

Civil War Photography Interactive Worksheet

1. Look at the image on slide #2
 - a. What do you know about this image or the event being depicted in the image?

Battle of Bunker Hill, June 17, 1775 during the American Revolution. Operating from intelligence indicating that the British were to planning to send troops to occupy the hills surrounding Boston, commander William Prescott sent 1,200 Continental troops to do so first. American troops fortified both Bunker Hill as well as Breed's Hill, on which most of the fighting actually took place. The hand-to-hand combat that ensued during the third attack resulted in the death of the popular leader Jospheh Warren- the image depicted in the painting. The Americans were forced to retreat to Cambridge because of lack of ammunition, but the British suffered over 800 casualties and 226 killed, including a disproportionate number of officers, making their victory ring hollow. British General Henry Clinton remarked in his diary that "A few more such victories would have shortly put an end to British dominion in America."

This painting by John Trumbull depicts the glory of the battle and the grandeur of death in such a battle. Trumbull, a member of the Continental Army, witnessed the Battle of Bunker Hill, was the personal aide to General George Washington, and deputy adjutant-general to Horatio Gates. Trumbull went on to paint some of the most well known paintings from the period, including *The Declaration of Independence*, *Surrender of General Burgoyne*, *Surrender at Yorktown*, and *Washington Resigning his Commission*.
 - b. What does it make you think of?

Accept reasonable responses. Guide students to consider the realism, as well as the elements of glory and triumph depicted in the images from this time period. This will help students to be able to recognize the shock of the realism portrayed through photographs.
 - c. What kind of emotion does this image invoke?

Accept reasonable responses.
 - d. What does it make you think of?

Accept reasonable responses.
2. Look at the image on slide #3
 - a. What do you know about this image or the event being depicted in the image?

This photograph was taken by Alexander Gardner in Antietam, MD in September 1862. Little is known about the boy in the picture or the location on the battlefield, but you might provide a few details about the Battle of Antietam- the bloodiest single day of fighting in American history.

- b. What does it make you think of?
Accept reasonable responses. Compare the realism and poignancy of this image with that of the *Death of General Warren at Bunker Hill*.
 - c. What kind of emotion does this image invoke?
Accept reasonable responses. Again, compare the realism and poignancy of this image with that of the *Death of General Warren at Bunker Hill*.
 - d. Does this image invoke the same kind of emotion as the one before it? Why or why not?
Accept reasonable responses. Again, compare the realism and poignancy of this image with that of the *Death of General Warren at Bunker Hill*.
3. What were four photographic evolutions that occurred before the Civil War? (slide #4)
 - a. daguerreotype
 - b. collodion process or wet plate process
 - c. ambrotype and tintype
 - d. stereo view
 4. The daguerreotype was invented in 1839 by Louis Daguerre. (Slide #5)
 5. How long did it take for a daguerreotype so expose? (Slide #5)
15 minutes
 6. Yes/ No A daguerreotype WAS reproducible? (Slide #5)
 7. What made the daguerreotype do fragile? (slide #6)
It was thin and delicate
 8. What was the first war to be photographed and when? (Slide # 8)
The Mexican-American War 1846 or 1847
NOTE: The photographs taken during the Mexican-American War are very rare. The image of Winfield Scott on slide #8 was taken after the war in 1849 by Mathew Brady.
 9. Before the Civil War Americans were most likely to see images of war depicted in what format? (Slide #9)
Lithograph
 10. Wet plate photography was invented in 1851. (Slide # 10)

11. Another name for wet plate photography was The Collodion Process
(Slide #10)
NOTE: Refer back to the demonstration of the wet plate process by Rob Gibson and Pamplin Park. You may also want to refer to the Photography and the Civil War page on the CWPT site. (provide link)
12. What was the most significant aspect of the invention of wet plate photography? Why was it so important? (Slide #11)
It could produce a negative image capable of reproduction. The ability to reproduce meant that more people could view the images.
13. Ambrotypes used the wet plate process to take a picture on plate glass. Why was this preferable to the daguerreotype? (Slide #12)
They were cheaper, more convenient to make and the plate glass was less easily damaged.
14. Exposure time using the wet plate process was between 2-12 seconds.
(slide #12)
15. The first images of war to be viewed by the public were of what war? (Slide # 13) **The Crimean War 1855**
16. These images were also the first to be used for military intelligence. Who was responsible for bringing them back to the United States? (Slide #14)
A U.S. military commission sent to observe the Crimean War. This commission included future U.S. General George B. McClellan.
17. Why were tintypes so popular among Civil War soldiers? (Slide #15)
They were durable and inexpensive- less than 25 cents.
18. Today stereo views might be identified as 3D. (Slide #16)
19. Stereo view photographs were produced using a twin lens camera.
(Slide #16)
20. Yes / No A stereo view WAS reproducible? (Slide #17)
21. The first images of a battlefield immediately following a battle were taken by Felice Beato in 1860 during the Second Opium War. (Slide #18)
22. Two famous photographers of the Civil war were (Slide #19)
 - a. Mathew Brady
 - b. Alexander Gardner
23. Photographers typically had how many assistants? Why? (Slide # 20)
One to three, because the process was long and complicated and required a lot of individual attention from several people.

24. Read slide #21 and the excerpt from the *New York Times* article on October 20, 1863 by an unknown author on slide #22.

“The living that throng Broadway care little perhaps for the Dead at Antietam, but we fancy they would jostle less carelessly down the great thoroughfare, saunter less at their ease, were a few dripping bodies, fresh from the field, laid along the pavement....As it is, the dead of the battle-field come up to us very rarely, even in dreams. We see the list in the morning paper at breakfast, but dismiss its recollection with the coffee....*There is nothing very terrible to us, however, in the list, though our sensations might be different if the newspaper carrier left the names on the battle-field and the bodies at our doors instead....*

Mr. Brady has done something to bring home to us the terrible reality and earnestness of war. *If he has not brought bodies and laid them in our door-yards and along the streets, he has done something very like it.*”
[italics added]

What point is the author making in the first paragraph about public sympathy toward the dead?

That American citizens have never really thought about or considered the magnitude of the realities of war.

25. What do you think the author means when he says “*If he [Brady] has not brought bodies and laid them in our door-yards and along the streets, he has done something very like it*”? (Slide #21-22)
Accept reasonable responses. Some answers may include: Although American citizens may have seen photographs before the war they had never seen the graphic images of a battlefield presented so realistically. This author is trying to express the fact that Mathew Brady might as well have brought the bodies to the doorsteps of the American citizens because the emotional impact would have been the same.
26. Look at the images on slide #23. Does the sketch elicit the same kind of emotional response as the photograph? Why or why not?
Accept reasonable responses.
27. Look at slide #24. What do you think was the impact of photography in future conflicts?
Accept reasonable responses. Spend an appropriate amount of time comparing imagery from these conflicts, contrasting its use and impact on the public, politics, etc.

Further Develop the Topic...

28. This image of a dead Confederate sharpshooter at Gettysburg is very well known. However, it is notable that photographer Alexander Gardner moved the soldier's body in order to pose him for a more dramatic scene. How do you think the family of this soldier, who was identified as Andrew Johnston Hoge, would have reacted to this information? If this were a member of your family, would it change the way you looked at the image?

Accept reasonable responses.



Dead Confederate soldier in Devil's Den, Gettysburg, July 1863; Library of Congress

Assessment:

1. Name two developments in photography that occurred before the Civil War and describe their importance.
Any of the following were important, but the daguerreotypes and the wet plate process were the most impactful.
 - **daguerreotype**- the first functional photography
 - **collodion process/ wet plate process**- allowed the duplication of images
 - **ambrotypes/ tintypes**- both were more durable and sturdy than the daguerreotypes
 - **stereo view**- reproducible 3D images which were very popular
2. Why was the Civil War considered a watershed moment in history? (slide #19)
There are several components to this question. You may choose to emphasize all or some of them.
 - Because images taken during the American Civil War were the first to be distributed to a large public audience and many graphically depicted dead soldiers following battle.
 - These realistic images emotionally impacted society.
 - Professional photographers attempted to completely document the war in images, beginning a new genre of documentation: **photojournalism.**

**Points have not been assigned to this question on the rubric so that some or all of the components may be counted for credit.*
3. Knowing that the vast majority of Americans had a personal connection to someone fighting in the war, how do you think families back home reacted to seeing actual photographs of the war and its horrible, brutal effects?
Accept reasonable responses.