

The Civilian Experience and the Civil War

Teacher Introduction:

The Civil War was a personal war that tore our nation apart and affected families on both sides. There were some common experiences that many men, women, and children, on both sides, endured 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 everyone experienced these aspects, and those who did not personally knew someone else who had. This was especially true for those states in which fighting occurred. Women, as the new heads of families, experienced a war 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 Common Supplies and Activities:

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

Social Studies Georgia Standards of Excellence:

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.

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

Grades 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.

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

Grades 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.

Grades 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 that portray American life from the Civil War.

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.*

Lesson:

Begin the lesson by summarizing the information 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 had 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. As a result of its political status, 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, 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 the following questions.

- a. What do you think caused these women and children to riot for food?
 - b. Besides food, what other things does this 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 Recipe Book: A compilation of Over One Hundred recipes, Adapted to the Times, printed in 1862 (edited for this lesson). This book advises Confederate cooks on how to make food without 'essential' ingredients.
- a. Show the students the recipe book on the next few pages to describe the process of finding substitutes. (Other substitutes for coffee included okra seeds, wheat berries, corn, peanuts, sugar cane seed, and cotton seed among others.) Read your students a few other recipes as well.
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 that was 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 Lady's Book, a fashion periodical of the period, and ask them the following questions:
 - i. What does this outfit tell you about this woman's lifestyle?
 - ii. Do you think this was an expensive outfit to make and maintain?
 - iii. 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 repurpose what they did have or 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 and using a spinning wheel to process that cotton so it could be used to make fabric.

- c. Pass out the lyrics of "The Homespun Dress" by Carrie Belle Sinclair and/or play the song over the classroom's computer. (Be aware - the YouTube song is a shorter version, but it can give the students an idea of what the tune of the song was) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JsfZdEVZekY>

Teacher Note: It is important to remember that though the war caused great personal sacrifice for men and women, most people did without luxuries instead of becoming 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 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 what they would take with them if they had to leave their house and only had an hour to gather their things. Why did they choose those specific items, and how would those items 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 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 the picture titled "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. To explain the importance of Ladies Aid Societies and the kind of work they did to support the troops, please consider one or both of the following activities:
Making and Rolling Bandages *or* Putting on a Tableau.
 - i. Make and Roll Bandages:
 - 1. Information: Many of these aid societies helped the war effort by making and rolling bandages. During the Civil War, there was no gauze or Band-Aids like we have today, and bandages were often made from ripped linen that was worked into a bandage form by women. These women would take scraps of linen – often torn from bed sheets and tablecloths - and sew them together to create a bandage. They would then roll these bandages and ship them in bulk off to hospitals to be used there. Women rolled hundreds of thousands of bandages on both sides throughout the war. They also made uniforms, shirts, pants, and socks for soldiers.
 - 2. Activity: Give your students two scraps of linen and a needle and thread (needles should be pre-threaded - needles and cloth are *not* provided in the trunk). Have the students make a running stitch to

attach the pieces together. After this they should partner with a friend to sew their pieces together. Feel free, as the students are sewing, to play Civil War music in the background or to have them imagine the scene in which acts like this would have taken place. After the partners sew together their pieces, have them roll up the bandages and place them at the front of the class, ready to be used on a soldier.

ii. Putting on a Tableau:

1. Information: Many aid societies put on events, like pageants, fairs, and picnics to raise money for the war effort. Tableaus, or plays, were another popular way for these societies to raise money.
2. Activity: Divide your students into two groups and have each group put on a tableau for the other group (feel free to divide students into multiple groups if the class is large). Give each group objects from the trunk that they must use in their tableau (feel free to divide the trunk in half with one half going to each group).
 - a. Every student should be involved in the tableau in some way.
 - b. Subjects must pertain to the war effort and use objects from the trunk assigned by the teacher.

After the plays are complete, have the students write down their observations about the process. Would this sort of activity inspire them to donate their time and money for the war effort?

6. **Mourning:** Death was a common aspect of life during the nineteenth century, especially during the Civil War. Throughout the war, one in four Confederate soldiers would die while fighting, from 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 while in mourning and how long one should mourn.

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 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 from *The Gentleman and Lady's Book of Politeness and Propriety of Deportment: Dedicated to the Youth ...*
 - i. “There are two kinds of mourning, the full and half mourning. The full mourning is worn for a father, mother, grandfather, grandmother, husband, wife, brother and sister...Half mourning is worn for uncles, aunts, cousins, and second cousins...Custom requires that a woman should wear mourning for her husband a year and six weeks, while that of a widower is only six months... During forty days we do not leave the house, except to go to church; it would be very improper to visit, dine out, or go to any assembly during the first mourning. When this time has expired, we make visits of mourning and go out a little more, but we cannot appear in public promenades, at spectacles or balls; we cannot sing, even at home. It is only at the time of half mourning that we resume by degrees our former habits of life.”
 - b. Ask students questions about the etiquette of mourning you just read:
 - i. Why do you think a man who lost a wife would mourn for six months while a woman who lost her husband would mourn for a year and six months? (*Answer: “This difference, which may appear singular, is founded upon reasons of convenience and social relations” - The Gentleman and Lady’s...*)
 - ii. Do you think mourning practices changed during the Civil War? Could these practices continue after the war?
 - iii. What would the differences be to your life if you had to be in mourning for over a year?
 - c. Have your students examine the photos of people in mourning. Ask your students to identify clues in each of the photos that show that the particular person was in mourning based on what they have learned thus far.
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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."

CONFEDERATE
RECEIPT BOOK.

A COMPILATION
OF
OVER ONE HUNDRED RECEIPTS,
ADAPTED TO THE TIMES.

WEST & JOHNSTON, RICHMOND.

1863.

G. W. GARY, Printer, 21 Pearl Street.

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 Lady's Book - Fashion Pictures



Godey's Lady's 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 E



People in Mourning Pictures Description:

- A. This hand-colored tintype shows an unidentified little girl in mourning attire. She is holding a framed photo of her father dressed in 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 (shaped in a bow). Black armbands were a common symbol of 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 a 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. This photograph shows a soldier named Devereux. According to the description of him on the Library of Congress website, “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 shows he is in mourning.
- E. This photograph shows an unidentified woman dressed in black clothing wearing a mourning brooch. This woman's dark clothing, mourning brooch, and picture momento of a soldier shows that she is in mourning.