Civil War: Young Soldiers

Twelve Historical Photographs
1. Union Drummer Boy.
2. Teen-age Private, Georgia Infantry.
3. 93d New York Infantry Drum Corps.
5. Twelve-year-old Shiloh Veteran.
6. Union Colored-Infantry Drummer Boy.
7. "Powder Monkey."
8. Youthful Confederate Cavalryman.

"Union Drummer Boy"

Reproducible Masters
★ Broadsheet Essay
★ Student Photo Activities
★ Photo Analysis Worksheet
★ Timeline: 1861-1865

"Powder Monkey"

"Johnny Clem"

Jackdaw® Photo Collection PC-104
This Jackdaw Photo Collection highlights an interesting fact about the U.S. Civil War of 1861-65: namely, that a surprisingly large number of soldiers in both the Union and Confederate armies were boys under the age of 16 ... boys so young, in fact, that they would not have been permitted to serve in today’s U.S. Armed forces.

While the record-keeping of the military more than a century ago was not very accurate or complete, the records from that time do indicate that somewhere between 250,000 and 500,000 boys younger than 16 served on one side or the other in that titanic struggle. Both the North and the South had recruitment rules that prohibited the enlistment of young men under the age of 18, but the rules were often ignored as both sides of the looming conflict sought to build up their needed armies.

Because much of the North, and even more of the South, was farm country in the 1860s, a large percentage of the young recruits came from rural backgrounds. Their reasons for joining up, other than the excitement gripping the nation, were varied and complex. In general, boys from the North did not join up because they felt an urgent need to do away with slavery, but boys in the South did feel they had to help show the North their states weren’t going to be bossed around by Washington.

While it was a rare army recruiter who would refuse to enlist a husky young man who might be somewhat under age, there was another way for an enthusiastic underage recruit to join the army ... he could always sign up as a drummer or a bugler. These were considered non-fighting positions, and thus a recruiter would sometimes be willing to allow a boy to sign up without worrying about his age. The need to fill these categories of recruit was desperate; during the war, the Union army used over 40,000 musicians, while an estimated 20,000 served the armies in the South.

While the “drummer boys” and the buglers handled all manner of military camp chores during the Civil War, the need for their service became vital during battles and troop maneuvers. Positioned as they were at the side of frontline officers during a battle, it was the drummer or the bugler ... or both ... who transmitted the call for a particular maneuver to troops who were blinded by battlefield smoke and often separated from contact with the officers commanding their movements. It was the drumbeat or bugle call that told the troops what was expected of them in the heat of battle. It is worth noting that the American Civil War is the last major conflict in which the drummer or the bugler has played such a key role in transmitting signals from officers to troops during battle.
Civil War Gallery

FREEMEN!

AVOID CONSCRIPTION!

The undersigned desires to raise a Company for the Confederate States service, and for that purpose I call upon the people of the Counties of Jefferson and Hawkins, Tenn., to meet promptly at Russellville, on SATURDAY, JULY 19th, 1862, and organize a Company.

By so doing you will avoid being taken as Conscripts, for that Act will now be enforced by order of the War Department. Rally, then, my Countrymen, to your Country's call.

S. M. DENNISON,

Of the Confederate States Army.

Top: 1862 recruiting notice from the Library of Congress reproduced in the Jackdaw portfolio “Civil War.”

Left: Early photo of President Lincoln from the National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, reproduced in the Jackdaw portfolio “Secession.”
Student Activities for Photos

Photo 1
What thoughts come to your mind as you look at this photo of a Union drummer boy? What do you think this drummer boy’s life in the army was like?

Photo 2
This is a photo of a young Southern soldier. How do you think his reasons for being in the army compare to those of a Northern soldier?

Photo 3
After you have studied this photo of a group of Union drummers, describe the function of the drummer in the Civil War army as compared to drummers in today’s army.

Photo 4
From his appearance, do you think this young man is too young to be in the Civil War? Give your reasons.

Photo 5
Do you think Johnny Clem is too young to have been in the army? Why do you think the Union Army officers allowed him to serve?

Photo 6
This drummer boy was unique. Write a one-page essay describing why that statement is true.

Photo 7
Do you know why this boy is called a “powder monkey”? Do some research to discover what his job aboard a warship was.

Photo 8
What is your impression of this young Confederate cavalrman? Why were most photographs posed during this period in history?

Photo 9
Make a list of the reasons why this young Union soldier would have joined the army in 1861.

Photo 10
Make a list of the reasons why this young Southern soldier would have joined the army in 1861.

Photo 11
This Union soldier was from the state of Maine. Describe how he would have had to travel to join the Army outside the city of Washington in 1861.

Photo 12
Do you think this young soldier went into battle dressed this way? Did all Union soldiers dress alike? All Confederate soldiers?
Photo Analysis Worksheet

Step I. Observation
A. Study the photograph for two minutes. Form an overall impression of the photo, and then examine individual items in the photo. Next, divide the photo into quadrants and study each section to see what new details become visible to you.

B. Use the chart below to list people, objects, and activities you see in the photo.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People</th>
<th>Objects</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Step II. Inference
Based on what you have observed above, list three things you might infer from this photo.

1. 

2. 

3. 

Step III. Questions
A. What questions does this photo raise in your mind?

1. 

2. 

3. 

B. Where could you find the answers to these questions?

1. 

2. 

3. 

Photo worksheet presented by Jackdaws; designed and developed by the Education Branch, National Archives, Washington, D.C.
**Timeline**

**1861**
January-May — Southern states secede from Union, draft a Constitution, and elect Jefferson Davis President.

April 12-14 — Civil War begins; Confederates fire on Fort Sumter, Charleston, S.C., forcing Union troops to evacuate.

July 21 — Confederates defeat Union troops at First Battle of Bull Run, Manassas, Va.

**1862**
April — Union army of Tennessee under U.S. Grant forces Confederates to withdraw at Battle of Shiloh, Tennessee.


September — Lee’s first northern invasion is halted by Gen. McClellan at Battle of Antietam, Maryland.

**1863**
January 1 — Lincoln issues Emancipation Proclamation, freeing slaves in seceding states.


July — Union forces under Gen. Grant capture Vicksburg, Mississippi.

November 19 — President Lincoln delivers Gettysburg Address.

**1864**
March — Gen. Grant, named supreme commander of Union armies.

May-June — Armies of Grant and Lee fight inconclusive, but destructive, Battles of Wilderness, Spotsylvania, and Cold Harbor, Va. Union losses heavier than Confederate.

May-December — Union army under Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman captures and burns Atlanta, Ga., September 1st, then marches on to sea and captures Savannah on December 22nd.

**1865**
January-April — Caught between Grant to the North and Sherman to the South, Lee abandons siege of Petersburg and Richmond and retreats westward.

April — Union forces under Grant chase and surround Southern forces; Lee surrenders to Grant at Appomattox, Va. on April 9th. Other Southern armies follow suit; Civil War ends May 26.

April 14 — President Lincoln is shot and killed by John Wilkes Booth at Ford’s Theater, Washington, D.C.