



Assignment Discovery Lesson Plan
Trains, Telegraphs, and Steamships: War's New Weapons

Subject

World History

Grade level

6-8

Duration

One or two class periods

Subject

World History

Objectives

Students will

- research how the North and the South used new technologies during the Civil War; and
- imagine they are on-the-scene reporters writing about how these new technologies are changing the course of the war.

Materials

- Paper and pencils
- Newsprint and markers
- Computer with Internet access
- Newspapers and magazines
- *Trains, Telegraphs, and Steamships: War's New Weapons* video and VCR (optional)

Procedures

1. Begin the lesson by asking students what they know about the Civil War. Write their ideas on a sheet of newsprint. Possible answers include
 - a conflict about slavery;
 - the only time in U.S. history that one region of the country fought another; and
 - a conflict that resulted in the end of slavery in the United States.
2. Explain that the Civil War was the first conflict in which the train and telegraph were used. Tell students that their task is to find out the role these

and other new technologies of the time played in the war's progress and outcome, including how the North and the South used them.. Then, they will report what they've learned in an article written from the perspective of a Civil War reporter. Their challenge is to describe these new technologies in a way that makes it clear to the general public how important these new inventions are becoming to the war's progress. Along with trains and telegraphs, students should include information about major medical advances and the camera, including the birth of photojournalism as a profession.

3. Give students time in class to conduct their research. These Civil War Web sites contain relevant information:
<http://www.aeragon.com/03/>
<http://www.mmccwrt.org/2002/default0204.htm>
<http://www.rootsweb.com/~usgenweb/oh/newspapers/civilwar/civilw3.txt>
<http://www.visitpwc.com/history.html>
<http://cgsc.leavenworth.army.mil/carl/resources/csi/gabel4/gabel4.asp>
<http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg/books/amh/AMH-12.htm>
<http://www.cl.utoledo.edu/canaday/quackery/quack8.html>
<http://www.civilwarmed.org/exhibits.cfm>
4. You can have students write their articles either at home or during the next class period. Encourage them to include pictures.
5. Ask for volunteers to share their articles with the class. Then, discuss the technologies the students focused on. In their opinion, what were the most important technological advances during this time in history?
6. Conclude the lesson by asking students how their research altered their view of the Civil War. What new insights about the conflict do they now have?

Extensions

- Have students pretend they are physicians during the Civil War. Ask them to write a letter to a friend describing the new medical developments being used. Then, as a class, discuss how the Civil War helped spur these advances.
- Ask students to think about the role the media continues to play in war. How do today's journalists affect public opinion? How do they affect the outcome of a war? To aid the discussion, have students review newsmagazines with coverage of the recent conflict in Iraq.

Evaluation

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

3 points: Students actively participated in class discussions; wrote an interesting, informative, and creative article that covered how technology affected the progress and outcome of the Civil War; showed a deeper understanding of the Civil War.

2 points: Students participated in class discussions; wrote a competent article that covered how technology affected the progress and outcome of the Civil War; showed a somewhat deeper understanding of the Civil War.

1 point: Students did not participate in class discussions; did not complete their articles; had difficulty viewing the Civil War from a different perspective.

Vocabulary

Bull Run

Definition: Site of two early Civil War battles, both of which were victories for the South

Context: The First Battle of Bull Run (July 21, 1861) alerted the North to the seriousness of the War; the Second Battle of Bull Run (August 27-30, 1862) resulted in the South's recapture of Virginia.

Civil War

Definition: U.S. conflict between the Northern and Southern states that took place between 1861 and 1865; at issue was whether to allow slavery to continue or to abolish it

Context: The Civil War divided the country so much that, in some cases, one brother was fighting against another.

photojournalism

Definition: The documentation of an event through articles and photographs; the Civil War was the first conflict in which photojournalism was used.

Context: Thanks to the efforts of Mathew Brady, one of the first photographers to recognize the value of photojournalism, we have a complete photographic record of the Civil War.

railroads

Definition: Form of transportation that proved critical to the progress and outcome of the Civil War; railroads were used to transport troops, ammunition, and supplies to the front because they could do so more rapidly and in greater quantities.

Context: Because railroads were proving critical to the outcome of Civil War battles, each side invented ways to sabotage the rail and other parts of the railroads' infrastructure.

telegraph

Definition: Communication device invented by Samuel Morse in 1844 that was a key tool during the Civil War

Context: During the Civil War, the telegraph was used to report battle information and communicate military strategies.

Academic Standards

This lesson plan addresses the following curriculum standards created by the National Council for the Social Studies:

- Culture
- Power, Authority, and Governance
- Science, Technology, and Society
- Global Connections

Credit

Marilyn Fenichel, education writer and editor