

The Common Civil War Soldier Lesson Plan

USING LIVING HISTORY TO UNDERSTAND THE LIFE OF A SOLDIER

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Grades: 3-6

Length of Time: Approximately 2.5 hours

Goals:

The students will obtain a better understanding of what life was like for the Civil War soldier by seeing a classroom visitor's display of Civil War items.

Objectives:

1. Having been shown reproduction items from the time period, students will be able to describe aloud what people from the Civil War era would have worn, carried with them, and used on a daily basis.
2. Having been shown reproduction items and participated in a class discussion on the topic, students will write two letters describing what life was like as a soldier.

Materials Used:

1. A classroom visitor dressed in Civil War era clothing with items from the time period.
2. Civil War Living History Assessment/Enrichment Writing Prompt
3. Civil War Living History Assessment/Enrichment Activity

Anticipatory Set/Hook:

What do you think life was like for a Civil War soldier? Do you know what a Civil War Reenactor does?

Procedure:

A Civil War reenactor will be able to bring period correct items to your classroom. Ask the visitor to display these items in such a way so as to make them most visible to your students. It is then best to proceed through the items in such a way as to showcase certain specific areas that are important to students understanding the time period as well as the classroom visitor. Different visitors will provide very different experiences, but here are some ideas that can help guide the presentation.

Possible topics that your classroom visitor can discuss:

1. Introduction

- a. What is a Civil War Reenactor?
 - i. Explain what reenactor does.

2. Drummer Boys

- a. Ask what types of jobs children would have had if they joined the armies during the Civil War? Explain that they included:
 - i. Orderly: worked for an officer to perform chores
 - ii. Guide-On: Held flags on either end of groups of soldiers to help the soldiers march in straight lines
 - iii. Powder Monkey: carried gun powder charges from the caisson to the artillery sergeant for loading cannons
 - iv. Stretcher Carrier: assisted in transporting wounded soldiers
 - v. Musician: played the fife or drums to assist soldiers in marching, help with communication, and even simply for entertainment

3. Civilian Life

- a. Ask your students to describe what civilians did during the civil War. If possible, explain what civilian life was like.
 - i. Describe families who followed the armies
 - ii. Showcase games and other activities children would have enjoyed
 - iii. Describe what civilians would have done on a day to day basis

4. Military Encampment

- a. Ask students what they think soldiers would have done between battles. Explain what soldiers would have done in camps
 - i. Describe the tents used by soldiers
 - ii. Display the items most likely found with a soldier in camp

5. Explain the Civil War Soldier

- a. Introduction
 - i. Explain the differences between a Northern Soldier and a Southern Soldier
 - ii. Show students that in fact many times people from the same area fought against one another

- b. Ask your students what they think soldiers would have worn? Showcase Civil War clothing
 - i. Explain what soldiers on both sides would have worn
 - ii. If the visitor allows it, allow the children to try on some of the Civil war clothing if it is available
 - c. Ask your students what they think soldiers carried into battle. Explain Soldier Accoutrement
 - i. Showcase, if possible, the cartridge box, cap pouch, belt, buckle, canteen, etc that Civil War soldiers would have carried.
 - ii. Explain what each of the items was used for
 - d. Ask your students what a musket is. If possible, demonstrate a musket
 - i. Examine the cartridges and caps used during the Civil War
 - ii. Explain about loading in nine-steps
 - e. Ask your students what they think soldiers ate during the Civil war. If possible, display some typical food.
 - i. Discuss types of food soldiers typically ate, including hard tack, salt pork, beans, coffee, etc.
 - ii. Discuss cooking ingredients and procedures
6. Make sure that students are given an opportunity to ask any further questions they may have after the presentation

Closure:

Ask your students what they think of a soldier's life. Could they have done what soldiers needed to do? Do you think it was easy or hard?

Assessment:

Students will successfully complete the writing prompt and/or Assessment/Enrichment Activity to showcase the knowledge they have received from the classroom visitor.

Modification Ideas:

Have students draw a picture of what they saw instead of having them write for an assessment.