

# The Civilian Experience and the Civil War

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## Teacher Introduction:

The Civil War was a personal war which tore our nation apart and affected families on both sides. There are some commonalities that many men, women, and children during this period, on both sides, experienced and this lesson seeks to help your students understand what these were. This lesson addresses six different aspects of life that were affected by the war: food shortages, changes in cooking, women's fashion, refugee life, volunteer efforts, and mourning practices. Virtually all of these aspects of life were experienced by most Americans in the northern and southern states either personally experienced or knew someone else who experienced these aspects of war. This was especially true for those states in which fighting occurred. Women, as the new heads of families, experienced war life as a life vastly different from the antebellum one. They had to adjust to this new world, and this adjustment demanded a great deal of personal sacrifice.

## A Teacher's Note on Supplies and Activities:

As you go through this lesson try to keep in your student's minds the realities of everyday life for people just like them during this period. There is a plethora of content in this lesson, feel free to take and leave whatever you want.

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## Georgia State Social Studies Standards

Grade 4: **SS4H5** Explain the causes, major events, and consequences of the Civil War

Grade 8: **SS8H5** Analyze the impact of the Civil War on Georgia.

Grade 6-8: **L6-8RHSS1**: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

Grade 6-8: **L6-8RHSS2**: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

Grade 9-10: **L9-10RHSS1** Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

Grade 9-10: **L9-10RHSS2** Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

Grade 11-12: **L11-12RHSS1** Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

Grade 11-12: **L11-12RHSS2** Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

## Lesson Objectives

- Explore the different aspects of civilian life that were affected by the Civil War.
- Interpret period photos from the Civil War.
- Analyze primary and secondary source documents from the Civil War and how they portray American life.

**Lesson Duration** – One class period or one hour, all parts of this lesson together may take more than one class period. *This can be modified to fit your class period length or divided across class periods or days.*

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## Lesson

*Begin the lesson by summarizing the information related in the teacher introduction above as an introduction.*

- 1. Shortages:** Explain to your students that when the war began both the North and the South had to suddenly provide goods and services that their counterpart provided before the war. Though shortages were felt more strongly in the South, due to a lack of infrastructure and a swift blockade by Union forces, the North felt this outcome of war as well. Richmond, the capital of the Confederacy, was a town where there was a lot of wealth and a lot of poverty. The city was composed of some of the wealthiest in the South who came to Richmond when the new Confederate government was installed there and because of this, it also had many refugees. Refugees who had either been removed or who had fled their homes looking for a safer place to stay came to the capital, swelling its numbers virtually overnight. Many of these people were starving and had no place to go. This

compounded with the fact that the winter of 1862 - 1863 was a tough one for many people, which led to rioting.

Read, to your class the eyewitness account provided of a bread riot that occurred on April 3, 1863 in Richmond, Virginia. Afterwards, discuss together the following questions:

- A. What do you think caused these women and children to riot for food?
  - B. Besides food, what other things does the writer mention the South didn't have?
  - C. What do you think of the writer, was she sympathetic to the plight of the rioting people?
  - D. If the government cannot provide its citizens with food, is it right or wrong to take food like this?
- 2. Cooking:** Cooking became difficult as food became less available. Many housewives made do with what was available to them or substituted other available goods. Show your students the Confederate Receipt Book: A Compilation of Over One Hundred receipts, Adapted to the Times, printed in 1863 (edited for this lesson). This book advises Confederate cooks on how to make food without 'essential' ingredients.
- A. Ask your students to think about a bag of coffee beans and tell them that a pound of coffee before the Civil War would cost about \$3.00 a pound. Ask them how much they think that same amount of coffee would be by the end of the war?  
*(Answer: over \$70.00 a pound, that's a 23,000 percent increase).*
  - B. Discuss how the price of coffee skyrocketed and its scarcity during the war, especially in the South due to the blockade. Ask the class how they would make coffee without coffee beans?
  - C. Tell the students that acorns could be used as a substitute for coffee beans and use the recipe book on the next few pages to describe this process. (Other substitutes for coffee included okra seeds, wheat berries, corn, peanuts, sugar cane seed, and cotton seed among others.)
  - D. Read your students a few recipes, including the one for coffee. Before reading each adapted recipe, ask the students how they would adapt a known favorite recipe if they lacked the essential ingredients. For example, ask your students how they would make a pizza without access to flour and cheese.
- 3. Women's Fashion:** Clothing was one of the main ways that a woman of this period showed her wealth and privilege. The large cage crinoline, or hoop skirt of this period, with its yards of costly material needed to cover it, illustrated to the world the status of the woman that wore it. It stated that this fashionable lady did not have to work in the fields or in the factories, and that she could afford to dress well. Many women, when the war began, were not able to keep up this façade of ease and grandeur. Unless she was wealthy and

willing to pay high costs for blockade-run goods, which were seen as unpatriotic, the wealthy southern woman had to wear her old dresses, often remaking them to go with the newest style.

- A. Show students pictures from Godey's Ladies Book, a fashion periodical of the period and ask them the following questions:
  1. What does this outfit tell you about this woman's lifestyle?
  2. What do you think this was an expensive outfit to make and maintain?
  3. Do you think that most people during the time dressed like this?
- B. Tell your students that if expensive fabric for beautiful dresses could not be bought then women would have to refashion or repurpose what they did have or to weave their own. Homespun or cloth that was made in the home was used for years to clothe the poorer classes and the slaves on plantation farms. Homespun was therefore a 'low' cloth associated with the poorer classes. Some women, desperate for clothes for themselves and their families, tried to weave homespun dresses, shirts, trousers, and other garments that were needed. In the Confederacy, this was seen as patriotic and many women tried their hand at making garments like this. Ask your students to imagine making a piece of clothing from nothing but an old linen tablecloth with your needle and thread. Or to go through the laborious process of taking raw cotton (hold up cotton ball) and using a spinning wheel, to process that cotton so it could be used to make fabric.

Pass out to your students the lyrics of "The Homespun Dress" by Carrie Belle Sinclair and/or play the song over the classroom's computer.

<https://youtu.be/YLJnYYdn8xw>

1. Pass out "The Homespun Dress" worksheet for students to work alone or in pairs on after listening to the song.

*Teacher Note: It is important to remember that though the war caused great personal sacrifice for men and women, most people did without luxuries and did not become their own independent home factories. Nobody knew when the war would end, and many, hoping for a quick end, did not diversify as "The Homespun Dress" song encourages southern women to do.*

4. **Refugee Life:** Many families left their homes, especially in the Southern states during the Civil War. Either voluntarily or forcibly there were many reasons for people to leave their homes. People who had means fled their homes to protect their slave population. As the shifting tide of war drove the Union troops farther and farther South, moving a planter's slave population stopped those slaves from being liberated by Union forces. In addition, many wealthy females moved in with other females for protection and comradery. Many rich white planter women were afraid of their slave populations, who, as the war continued, realized that freedom could be had easily. Banding together made women feel

safer and gave them a sense of community they lost when their husbands, brothers, and sons went off to war.

People would also become refugees by no choice of their own. As the Union troops marched through the south, especially as Sherman marched through Georgia, people's homes were destroyed or commandeered by Union forces for living quarters and hospitals. The home owners had no choice but to leave. Sherman, after conquering Atlanta, turned out the entire civilian population who had not fled before he arrived. Thus turning out thousands of women and children as winter swiftly approached.

- A.** Have your students look at the stereograph entitled Refugees Leaving the Old Homestead. Ask your students why people would leave their homes during the Civil War?
  - B.** What things do you see these refugees are taking away with them
  - C.** Ask your students that if they had to leave their home and were given an hour to gather their things, what would they take with them? List these things on the board. Discuss why they would choose these items and how they would aid them in fleeing their homes.
  
- 5. Volunteer Efforts:** While most of the men were off fighting in the war, many other responsibilities fell to the women left at home and their help was needed for various volunteer efforts. Organizations like the United States Sanitary Commission (USSC) who inspected field hospitals also trained nurses to work in these hospitals. With such a large job to do, the USSC enlisted the support of women throughout the North through organizations like the Ladies' Aid Society. This society brought together women who were helping in an individual way and organized them together to become a powerful force in the Union movement. The Confederacy also had a large and supportive volunteer movement, but as the war went on and resources became scarce, it became harder and harder to help supply the troops. The northern volunteer effort is also better documented than the southern one, so this lesson will focus on them.
  - A.** Have your students look at this picture entitled "The Influence of Women" and ask them what roles women are portrayed as being necessary for.  
*(Answers are in a clockwise direction starting with the top: Sewing and making uniforms, washing clothing, writing letters for sick soldiers, nursing and providing care.)*
  - B.** Then discuss with your students:
    - 1.** How were these roles the same or different than what women were already doing?
    - 2.** How did these contribute to the war effort?
    - 3.** Why were women primarily the ones to complete these roles?

**6. Mourning:** Death was a common aspect of life during the nineteenth century, and especially during the Civil War. Throughout the war, one in four Confederate soldiers would die while fighting, later of injuries received on the battlefield, or of unsanitary conditions in camps and hospitals that promoted diseases. Strict mourning practices ritualized this aspect of life and gave people a prescribed way to memorialize the death of a loved one. These practices dictated what a person should wear for mourning and for how long they should mourn for. With so many lost in the Civil War, especially with so many soldiers unable to return home to be buried, tokens and mementos of loved ones became extremely important. Jewelry woven of a loved one's hair, a photograph encased in a gold frame, or anything that reminded the mourner of the loved one was cherished and considered to be an essential part of the mourning experience. *Show students "People in Mourning Picture – Exhibit F" for example of hair jewelry.*

- A.** Read to your students the etiquette for mourning a loved one listed below:  
"For parents you are to mourn a child for one year, siblings mourn for six months. Widowers mourn for three months and show their outward devotion by wearing arm bands, badges, and rosettes of black fabric. Widows mourn for two years. Women had two stages of mourning, the first, or heavy mourning lasted for a year and involved wearing black all the time and when out in public a black veil to hide her face. The woman was not to wear jewelry or engage in any type of social activity besides going to church. At half mourning, or after one year, the woman could wear lighter colors like lavender, mauve, and brown. She was also permitted to wear black jewelry made of jet or black glass. She could also wear hair jewelry to remember her loved one. As you can see the status and closeness of the relationship determined how long someone would mourn for."
- B.** Ask students questions over the etiquette of mourning you just read:
- Why do you think a man who lost his wife would mourn for three months while a woman who lost her husband would mourn for two years?
  - Do you think mourning practices changed during the Civil War – could these practices continue after the war?
  - What would the differences be to your life if you had to be in mourning for two years?
- C.** Have students examine the photos of people in mourning. Ask your students to identify clues in each of the photos that show the particular person was in mourning based on what they have learned so far.

## Eyewitness account of a bread riot on April 3, 1863

“Something very sad has just happened in Richmond - something that makes me ashamed of all my jeremiads (laments) over the loss of the petty comforts and conveniences of life - hats, bonnets, gowns, stationery, books, magazines, dainty food.

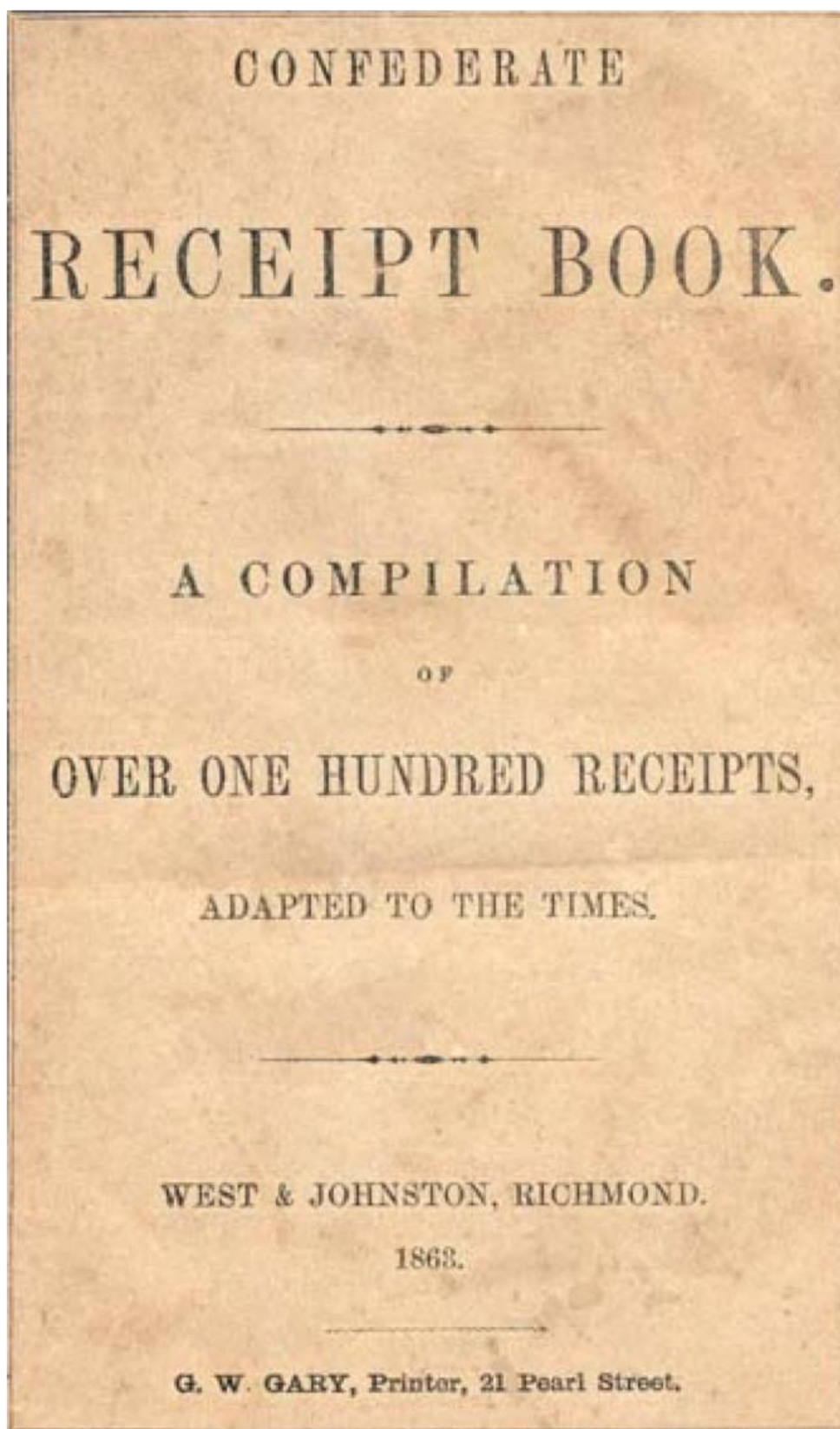
Since the weather has been so pleasant, I have been in the habit of walking in the Capitol Square before breakfast every morning. . . Yesterday, upon arriving, I found within the gates a crowd of women and boys - several hundreds of them, standing quietly together.

I sat on a bench near, and one of the number left the rest and took the seat beside me. She was a pale, emaciated girl, not more than eighteen. . . As she raised her hand to remove her sunbonnet and use it for a fan, her loose calico sleeve slipped up and revealed the mere skeleton of an arm. She perceived my expression as I looked at it, and hastily pulled down her sleeve with a short laugh. 'This is all that's left of me' she said. 'It seems real funny, don't it? . . . We are starving. As soon as enough of us get together, we are going to the bakeries and each of us will take a loaf of bread. That is little enough for the government to give us after it has taken all our men.'

. . . The crowd now rapidly increased, and numbered, I am sure, more than a thousand women and children. It grew and grew until it reached the dignity of a mob - a bread riot. They impressed all the light carts they met, and marched along silently and in order. They marched through Cary Street and Main, visiting the stores of the speculators and emptying them of their contents. Governor Letcher sent the mayor to read the Riot Act, and as this had no effect on the crowd. The city battalion came up. The women fell back with frightened eyes, but did not obey the order to disperse.

The President [Jefferson Davis] then appeared ascended a dray, and addressed them. It is, said he was received at first with hisses from the boys, but after he had spoken some little time with great kindness and sympathy, the women moved quietly on, taking their food with them. General Elze and General Winder wished to call troops from the camps to 'suppress the women,' but [Secretary of War James] Seddon, a wise man, declined to issue the order. While I write women and children are still standing in the streets, demanding food, and the government is issuing to them rations of rice."

<http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/breadriot.htm>



<http://docsouth.unc.edu/imls/receipt/receipt.html>



### APPLE PIE WITHOUT APPLES.--

To one small bowl of crackers, that have been soaked until no hard parts remain, add one teaspoonful of tartaric acid, sweeten to your taste, add some butter, and a very little nutmeg.

### ARTIFICIAL OYSTERS.--

Take young green corn, grate it in a dish; to one pint of this add one egg, well beaten, a small teacup of flour, two or three tablespoonful's of butter, some salt and pepper, mix them all together. A tablespoonful of the batter will make the size of an oyster Fry them light brown, and when done butter them. Cream if it can be procured is better.

### CONFEDERATE CANDLE.--

Melt together a pound of beeswax and a quarter of a pound of rosin or of turpentine, fresh from the tree. Prepare a wick 30 or 40 yards long, made up of three threads of loosely spun cotton, saturate this well with the mixture, and draw it through your fingers, to press all closely together, and to keep the size even. Repeat the process until the candle attains the size of a large straw or quill, then wrap around a bottle, or into a ball with a flat bottom. Six inches of this candle elevated above the rest will burn for fifteen or twenty minutes, and give a very pretty light, and forty yards have sufficed a small family a summer for all the usual purposes of the bed-chamber.

### PRESERVING MEAT WITHOUT SALT.--

We need salt as a relish to our food, but it is not essential in the preservation of our meats. The Indians used little or no salt, yet they preserved meat and even fish in abundance by drying. This can be accomplished by fire, by smoke or by sunshine, but the most rapid and reliable mode is by all these agents combined. To do this select a spot having the fullest command of sunshine. Erect there a **wigwan** five or six feet high, with an open top, in size proportioned to the quantity of meat to be cured, and protected from the winds, so that all the smoke must pass through the open top. The meat cut into pieces suitable for drying (the thinner the better) to be suspended on rods in the open comb, and a vigorous smoke made of decayed wood is to be kept up without cessation Exposed thus to the combined influence of sunshine, heat and smoke, meat cut into slices not over an inch thick can be thoroughly cured in twenty-four hours. For thicker pieces there must be, of course, a longer time, and the curing of oily meat, such as pork, is more difficult than that of beef, venison or mutton.

To cure meat in the sun hang it on the South side of your house, as near to the wall as possible without touching.

Savages cure fish by pounding it fine, and exposing it to the bright sun.

### SUBSTITUTE FOR CREAM IN TEA OR COFFEE.--

Beat the white of an egg to a froth, put to it a very small lump of butter, and mix well, then turn the coffee to it gradually, so that it may not curdle. If perfectly done it will be an excellent substitute for cream. For tea omit the butter, using only the egg.

### SUBSTITUTE FOR COFFEE.--

Take sound ripe acorns, wash them while in the shell, dry them, and parch until they open, take the shell off, roast with a little bacon fat, and you will have a splendid cup of coffee.

### TO PREVENT THIRST.--

Coffee grounds chewed at intervals on a march, or during any arduous service, will repress thirst and satiate the cravings of hunger. When boiled over again, and the decoction becomes cool, it will quench thirst more effectively than water.

### VARIOUS HINTS.--

One flannel petticoat will wear nearly as long as two, if turned behind part before, when the front begins to wear out. If you have a strip of land do not throw away soapsuds. Both ashes and soap suds are good manure for bushes and young plants.

See that nothing is thrown away which might have served to nourish your own family, or a poorer one.

"Brewis" is made of crusts and dry pieces of bread soaked a good while in hot milk, mashed up, and eaten with salt.

### APPENDIX.

#### RECIPES FOR MAKING BREAD, &c., FROM RICE FLOUR.

RUSSEL COUNTY, ALA., SEPTEMBER 8TH, 1862.

Editors Columbus Sun :--I read an article in one of your papers lately in which recipes for making different kinds of bread with rice flour were enquired for, and having a few that I think will be found very good I send them to you. They were printed in Charleston, S. C., several years ago.

ELIZABETH B. LEWIS.

#### TO MAKE LOAF RICE BREAD.--

Boil a pint of rice soft, add a pint of leaven, then three quarts of rice flour, put it to rise in a tin or **eathern** vessel until it has raised sufficiently; divide it into three parts, and bake it as other bread, and you will have three large loaves, or scald the flour, and when cold mix half wheat flour or corn meal, raised with leaven in the usual way.

#### JOURNEY OR JONNY CAKES.--

To three spoonfuls of soft boiled rice add a small tea cup of water or milk, then add six spoonfuls of the rice flour, which will make a large Jonny cake or six waffles.

Godey's Ladies Book – Fashion Pictures



Godey's Ladies Book – Fashion Pictures



## Godey's Ladies Book – Fashion Pictures



## THE HOMESPUN DRESS

by Carrie Belle Sinclair

Oh, yes, I am a Southern girl,  
And glory in the name,  
And boast it with far greater pride  
Than glittering wealth and fame.  
We envy not the Northern girl  
Her robes of beauty rare,  
Though diamonds grace her snowy neck  
And pearls bedeck her hair.

CHORUS: Hurrah! Hurrah!

For the sunny South so dear;  
Three cheers for the homespun dress  
The Southern ladies wear!

The homespun dress is plain, I know,  
My hat's palmetto, too;  
But then it shows what Southern girls  
For Southern rights will do.

We send the bravest of our land  
To battle with the foe,  
And we will lend a helping hand--  
We love the South, you know.--CHORUS

Now Northern goods are out of date;  
And since old Abe's blockade,  
We Southern girls can be content  
With goods that's Southern made.  
We send our sweethearts to the war;

But, dear girls, never mind--  
Your soldier-love will ne'er forget  
The girl he left behind.--CHORUS

The soldier is the lad for me--  
A brave heart I adore;  
And when the sunny South is free,  
And when fighting is no more,  
I'll choose me then a lover brave  
From all that gallant band;  
The soldier lad I love the best  
Shall have my heart and hand.--CHORUS

The Southern land's a glorious land,  
And has a glorious cause;  
Then cheer, three cheers for Southern rights,  
And for the Southern boys!  
We scorn to wear a bit of silk,  
A bit of Northern lace,  
But make our homespun dresses up,  
And wear them with a grace.--CHORUS

And now, young man, a word to you:  
If you would win the fair,  
Go to the field where honor calls,  
And win your lady there.  
Remember that our brightest smiles  
Are for the true and brave,  
And that our tears are all for those  
Who fill a soldier's grave.--CHORUS

## “The Homespun Dress” Questions

Who is the audience the singer is addressing?

How does the author of this song hope to encourage sacrifice in fellow southerners?

How does the author see themselves as different from Northern women?

In the author’s mind, what qualities are desirable in a southern belle?

What other elements of southern culture or regional dress are prevalent in this song?

What picture of the future does the song try to paint?

Did this dream come true?

## Refugees Leaving the Old Homestead





# “The Influence of Women”



People in Mourning Pictures Exhibit A



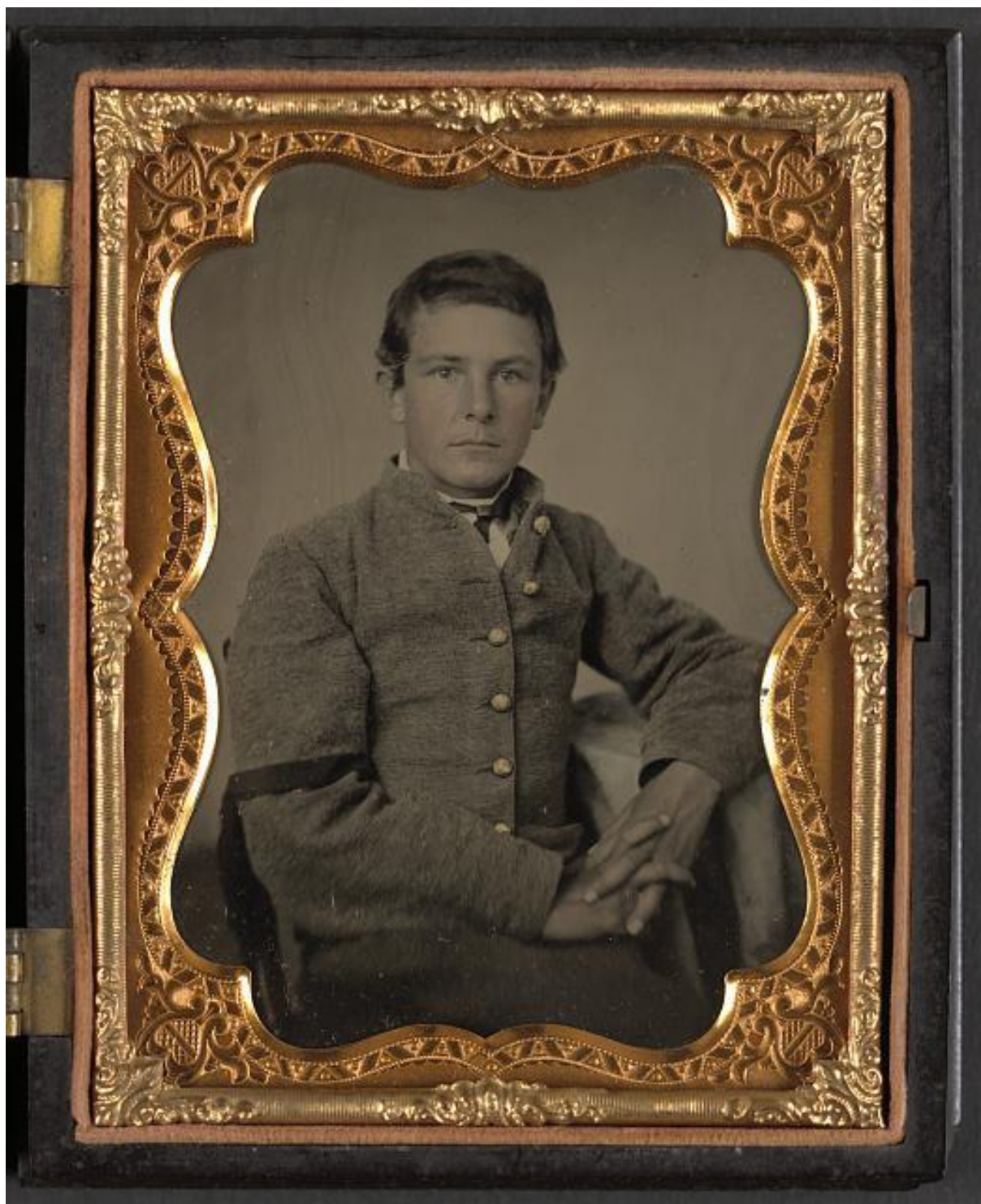
People in Mourning Pictures Exhibit B



People in Mourning Pictures Exhibit C



People in Mourning Pictures Exhibit D



People in Mourning Pictures Exhibit E



## People in Mourning Pictures Exhibit F

*Unidentified soldier in Union uniform with saber and revolver in locket with chain of braided hair – Example of Hair Jewelry*



## People in Mourning Pictures Descriptions

**A.** This hand-colored tintype shows an unidentified little girl in mourning attire. She is holding a framed photo of her father dressed in the uniform of a Cavalryman with sword and Hardee hat. Her dark dress, mourning jewelry, and somber expression all show that she is in mourning.

**B.** This ambrotype shows an African American soldier with a black armband around his right arm. Black arm bands were a common symbol of mourning at this time period, especially for soldiers who could not go into full mourning due to their uniforms.

**C.** This ambrotype depicts a woman believed to be Mrs. James Shields in full mourning holding a small boy in her lap. Her black dress with the only adornment being the brooch depicting a Confederate soldier, possibly Mr. Shields confirms her mourning. Her son is wearing a kepi, a type of hat, probably owned by his late father.

**D.** Photograph shows identified soldier. According to the text found with the photograph, Devereux was 18 years old at the time the photograph was taken following the Battle of Spotsylvania Court House by a photographer named Haven in Raleigh, North Carolina. He wore a mourning ribbon around his arm for General Junius Daniel, who was killed at Spotsylvania. The black band around his arm show he is in mourning.

**E.** This photograph shows an unidentified woman, dressed in dark clothing, wearing mourning brooch, and displaying framed image of unidentified soldier. The woman's dark clothing, brooch, and picture/memento of a soldier show that she is in mourning.

*If you want more pictures for your students, more can be found in the same collection we used from Library of Congress: <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/lilj/>*