should make sure your reasons are supported by the evidence and are historically authentic.

Second Entry: Winter 1861

Your Regiment has been stationed at Fort Warren for training. Create a blog entry of at least 500 words that catalogues your experiences there. You should use the sources, notes, and other information you have been using for this unit. You should make sure your interactions with other soldiers, the island, and Confederate prisoners are supported by the evidence and are historically authentic.

Third Entry: Summer 1862

Your Regiment has moved South and you are on the front lines. Create a blog entry of at least 500 words that explains what you are experiencing and how you feel. You should use the sources, notes, and other information you have been using for this unit. You should make sure your interactions are supported by the evidence and are historically authentic.

Georges Island Field Trip Scavenger Hunt Form

Name: _____

The order that you visit these sites will be determined by your chaperone. Make sure to visit each site and gather the information requested on the form!

A. Visitors Center

Go inside the museum and look at the display of the different food available to people who lived at Fort Warren during the Civil War.

What was Alexander Stephens eating during his stay?

How does that compare to what a regular Union soldier was eating? Who got the better meal in your opinion and why?

B. Site of Execution of Matthew Riley and Charles Carpenter:

Read the short excerpt from Jay Schmidt's *Fort Warren*, from Ch. 9 "Execution of Deserters."

Explain in 2-3 sentences what crime these men were executed for? What did they do and why did the Army think it was so bad?

C. Main Gate ("Outer Defenses" in Self-Guide)

Read the short excerpt from Jay Schmidt's *Fort Warren*, from Ch. 8 "Confederate Escapees"

This is the site where Private Sawyer supposedly made his escape.

What is your opinion about the stories of escaping Confederate soldiers? Were these soldiers wise to risk escape or were they better off staying in the Fort considering their treatment? What would you have done?

D. Front III (Casemates where Stephens was held)

Yesterday, you read from the journal of Alexander Stephens. Today, you see the area where he was held. Based on your reading yesterday, answer the following question:

Do you think Alexander Stephens accurately described what his prison space was like? Was he exaggerating? What's your opinion?

E. Observation Tower

Take a look at what you see. In the space below, draw the view and use the map at this site to help you label **3** of the islands you see!

F. Powder Magazine

In the Powder Magazine, you will find the place where the soldiers kept their weapons.

Explore this place. What are three words you would use to describe it?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Why do you think the soldiers built this place to store their ammunition? What made it a good place to store those materials?

G. Parade Ground

Your chaperone will lead you on a short march. Afterwards, please sit down and think about this question.

After your march, you do you feel?

Do you think wearing a thick wool uniform and several pounds of equipment and weapons would make this a better feeling or a worse feeling. Explain!

H. Bastion D:

Your chaperone will tell you a story about an attempted murder that may or may not have happened here.

On the ground, look carefully to see some evidence. Use this space to draw the evidence you see.

What is your opinion about the story- is it true or not? On what do you base your opinion!

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L 1862-7

C

The Glorious 9th!

IRISHMEN

To the Rescue!

Irish Americans of Massachusetts!

The indomitable valor and bravery which distinguished your ancestors on many a bloody battle-field in past ages, have descended to you untarnished. Your fellow countrymen of the 9th Massachusetts Regiment have proved at "Hanover Court House," at "Mechanicsville," at "Gaines' Mill," and at "Newtonville," that it has not degenerated. They are worthy inheritors of the courage and prowess of the heroes who fought at "Clontarf," at "Beal-an-ath-Buidhe," at "Limerick," at "Landen," at "Cremona" and "Fontenoy."

The Union and future glory of this great sanctuary of freedom is in danger. A host of Southern traitors seek to destroy our free democratic government, and erect upon its ruins a contemptible and Despotic Aristocracy.

Irish valor and bravery, have, to a great extent, thus far, impeded the march of these native Vandals, and driven back their superior numbers in dismay. Wherever the "chivalry" of the South have dared to encounter, on an open field, our Irish braves, they have found to their cost that Irishmen, as of old, are still invincible.

No Regiment in the service of the United States, has earned more imperishable glory than the 9th Regiment Massachusetts Volunteers, and its late gallant and heroic Colonel. The fortunes of war have thinned its ranks; it must not be allowed to perish for want of brave men to fill up its numbers.—The honors it has earned you can share. The living heroes of the 9th are still "eager for the fray." They pant to be led once more against the enemy—the enemy of human freedom—the enemy of mankind. They long to avenge their brave compatriots.

"We swear to revenge them!—no joy shall be tasted,
The harp shall be silent, the maiden unwed,

Our halls shall be mute, and our fields shall be wasted,
Till vengeance is wreaked on the liberticides' head."

They call upon you from the banks of the James to fill up their ranks, to share with them the laurels of the past and the glory of the future. Will you not respond to their call?

"Our green flag flutters o'er us,
The friends we've tried are by our side,
And the foe we hate, before us!"

The City of Boston has voted a Bounty of \$100!

In addition to thirty-eight dollars allowed by the United States, for every volunteer who joins the 9th Regiment, to defend the best and freest government ever vouchsafed to man. In joining the Ninth, you join your own gallant kith and kin. You will be led to the battle-field by officers of your own ancient race, who have proved themselves inferior to no others of our grand army. Here, too, the

FLAG OF IRELAND!

Is carried side by side with the Starry Banner, and Irish bravery will obtain the credit it deserves. The laurels you win will deck your own brows—others will not obtain the credit which belongs to you. And while your prowess and invincible valor shed additional lustre on

The Stars and Stripes!

They will cast a bright ray of glory on the

GREEN FLAG!

and the unconquerable nationality it represents.

In this Regiment you will have

A CHAPLAIN OF THE OLD FAITH

To minister to your spiritual wants and dispense the priceless blessings of religion.

Your families will be provided for by the BOUNTY OF THE STATE, and you will receive in Pay, Rations and Clothing, an allowance more than that for which many of you toil at laborious drudgery, equally, if not more dangerous, than the field of honor and glory.

The nation provides also a handsome pension for you if disabled, and for your wives and little ones if you fall at the post of duty. What employer, let us ask, does the like?

Our brave countrymen, hitherto, have rushed to the battle-field without bounty, with little hope of reward. Can YOU hesitate NOW, when such ample provision is made for you and yours?

Let the ranks of the glorious 9th be at once manned by heroes, worthy successors of those who have fallen, and fit companions of the veterans still eager for the fight. This Regiment is yours. Its history—its glory—its past—its future, are yours, and shed a lustre not on you only, but on the Irish race. The only power in Europe which supports the South is your ancient enemy, the Government of England.

"Then onward your green banners rearing;
Go flesh every sword to the hilt;

On our side is virtue and Erin,
On theirs is the Saxon and Gailt."

☛ The Sum of \$138,00! ☛

Will be paid to each volunteer as soon as mustered into service. Pay and Rations from enlistment.

Transportation for volunteers, over any of the railroads to Boston, furnished to those wishing to join.

The undersigned has received full power from the City Government of Boston to recruit the ranks of the 9th REGIMENT to its full quota.

☛ All applications for enlistment to be made at the

Headquarters, 112 Washington Street, Boston,

Edward Burgess to his Mother, December 2, 1863

Fort Totten

Dec 2 1863

Dear Mother

I received your letter today I was glad enough you had better believe. In the first place I will answer all your questions, you ask if I am warm nights? yes pretty warm. we have a stove in our tent & so we keep pretty warm. Are your slippers wearing out. no but I am going to sew some canvass on the bottoms so that I can wear it around the tent. what did you do with your old valise? I left it in R. I got 2 big bundles of Papers of while I was in Readville from Uncle E. I suppose I was very glad of them. our fort is made of a kind of peat cut out about the shape of bricks & piled together just outside the wall a deep ditch 26 ft wide is dug & so contrived that it can be filled with water with in an hour. If not inside the wall is a huge structure of logs & dirt about 30 ft wide

[page break]

& 160 ft high ft high it is built to stop balls from our tents which are built at its foot enclosed you will find a plan of this fort. I have been well ever since we came here but some of the boys have had the fever & ague which seems to be the prevailing disease here & have been waiting a good while for a letter I think it will better to write once a week not wait for return letter for it takes about a fortnight for a letter to go and come I got three stamps but I am going to write to Willie & Clara & that will take & I thought I would save the other to reply to one of them if I should get an answer they both ~~go~~ wrote good letters W said he had got a pen-holder for me but I was too late to get it for I got the letter the day I left R. I shall write to them today & the letters will probably go by the same boat as this. we don't see many rebels all we see are prisoners or deserters some poor 20 deserters come in every night they are rough looking

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chaps I tell you they are dressed in clothes like my cashmeret pants. Give my love to the Moreys & tell Charlie I should like to see him. Give my love to Elija & Blaney & to Augusta I tell Eddie Allen that I should like to have him come out here a while if he could. we had a first rate-time here on Thanksgiving, in the morning the whole Garrison was drawn up in a hollow square & the Proclamation of the Pres. was read by the Chaplain of the 5th R.P. Arty & was followed by a short prayer after which we were dismissed & passes were given to all who wished to Newberne where there was a greased pole, sack race, greased pig & other amusements. the rhode island companies had rice puddings & other dainties. but we poor recruits rejoiced in Hard tack & salt beef which looks looks like cast iron. I dont think you had better send me a box yet as I am comfortable write soon

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send me some Lowell papers & one late Boston Journal

Your Truly

EB Peirce

PS tell me whether you can get state aid or not I will send you some cotton when I can get some more. the leaves are all gone now excuse bad writing E.B.P.

Give my love to father & tell him to be sure to write