

Civil War Battle Strategy Lesson Plan

THE ROADS TO ANTIETAM

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Grades: 8-12

Length of Time: 3-4 class days

Goals:

1. Students will understand the importance of strategy in Civil War battles by examining primary resources.
2. Students will understand the difficulties involved in creating battle plans as a commander through their experiences constructing their own battle plans.
3. Students will create battle plans in order to understand the importance of terrain in Civil War battles.

Objectives:

1. Students will examine Lee's Proclamation to the People of Maryland in order to explain the purpose of his 1862 invasion of Maryland.
2. Students will examine the Confederate Special Orders #191, in order to summarize it and determine its significance.
3. Students will construct a thoughtful battle plan response for the Union Army, by analyzing a map based on Confederate Special Orders #191.

Materials Used:

- Lee's Proclamation to the Citizens of Maryland worksheet
- Confederate Special Orders #191 worksheet
- Lost Orders map (with sheet protector)
- Lost Orders poster (laminated) or Lost Orders overhead sheet
- Dry-Erase Markers

Anticipatory Set/Hook:

Explain to students that Robert E. Lee's virtually undefeated Army of Northern Virginia began its first invasion of the north late in the summer of 1862. He hoped that this invasion would provide an opportunity to win a major victory on northern soil that would convince England or France to form an alliance with the Confederacy and possibly entice Maryland to secede from the Union. Explain to students that if Lee's invasion was a success, it quite possibly would have ended the Civil War with the Confederacy victorious.

Procedure:

Activity 1:

Distribute Lee's "Proclamation to the People of Maryland" handout. Have students read the proclamation slowly, and then work in pairs to answer the comprehension questions that follow. Discuss the answers to the questions as a class.

Activity 2:

Ask students to guess how the Union Army will respond to Lee's invasion of the North, then distribute "Confederate Special Orders #191" handout to students. Have them read the orders slowly, and then work in pairs to answer the questions that follow. Discuss students' answers, and then split them into mixed ability groups of approximately 4-5 students each.

Introduce student groups to the battle plan activity by presenting them a copy of the "Lost Orders Map" inside a sheet protector. Having them read the text on the back of the "Lost Orders Map." Tell students that the map shows the approximate layout of the Confederate and Union armies at the time when General McClellan was presented with Special Orders #191. Instruct Students to work together to create a Union battle plan based on the map. Assign one student as the "commanding general." This student will have the responsibility of leading the group, settling any disputes and approving the final battle plan. Provide students with dry-erase markers so they can draw/revise their battle plan on the sheet protector as many times as needed. Be sure to point out the terrain obstacles that students must consider in forming their plans. After they have finished their plan, tell students to prepare to present their plan to the class.

Prepare a laminated poster or an overhead projector sheet of the "Lost Orders Map." Have each group of students explain their battle plans to the class by drawing on the poster or overhead sheet. After each group presents their plan, ask the other students for comments/questions about each plan. After all groups have presented, have students vote on the battle plan they feel is best (not including their own plan) and justify their vote.

Closure:

Have students conduct research online to learn about the actual Union battle plans that result in the Battles of South Mountain, Harpers Ferry, and ultimately Antietam. Have students grade McClellan's battle plans on a scale from A-F with a clear justification for why McClellan received the grade he did.

Assessment:

Students will be assessed in two ways through this project. The first assessment will be the presentation of their battle plans. The teacher will informally assess the thoughtfulness of the plans and provide students with feedback after all of the presentations (and voting) have occurred. The second assessment will be the students' evaluation of McClellan's plans. Through reading and the students' grades and justifications of McClellan's plan, the teacher will be able to assess the student's knowledge of thoughtful battle plans and tactics of the Civil War.

Modifications:

1. Read the "Proclamation to the People of Maryland" and "Confederate Special Orders #191" in pairs or as a class.
2. Pair students needing help with research with students that have strong research skills.