

An Integrated Curriculum For The Washington Post Newspaper In Education Program

Civil War Engagement



- Student Activity: Visit a Civil War Battlefield
- Word Study: Campaign Considerations
- Post Reprint: “The last temptation of Abraham Lincoln”
- Case Study: Harper’s Ferry
- Student Activity: Slavery Abolished
- Student Activity: Be a Sketch Artist

Visit a Civil War Battlefield

The American Civil War was fought from 1861 to 1865. It is a very important time in the history of this country. Brother fought against brother. During a visit to a battlefield you will see landmarks indicating where these soldiers faced one another, where generals moved and rallied troops, and where doctors and nurses tried to heal the wounded.

Identify the Battlefield

Images represent nine Civil War battlefields. After a visit, circle the park.

ANTIETAM NATIONAL
BATTLEFIELD
Antietam, Maryland



BATTLE OF CEDAR
CREEK
Middletown, Virginia



COLD HARBOR NATIONAL
BATTLEFIELD PARK
Hanover County, Virginia



GETTYSBURG NATIONAL
MILITARY PARK
Gettysburg, Pennsylvania



HARPERS FERRY NATIONAL
HISTORICAL PARK
Jefferson County, West Virginia



MANASSAS NATIONAL
BATTLEFIELD
Manassas, Virginia



MONOCACY NATIONAL
BATTLEFIELD
Frederick, Maryland



PETERSBURG NATIONAL
BATTLEFIELD
Petersburg, Virginia



SPOTSYLVANIA NATIONAL
MILITARY PARK
Fredericksburg, Virginia



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Sketch the Scene

During the Civil War “special artists” or “specials” were hired by newspaper publishers and weekly magazines to sketch scenes and events. These amateur and professional artists were fast in capturing images in graphite and charcoal. They brought the war home as they captured scenes during and after battles, drew soldiers at campsites and generals on their horses, and caught details of the surroundings such as houses and churches, crops and animals, and natural vegetation.

Look around you. Are there landmarks, any distinctive memorials and natural features? Decide on your perspective and begin sketching. You can add notes about colors and textures.

Write About Your Experience

Tell about the part of the battlefield you liked the most or which made you think the most. What did you see? What did you learn in the visitor center? Be sure to name the battlefield and its location.

One Example

In addition to seeing the rolling cornfields of Antietam National Battlefield in Maryland, I crossed Burnside’s Bridge and walked Bloody Lane. It was almost like being in an Alexander Gardner photograph because I could picture farms and soldiers on the ground and imagine the sounds of battle. At the National Park Service visitor center, I learned that 23,000 soldiers from both sides lost their lives, were wounded or missing in action. My visit made me think about ...

VISIT A BATTLEFIELD

<http://www.cnn.com/2012/09/04/travel/civil-war-sites-travel-leisure/>
12 Fascinating Civil War Sites

<http://www.civilwar.org>
Civil War Trust

http://visitmaryland.org/Pages/CivilWar.aspx?gclid=CIKn2Oq7_MACFSbl7Aod0zMAYg
Civil War History in Maryland

<http://www.virginia.org/civilwar/>
Civil War in Virginia

<http://www.cedarcreekbattlefield.org>
Cedar Creek Battlefield Foundation

<http://www.nps.gov/hafe/index.htm>
Harpers Ferry National Historical Park

<http://www.nps.gov/rich/planyour-visit/index.htm>
Richmond National Battlefield Park

<http://travel.nationalgeographic.com/travel/top-10/civil-war-sites/>
U.S. Civil War Sites

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The last temptation of Abraham Lincoln

BY JOEL ACHENBACH

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In the grim summer of 1864, with the Civil War in its fourth year and seemingly stalemated, the smartest minds in American politics came to the realization that there was no chance that President Abraham Lincoln would be reelected.

Even Lincoln had lost all hope.

“You think I don’t know I am going to be beaten, but I do, and unless some great change takes place, beaten badly,” he told a fellow Republican.

On Aug. 23, he committed his pessimism to paper.

“This morning, as for some days past, it seems exceedingly probable that this Administration will not be re-elected. Then it will be my duty to so co-operate with the President-elect as to save the Union between the election and the inauguration; as he will have secured his election on such ground that he can not possibly save it afterwards.”

Lincoln folded the memorandum and elaborately sealed it, then asked the members of his Cabinet to sign the back of the paper without reading it. This oddly theatrical gesture would forever remain a bit enigmatic. One plausible interpretation is that he thought the



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memorandum would be politically useful after the election, but he didn’t want word to get out that he already was making contingency plans for his defeat.

The astounding duration and carnage of the war had made the Northern citizenry “wild for peace,” declared Thurlow Weed, a prominent Republican who, had he lived in a

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later age, surely would have been a ubiquitous pundit on Sunday morning talk shows.

Weed informed Secretary of State William Seward that Lincoln's reelection was "an impossibility."

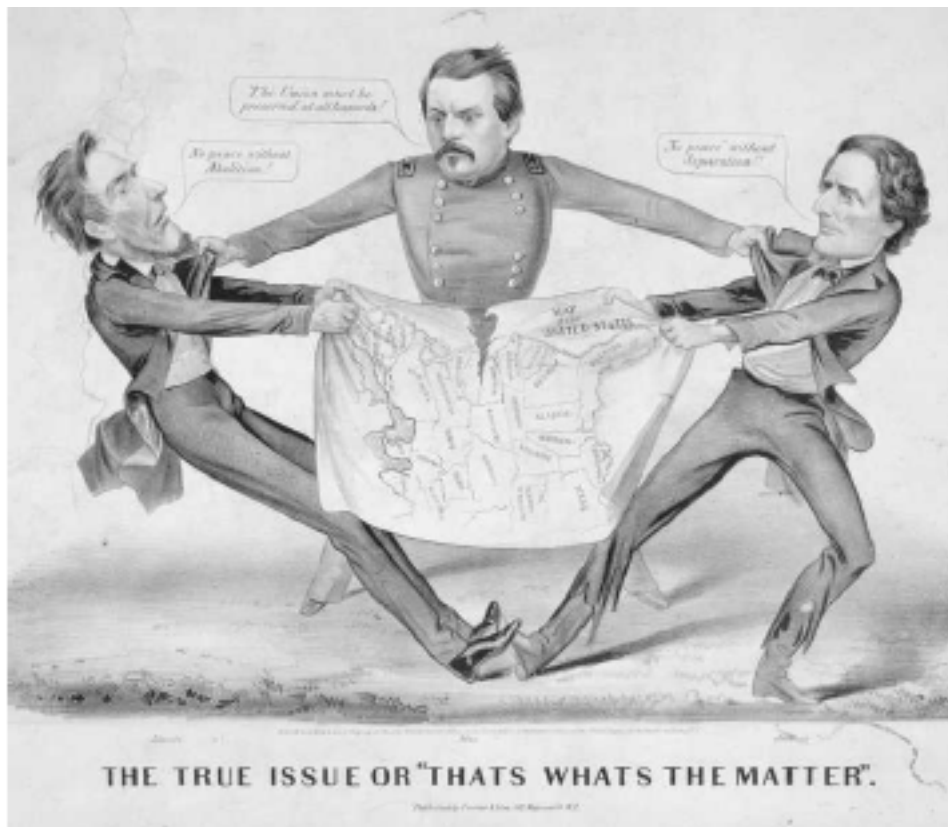
Political allies of Lincoln began plotting to force him to withdraw so they could nominate a candidate with better prospects. Radical Republicans, who despised Lincoln for his political moderation, were poised to back Gen. John C. Fremont's third-party candidacy. Lincoln's political enemies in the Capitol were on the verge of calling for his impeachment.

And those were just his fellow Republicans. The Democrats hated him more. As the telegraph wires hummed with woeful bulletins from the battlefields, the pro-slavery, white-supremacist "peace" wing of the Democratic Party — the "Copperheads," as their critics called them — gained strength.

The presidential election Nov. 8 would serve as a referendum on the war. At stake was not merely Lincoln's continued occupation of the White House, but the fate of millions of African Americans held in Southern bondage.

Slavery was, as Lincoln said later, "somehow the cause of the war," but to forge an alliance of Republicans and northern Democrats, he initially had insisted that his only goal in prosecuting the war was to restore the Union.

When Lincoln drafted the Emancipation Proclamation in 1862, he made the argument that it was a



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In a rare pro-Democratic cartoon, presidential candidate George B. McClellan is portrayed as the intermediary between Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis.

military necessity first and foremost. Abolition would drain strength from the Rebels as blacks escaped to freedom or as Union forces conquered Rebel territory. Lincoln's emancipation order applied only to the rebellious states, leaving slavery intact in the loyal border states.

By the summer of 1864, the Union war machine included, by Lincoln's estimate, close to 150,000 black soldiers, sailors and laborers.

"There have been men who have proposed to me to return to slavery the black warriors of Port Hudson and Olustee to their masters to conciliate the South," Lincoln told two visitors to the White House. "I

should be damned in time and in eternity for so doing."

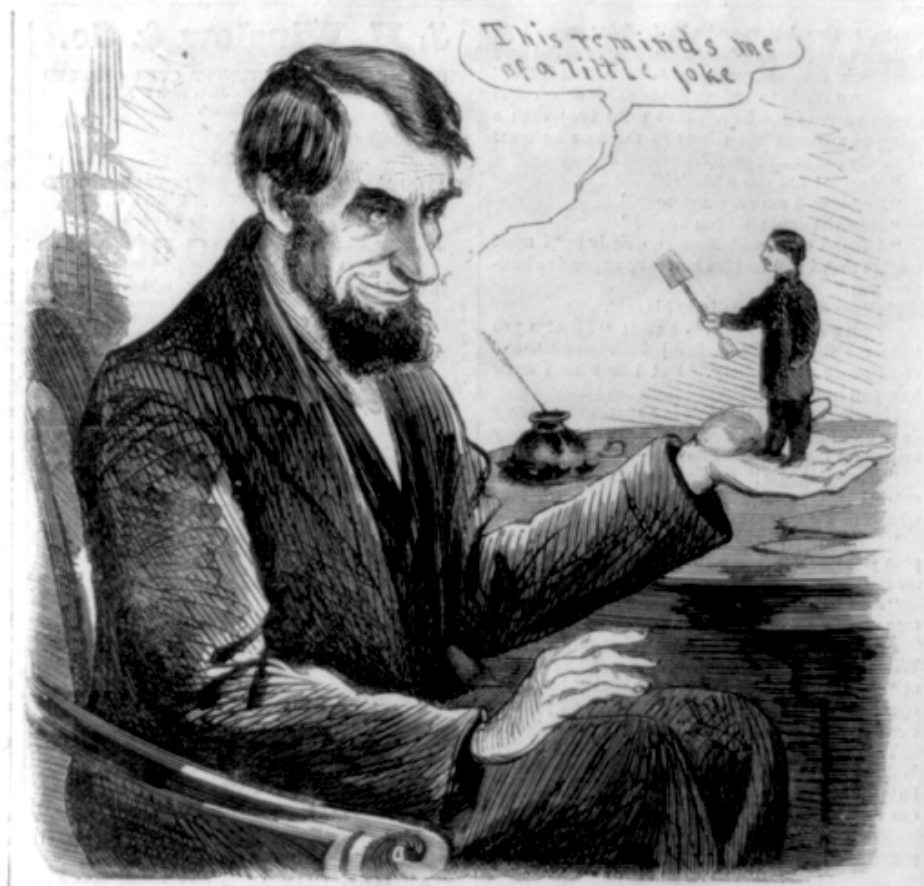
In a later letter that he decided not to send, he said the Union military needed the might of its black fighters, and added, "Nor is it possible for any administration to retain the service of these people with the express or implied understanding that upon the first convenient occasion they are to be re-enslaved. It can not be, and it ought not to be."

But even his allies questioned whether he had gone too far in making the war about abolition rather than simply the restoration of the Union. Lincoln faced pressure to cut a deal.

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S WEEKLY.

[SEPTEMBER 17, 1864.]



COURTESY OF THE LIBRARY ON CONGRESS

“This reminds me of a little joke,” 1864, a pro-Lincoln cartoon showing the president holding a tiny McClellan, as published in the Sept. 17, 1864, edition of *Harper’s Weekly*.

Douglass, an abolitionist and former slave, came to the White House and, after reviewing the letter, persuaded the president not to send it.

Historian Jonathan White, author of “Emancipation, the Union Army, and the Reelection of Abraham Lincoln,” says Lincoln knew that Davis would never agree to restoring the Union. Davis and the Southern leaders wanted permanent independence. There was never a deal to be had.

Thus Lincoln probably was being characteristically crafty: His suggestion of flexibility would not have been aimed at the Rebel leaders, but at his allies in the North who threatened to pull their support from the war effort.

Lincoln understood that peace would be reached only on the far side of the battlefield. He sought an unconditional surrender by the Rebels.

“It is an issue which can only be tried by war, and decided by victory,” Lincoln said.

War candidate, peace platform

The election of 1864 — taking place in the middle of a civil war — would be the most consequential presidential election in American history to that point — and perhaps to this day.

“It is remarkable that there was even an election held,” says historian Joan Waugh of the University of California at Los Angeles.

The political fortunes of Lincoln — who had been nominated in Baltimore in June, with the Republicans

It was tempting.

In July, he had given a letter to Horace Greeley, an opponent of slavery who planned to meet with Confederate agents, listing as the conditions for any peace “the integrity of the whole Union, and the abandonment of Slavery.” Then in mid-August, after a northern politician questioned the president’s insistence on abolition as a condition for peace, Lincoln drafted a letter that suggested that he remained flexible on the issue, and that ended

with a sentence that would remain the subject of historical debate a century and a half later:

“If Jefferson Davis wishes, for himself, or for the benefit of his friends at the North, to know what I would do if he were to offer peace and re-union, saying nothing about slavery, let him try me.”

But Lincoln did not mail the letter yet. He knew it would be published in newspapers and widely discussed. He wanted to talk it over with Frederick Douglass.

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rebranding themselves the National Union Party — suddenly improved when the Democrats gathered Aug. 29 in Chicago to nominate their candidate.

The Democrats were deeply split by their pro-war and Copperhead factions. They reached a compromise: They nominated a war candidate and adopted a peace platform.

That candidate was, as long expected, Gen. George B. McClellan, a handsome young officer who had risen to the command of all the Union armies only to be shelved by Lincoln after he repeatedly overestimated the enemy's strength and hesitated to attack the Rebels.

The peace platform said Lincoln had been unable to restore the Union by “the experiment of war,” and called for “a cessation of hostilities, with a view to an ultimate convention of the States, or other peaceable means, to the end that at the earliest practicable moment peace may be restored on the basis of the Federal Union of the States.”

McClellan registered that the restoration of the Union was not a precondition of such an armistice, and said, in his letter accepting the nomination, that he could not face his “gallant comrades” in the Army and the Navy and tell them that “we had abandoned that Union for which we had so often periled our lives.”

Although he had, in effect, repudiated a key element of the platform, the damage had been done.

Many rank-and-file Democrats, including legions of troops in the field who were going to cast absentee ballots, saw the Democratic platform as treasonous. Lincoln would win the military vote overwhelmingly.

The Democrats also suffered a case of exquisitely bad timing. Even as news of the peace platform spread, another bulletin came from the Deep South: “Atlanta is ours, and fairly won.”

Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman's telegram, received in Washington on Sept. 3, a day after his forces had taken Atlanta, signaled another turning point of the war.

Lincoln ordered 100-gun salutes across the country and a national day of thanksgiving.

He then maneuvered to neutralize Fremont's third-party threat. By firing the conservative postmaster general, Montgomery Blair, a bitter enemy of Fremont, Lincoln appeased the Radical Republicans and won their support.

On Nov. 8, Lincoln won 55 percent of the popular vote to McClellan's 45 percent — a margin of about 400,000 votes — and enjoyed an Electoral College landslide, winning 22 states and 212 electoral votes to McClellan's three states and 21 electoral votes.

The enemies of human liberties, Douglass said after the election, had hoped to see “this country commit suicide.” It had been a contest, he said, between the advocates of freedom and “the advocates of caste, of aristocratic pretensions, of despotic Government, of limiting

the power of the people, all who are for King-craft and priest-craft.”

Lincoln convened his Cabinet and finally read out loud the “blind memorandum” of Aug. 23. He told members what he had planned to say to president-elect McClellan:

“You raise as many troops as you possibly can for this final trial, and I will devote all my energies to assist and finish the war.”

And then Seward observed, “And the general would have answered you, ‘Yes, yes,’ and the next day when you saw him again and pressed these views upon him, he would have said ‘Yes, yes,’ and so on forever, and would have done nothing at all.”

Lincoln replied, “At least I should have done my duty and have stood clear before my own conscience.”

We cannot know what Lincoln actually would have done had he lost, but a close reading of the blind memorandum offers a hint. Lincoln wrote that “it will be my duty to so cooperate with the President-elect as to save the Union,” and the word “so” looms large there. He is not going to let the election results destroy the Union and perpetuate slavery.

Lincoln's term would not end until the inauguration of the new president March 4. He had work to do, and a war to win, and no one was going to stop him.

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Case Study: Harpers Ferry



Blessed with a steady flow from the Shenandoah and Potomac rivers, Harpers Ferry was a prosperous industrial town in the mid-1860s. George Washington had seen the advantages of its topography and chosen it as a location for a U.S. Armory. Before 1861 more than 400 employees worked in 20 factory buildings, innovation and industry were its hallmarks, and railroads kept a stream of goods and people through the area that had been a corridor for Native Americans and jumping-off point for western exploration.

How is Harpers Ferry representative of or illustrative of the economic, cultural, political and historic conditions?

Select an aspect of American life in the 1800s.

Research more about Harpers Ferry. Look at events through the people who lived then.

Abolition	Free men and slaves
Agricultural economy	Industrialization
Ammunitions and arming a nation	Natural resources
Control of the “Breadbasket of the Confederacy”	Protecting Washington, D.C.
Education	Transportation

You might approach Harpers Ferry from the point of view of an individual. You would read and research Harpers Ferry as seen through the eyes of John Brown, Baltimore and Ohio Railroad President John W. Garrett, General Jubal Early, Col. Thomas J. Jackson, General Robert E. Lee, General A.P. Hill or General Philip Sheridan.

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Slavery Abolished

Slavery abolished *Jan. 31*

After months of lobbying, dealing and outright bribery, and with a big push from President Lincoln, the House abolishes slavery by passing the 13th Amendment. The outcome, in doubt until the actual vote, is met with cheering and weeping. The president is so invested in the amendment that when it is signed, he adds his signature to those of the congressional officers, making it the only amendment signed by a president.



Congressmen erupt in celebration after passing the 13th Amendment.

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Be a Sketch Artist

Throughout history artists have made sketches for larger paintings that they will do later in a studio. Onsite (*en plein air*) artists record details of their visual experiences.

They document their trails. These sketches capture the effect of light and wind or the movement of figures. The quick sketches can be drawn in black and white or color.

During the Civil War, artists recorded the camp life and actions of the soldiers and officers at the exact sites, hoping not to be injured. Cameras had been invented by 1860s, but they were too slow to catch action and too cumbersome to use in the trenches. Newspapers and weekly publications depended on these special artists to be eyewitnesses who had the artistic skills to capture the details.



The war in upper Virginia - Gen. Sheridan's headquarters at Harper's Ferry

Along with visual sketches, sketch artists often make written notes. James E. Taylor was a former soldier who was hired by *Leslie's Illustrated Weekly*. At the top of his September 17, 1864, graphite drawing, his notes included: "Conference between gen Grant & Sheridan at the residence of Mr. Riderford Charlestown // a large number

of Officers in the yard // Episcopal church - some distance back // brick house painted white // Fence // escort." Since the sketches were carved into lithographs before publication, the notes also assisted this step of reproduction.

Think like a plein air artist.

When you are drawing outdoors, you may not remember clearly the time of day or circumstances. Was it cloudy or sunny? Where were you seated — which park, by what landmark, near which stream? Who are you sketching? What are the exact colors of the paint, the width of nibs and hardness of lead, and kinds of patterns used to make texture? Will you remember what lines you used or why you used them? Before a painting is a landscape or portrait, it is an arrangement of line, tone, patterns, colors and marks on a flat surface.

Your Tools

Your goal is to capture the moment. You become an attentive observer. Use your senses to take in the scene. Write a few notes about odors, textures and sounds. Draw what you see.

Bring these supplies.

- Drawing pad or notebook (9" x 12")
- A drawing kit with a variety of pens and pencils (different nibs, weights) and eraser
- Colors and pigments
- Camera
- A cup for water
- Bottled water
- Paper towels
- Stool