

# Civil War Newspaper Lesson Plan

## BREAKING HISTORICAL NEWS

*BY KAREN A. DAILEY (LADY'S ISLAND MIDDLE SCHOOL)*

**Grade:** 8

**Length of Time:** Approximately 3 to 4 weeks

### **Goals:**

The student will understand how to use primary documents including photographs to write about a historical topic, in this case, the Civil War.

### **Objectives:**

1. Given primary documents, students will create a Civil War newspaper that will include a photograph, a technical writing piece, and a creative writing piece.

### **Materials Used:**

1. Overhead projector
2. Photograph transparencies
3. Organizers
4. Computer
5. Selected websites
6. Photograph handouts
7. teacher made handouts
8. Teacher samples
9. Project folders

### **Anticipatory Set/Hook:**

What can be gained from an old photograph? What can we learn from a picture of the past?

### **Procedure:**

This lesson plan is made up of four parts. Each component will be presented after the students complete the previous one. It begins with a mini-lesson on media literacy, understanding primary documents and analyzing photographs. The second component will take the students into the media center to examine Civil war photographs, letters, and diaries. Part of this component includes student research as well. Students will use print and online sources for their research. Once research is complete, the students will work in the classroom developing both their technical and creative writing pieces. After completing the writing pieces the students will return to the media center to create a Civil War newspaper.

### **In the classroom (1-2 days)**

1. The teacher will introduce the lesson/project and present a sample of a finished product, the requirements and criteria for grading.
2. Students will ask questions.
3. The teacher will conduct a mini-lesson on media literacy and practicing analyzing photographs (See Photo Analysis form in worksheet PDF).
4. The students will work together in groups to analyze three photographs.
5. The teacher will lead a class discussion on student ideas about the photographs.
6. The students will write a short paragraph about the types of information a photo may show that may not be found in a textbook (See Constructed Response Worksheet).

### **In the Media Center (2-3 days)**

1. The teacher/media specialist will provide students with quality sites to search for their photograph. (See Internet Resources PDF)
2. The students will work individually to select a photograph and save the photo along with historical facts (if available) about the image.
3. The teacher will guide students in their research.
4. The student will save their photograph to their user directory and print a copy of the photograph and historical data (year, place, etc.). All work will go into the student research folder.

### **In the classroom (3-4 days)**

1. The teacher will conduct a whole class discussion about how to look at photographs and will use specific questions about the information in the photographs.
2. The students will refer to their photographs and offer their own ideas about the photos.
3. The teacher will guide the students in how they look at the images.
4. Students will complete a learning to look handout for their photograph (See Learning How to Look form in worksheets PDF).
5. The teacher will guide the students with their information in preparation for their research.
6. The student will prepare a variety of questions to use for researching each writing piece.
7. The teacher will provide several news articles and Civil War letters for students to examine in preparation for creating their own newspaper story and letter to a loved one.
8. The students will discuss elements of the news stories and differences between the news article and a letter to a loved one.

### **In the Media Center (3-5 days)**

1. The teacher and/or media specialist will provide a variety of Civil War resource texts and internet links for on-line research.
2. The students will use their photograph as the focus of their research.
3. The teacher will guide the students in their research.
4. The students will research their chosen topic based on the photograph they have selected (this may be more general research, for example if the image is a surgeon's tent and surgical procedures, the research may be on Civil War medicine).

### **In the classroom (3-5 days)**

1. The teacher will review the appropriate formats for news articles and for writing letters with the students (provide examples).

2. Students will use their research and compose their news article (technical writing) and be sure to make connections to the photograph.
3. The teacher will review student work and make any needed corrections and suggestions.
4. The student will use their historical information to compose a letter to a loved one/to the editor (creative writing), and be sure to make connections to the photograph.
5. The teacher will review student work and make any needed corrections and suggestions.

### **In the Media Center (2-3 days)**

1. The teacher will review the newspaper requirements and the criteria on the grading rubric.
2. Students should log onto the computer.
3. Students will create their newspaper according to a design and format chosen by the teacher.
4. Students will ask the teacher for guidance if needed.
5. Students will complete, save, and print their newspaper.

### **Closure:**

What did you learn about primary sources? Can photographs tell more of a story than you previously thought? Did you like using photographs or written items better? What else can you use to study history?

### **Assessment:**

Students will successfully complete their newspaper according to the template decided by their teacher. They will then be graded according to the provided rubric (see below).

### **Modification Ideas:**

1. Have the students work in groups to create one newspaper
2. Allow students to make their newspapers by hand.