



THE CIVIL WAR

A FILM BY KEN BURNS

LESSON

Grade Level: 7-12

Subject: History and
Geography

Estimated Time of
Required:
2 (50-60 minute) class
periods

THE CIVIL WAR CLASSROOM MATERIALS

THE BATTLE OF ANTIETAM

INTRODUCTION

In the bloodiest war in American history, the battle of Antietam stands out as the bloodiest single day. At the end of the battle, 2,108 Union soldiers were confirmed dead, and another 10,293 were missing. By comparison, on the bloodiest single day of World War II, D-Day, the US forces lost only half as many men. (In total, Union and Confederate losses were over nine times the number lost on June 6, 1944.)

Though Confederate losses were slightly less; only 10,318 men, Commanding General Robert E. Lee lost a quarter of his army. More importantly, Lee was repelled in an attempt to invade the North, and hopefully gain recognition of the Confederate government by European powers.

When the battle was finished, nearly twice as many men had died in one single day at Sharpsburg as had fallen in the War of 1812, the Mexican War, and the Spanish-American War combined.

In this activity, students will analyze primary historic sources relating to the battle as well as maps of the battle. They will make conclusions about the impact of the battle on the North and South, as well as investigate why the battle allowed President Lincoln to announce and sign the Emancipation Proclamation.

RELEVANT STANDARDS

This lesson addresses national content standards established by the Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) (<http://www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks/>).

History

- *Understands the technological, social, and strategic aspects of the Civil War (e.g., the impact of innovations in military technology; turning points of the war; leaders of the Confederacy and Union; conditions, characteristics, and armies of the Confederacy and Union; major areas of Civil War combat)*
- *Understands the provisions and significance of the Emancipation Proclamation (e.g., reasons Abraham Lincoln issued it, public reactions to it in the North and the South)*
- *Understands the impact of the Civil War on social and gender issues (e.g., the roles of women on the home front and on the battlefield; the human and material costs of the war; the degree to which the war united the nation; how it changed the lives of women, men, and children)*
- *Understands the influence of Abraham Lincoln's ideas on the Civil War (e.g., the Gettysburg Address, how the Emancipation Proclamation transformed the goals of the Civil War)*

by Michael Hutchison

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Geography

- Knows major physical and human features of places as they are represented on maps and globes (e.g., shopping areas, fast food restaurants, fire stations, largest cities, rivers, lakes, wetlands, recreation areas, historic sites, land forms, locations of places discussed in history, language arts, science, and other school subjects)
- Knows the geographic factors that have influenced people and events in the past (e.g., the effects of the site of a Civil War battle on the course of the conflict.)

RESOURCES USED IN THE LESSON

Episode 3 of *The Civil War* series, highly recommended but not required.

National Park Service Antietam National Battlefield web page (<http://www.nps.gov/anti/>).

SPECIFIC LINKS FOR THE LESSON

National Park Service (NPS) Antietam Battlefield Historic site page (<http://www.nps.gov/anti/>)
(This is the home page for the NPS resources)

NPS Battle of Antietam (<http://www.nps.gov/anti/battle.htm>)
(This page highlights the battle, as well as provides links for many resources relating to the battle, including those listed below.)

Morning Phase Map (http://www.nps.gov/anti/map_top.htm)
(This map highlights the battle as it raged across the Miller Cornfield.)

Confederate Battle Eyewitness (Morning: Miller Cornfield) (Private Isaac G. Bradwell, 31st Georgia Infantry) (<http://www.nps.gov/anti/eyewit-1.htm>)

Union Battle Eyewitness (Morning: Miller Cornfield) (Major Rufus R. Dawes, 6th Wisconsin Volunteers) (<http://www.nps.gov/anti/eyewit-2.htm>)

Mid-Day Phase Map (http://www.nps.gov/anti/map_mid.htm)
(This map highlights the battle as it occurred along what became known as "Bloody Lane".)

Confederate (Mid-Day: Bloody Lane) Eyewitness (Colonel John B. Gordon, 6th Alabama Infantry) (<http://www.nps.gov/anti/eyewit-3.htm>)

Union (Mid-Day: Bloody Lane) Eyewitness (Sergeant Thomas F. Galwey, 8th Ohio Infantry) (<http://www.nps.gov/anti/eyewit-4.htm>)

Afternoon Phase Map (http://www.nps.gov/anti/map_bot.htm),
which highlights the battle as it raged at the Burnside Bridge

Confederate (Afternoon: Burnside Bridge) Eyewitness (Lieutenant Theodore T. Fogle, 2nd Georgia Infantry) (<http://www.nps.gov/anti/eyewit-5.htm>)

Union (Afternoon: Burnside Bridge) Eyewitness (Lieutenant John W. Hudson, 35th Massachusetts Infantry) (<http://www.nps.gov/anti/eyewit-6.htm>)

NPS Emancipation Proclamation Page: (<http://www.nps.gov/anti/emancip.htm>)
supplementary links that may be used

NPS "Why Lee Invaded Maryland" Page: (http://www.nps.gov/anti/why_inv.htm)

NPS Antietam Time Line (http://www.nps.gov/anti/time_line.htm)

NPS "Eyewitness to Battle" pages
(<http://www.nps.gov/anti/eyewitness.htm>, <http://www.nps.gov/anti/eyewitness2.htm>)

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NPS “Generals Who Died” (at Antietam) page (http://www.nps.gov/anti/6_gener.htm)

“Official Records & Battle Description” (Shotgun’s Home of the American Civil War page) (<http://www.civilwarhome.com/antietam.htm>)

Various “Antietam Archives” information (<http://www.antietam.com/antietam/>)

The Battle of Antietam on the Web (<http://www2.ari.net/brdowney/>)

“Eyewitness History Page” (<http://www.ibiscom.com/antiet.htm>)

Reproduction of The New York Times coverage of the battle (<http://www.stcloudstate.edu/~brixr01/NYTSept181862.html>)

American Memory photographs of Antietam (<http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/v?ammem/cwar:0126-0156:T8>)

National Archives and Record Administration (NARA) page on the Emancipation Proclamation, including an essay on the signing by noted historian John Hope Franklin (http://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/summer_1993_emancipation_proclamation.html)

New York State Library “Virtual Visit” page on the Emancipation Proclamation (<http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/library/features/ep/index.html>)

LESSON STRATEGY

Before beginning the lesson, the teacher may wish to introduce it by having students view the battle segments in The Civil War series (Episode 3, Chapter 8). This may also be supplemented with excerpts from the accompanying book to the series. In addition, other books regarding the battle or the war might be incorporated, such as “Battle Cry of Freedom”, by James McPherson.

After the teacher has reviewed basic point regarding strategy of the Union and Confederacy, as well as a basic overview of the battle, the assignment is introduced.

The teacher should explain to the students that battlefield correspondents were important to this war as they were to any other war in which the American public had a desire (and a right) to know what the army was doing. Explain to the students that there were several correspondents working for newspapers on both sides, reporting information and making editorial judgments about each battle and troop movement.

In this lesson, students will role play battle correspondents, and will work in groups to develop newspaper “front pages” which highlight the battle, as well as including pictures of the battle scene, maps, and other pertinent information. In addition, students will highlight an editorial viewpoint on a major issue that was debated in September 1862, that is, whether President Lincoln should issue the Emancipation Proclamation.

Depending on the amount of technology available in the school, the teacher may elect to do the following:

- Have students develop “poster presentations” using poster board to simply paste stories on it.
- If the teacher has access to software such as Microsoft Publisher, they may elect to actually have the students create pages using Publisher that can be printed.
- If the teacher desires, using Publisher or similar software, they may wish to publish the front pages as web pages, and have them available online.

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In planning the lesson, the teacher might also consider dividing the class into groups, some representing “Northern newspapers”, and some representing the Southern point of view. In addition, the teacher may note that newspapers not only would want to present the news accurately, but they would probably be mindful of the feelings of their readership in regard to battles won or lost, soldiers injured or killed, etc.

(Note: One good resource for news stories about the war comes from the University of Virginia’s “Valley of the Shadows” web site. The newspaper archives can be found at <http://www.iath.virginia.edu/vshadow2/newspapers.html>, while the entire “Valley” site is located at <http://www.iath.virginia.edu/vshadow2/>. In addition, archival stories from the New York Times are available at <http://www.nyt.ulib.org/>.)

LESSON METHODOLOGY

The teacher divides the class up into groups according to whatever conditions desired (class size, grade level, etc.) The teacher may also wish at this point to assign roles (which groups will be Northern or Southern), or allow the class to select this on their own.

The teacher may either elect to read the following page, or photocopy and distribute the following statement to the students

From that point, allow the students to research the information, pictures, and maps to do the layout. While there is substantial information available on the Internet about this event, remind the students that they are the reporters, photographers, and editors, and the stories are to be written in their own words and they should remember to check their sources.

The teacher should determine how best to allow time for research for the activity, based on the availability of online resources, and the amount of time desired for the lesson.

ASSIGNMENT

You, and the students in your group, are a newspaper staff working in September 1862.

Your job is to report the Battle of Antietam as completely as possible. Field reports (using online resources) are available, as are photographs of the battle scene. It's your job to determine how to best cover the story, write it, and then to create a front page for your "newspaper", highlighting the following:

- An account of the battle, along with battle statistics (number dead, areas captured by which side, and other information).
- Eyewitness statements (quotes) of those directly involved in the battle.
- Maps of the various phases of the battle.
- Photographs of the battle scene or of the aftermath of the battle.
- An editorial position regarding one of the major issues of the period, that is, whether President Lincoln should (or should not) emancipate the slaves. (Recall that this obviously would not be popular in the South, but was also opposed in the North by many.)

As a group, you should go about this task in the following manner:

- Assign members of your group to do the appropriate "reporting" (research on the web), and write the stories.
- Assign members to investigate and write an editorial (stating what you believe the opinion of your newspaper and area of the country would be) regarding the emancipation issue. Remember, you are trying to convince others that your view is right.
- Assign members of your group to find pictures that effectively highlight the story as well as maps that will let your readers know what happened in this battle.
- Assign members (or the whole group) to edit copy (the stories your reporters do), write headlines, and "layout" the information into an "as easy to read" format as possible. Your teacher will explain more about how that will be done.
- Remember, all work your group does should be readable, but it should also be in your own words. If you use a source, be sure to "quote" that source when you write the story.

Finally, some simple journalism rules:

Remember good newspaper stories contain a strong lead, that is a opening sentence which contains enough information and is interesting enough to "hook" the reader into reading the rest of the story.

Also, good newspaper stories answer the following questions:

- **Who** (the people or groups involved in the incident)
- **What** (what happened)
- **When** (at what time/date did the event occur?)
- **Where** (geographically, what is the location of this event?)
- **Why** (for what reasons did the event occur?)
- **How** (in this instance, how did this incident occur... how was the battle fought, what types of strategies were used, etc.)

Finally, an editorial is an opinion story. The writer is trying to persuade his audience. A news story is factual, although during wartime, stories may be altered because of censorship, or because the news source wants to save the feelings of civilians at home. Editorials are usually not the opinion of one individual, but the stand of the publication on a particular issue.