

Preserving Battlefields Lesson Plan

BATTLE OF THE BATTLEFIELDS

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Grades: 8-12

Length of Time: Approximately 7 days

Goals:

Students will learn the importance of several Civil War battles, as well as the importance of preserving battlefields.

Objectives:

1. Given a particular battle, students will be able to write a page of notes on the importance of the battle.
2. Students will be able to identify a primary source item and orally present it to their peers.
3. Students will be able to show what they learned about important Civil War battles by writing a paper on the topic.

Materials Used:

1. Battle of the Battlefields handout
2. Battlefield Chart
3. Presentation Rubric
4. Summary to President Rubric

Anticipatory Set/Hook:

What would you do if you had to choose what Civil War site to save? What if the President of the United States was depending on you? Could you decide what battle was the most important or what battlefield was most important to save?

Procedure:

Day 1: Handout and explain assignment

Introduction

Many important battles were fought during America's Civil War. Commemorating these battles helps to remind us of the tremendous risks and sacrifices that Americans endured as they struggled during this four year conflict. We know the North eventually won the war, but the road to victory was by no means an easy one. Both sides had advantages. The North had more men and supplies. The South had experienced generals and was fighting on their own territory. In the end, 600,000 Americans died on or near battlefields in the North and South.

Today, these historic battles continue to shape our remembrances of America's struggle against itself. Unfortunately, 20% of Civil War battlefields have been destroyed for shopping malls, housing developments, or other reasons. Only 15% of the battlefields have federal government protections. For this reason, the President of the United States and the United States Congress has decided that the American people (and also visitors from other countries) should have the opportunity to learn more about important battles of the Civil War. They have authorized millions of dollars for the construction of a new museum at the site of the most important battle fought during the war. The main difficulty, the President and Congress have discovered, is determining which battle site should get the money. To make the right decision, the United States government needs your help.

The Challenge

Your class has been selected by the President and Congress to serve as the Battlefield Research Analysis Group (BRAG). They ask that you investigate this matter and recommend one battle as being the most important in the Civil War. As mentioned above, the President and Congress will award millions of dollars for the establishment of a museum at the battle site you choose. The museum is intended to educate people about the major battles of the Civil War—particularly the battle that your class selects as being most important.

BRAG members will be divided into groups. Each group shall first research one of the battles listed below to determine how it affected the course of the war and contributed to the final outcome of the war. After researching individual battles within the groups and presenting their findings to BRAG, all BRAG members will then meet together to decide which site should receive the award.

Day 2-4: Research battle and take notes

The battle sites to be investigated are:

Gettysburg

Antietam
Battle of New Orleans
First Battle of Manassas
Vicksburg
Shiloh
Chancellorsville
The Wilderness

Day 5: Group presentations/Battlefield chart

Day 6: Discussion and Debate

Day 7: Write Summary

Closure:

Do you think that preserving battlefields is important? What can you do to make sure that battlefields are saved?

Assessment:

Students will complete their presentations on battlefields, and will be graded based on the Oral Presentation and Battlefield Letter rubrics provided below.

After each group presents their information the entire BRAG will meet, discuss, debate, and decide which battlefield should be awarded the prize. Each student will write a one page summary of the BRAG's findings that will be sent to the President of the United States or a United States Senator or Representative from their district or state. Include three details about how the class decided on the winner, three reasons the battlefield was chosen, and three recommendations on how the money should be spent (24 points).

Grading:

Notes from your battle – 10 points

Presentation – 24 points

Battlefield chart – 8 points

Final summary to President and Congress – 24 points

Modification Ideas:

1. Have students write their proposal instead of presenting them to the entire class.

2. Place students with good oral communication skills with those who do not communicate well.