

# Genealogy Lesson Plan

## DID YOUR ANCESTORS FIGHT IN THE CIVIL WAR

*BY THE CIVIL WAR TRUST*

**Grades:** 6-9

### **Goal:**

Students will develop a connection with the past through the knowledge of their relation to a historical event.

### **Objectives:**

1. Students will interview family members using questions appropriate to the topic and recording the answers.
2. Students will conduct online research by visiting the provided websites.
3. Students will compile their findings into an exhibit, report, or scrapbook.

### **Materials:**

1. Computers with internet accessibility
2. Websites provided throughout the lesson
3. Student instructions

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

Why should you be interest in the Civil War? It happened so long ago and it's over. What if you knew your family members fought in the war? What if you knew their story?

### **Procedure:**

(To be read aloud or **handed out to students**)

### **Introduction**

Did one of your ancestors fight in the Civil War? If you don't know the answer to that question, the search is on! Since 75 percent of the draft-age men of the Confederacy and 50

percent of the draft-age men of the Union served in the military, there's a good chance that at least one of your relatives was a Civil War soldier. Below, you will find a few resources that will help you on your quest.

Once you gather information, share it with your family, friends, school, community, and beyond! It's your choice; you can create an exhibit, a report, or a scrapbook. You can also complete your project on paper or on the computer.

### **Activity**

*The search begins with your family.* Ask your family members, especially older ones, if you had an ancestor that fought in the Civil War. Accumulate any information that you can on that person such as oral histories, photos, letters, a diary/journal, an obituary, a tombstone, etc. You need to know family surnames like your mother's maiden name, your grandmother's maiden name, her grandmother's maiden name, etc. It will also help if you know where your ancestors lived.

Take your list of family surnames and go online to the "[Civil War Soldiers and Sailors System](#)" of the National Park Service. Type in one name at a time, and view the results. See if there are any matches. This should provide some important information about if and where your relatives served during the Civil War.

*If you have a name, but you don't know where your relative lived when he enlisted,* you may be able to find out using the [1860 Federal Census records](#). Most of these records have an index to the head of the households, which could be the soldier or the soldier's father. You need to know where he enlisted so you can find out what regiment he was in. Once you know that, it's easy to find more information.

*If you know the state where your relative lived when he enlisted,* check the state archives to find out what regiment he was in. You can visit your state library or state historical society, or [find state archive listings online](#). When you get to the site, click on "Researching People of the Civil War Era." Among other great genealogical information, state archival sources are listed. Most states have published histories of their military units as well, and brief summaries of the service of each man in the unit are often included. Another good source is "[The Sons of Confederate Veterans Genealogy Network](#)" which has genealogists listed by state. Regimental histories are available at any good library (if you can't find the one you want, ask about inter-library loan).

*If you know the soldier's last name and the regiment he was in,* the National Archives has pension records, hospital records, prison records, and military service records and a whole

host of other types of information. You can visit the National Archives in Washington, D.C. or go online to the National Archives Civil War Records. [Click here](#) to request forms for information on your ancestor (there's a small fee). Broadfoot Publishing Company will do the same thing for you, but much quicker; they also charge a fee.

### **Closure:**

Why do you think it is important to find our relatives who were involved in a major historical event? Are you more or less interested in the Civil War now? Do you think someone in your family might do research on you someday?

### **Assessment:**

Students will conduct an oral history, visit the provided websites to collect information, and create an exhibit, report, or scrapbook on their relative.

### **Modification Ideas:**

1. Have your students work in pairs or groups researching one soldier.
2. If your students do not have ancestors in the Civil War you can provide them with a soldier they can research.