

## TEACHING WITH PRIMARY SOURCES ACROSS TENNESSEE DEBUNKING CIVIL WAR PHOTOGRAPHS

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**Grades:** 9-12

**Subjects:** Visual Art History, English

**Time Required:** 50-60 minute class period

### OVERVIEW

This lesson plan is based on a study conducted by William Frassanito and an activity on the Library of Congress Web site, [The Case of the Moved Body](#). In this lesson, students will compare two images and texts taken from *Gardner's Photographic Sketch Book of the Civil War*, written by Alexander Gardner and published between 1865 and 1866. Students will understand how Civil War photographers used both the photographic medium and text to make a specific point to the public and how the photographs were used as propaganda.

### GOAL

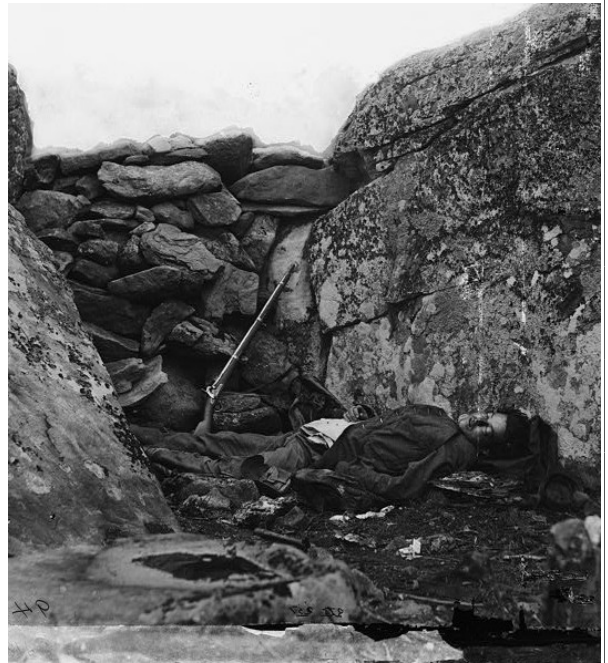
Students will

- Compare images and texts
- Understand that photographs contain bias and can often be altered visually or by adding text to make a specific point to the public

### OBJECTIVES

The learner will

- Analyze two photographs using the [Primary Source Analysis Tool](#) and guiding questions, and then compare these images to find similarities
- Analyze the two texts, using a series of guiding questions
- Analyze the technological limitations of photography and understand how those limitations affected what a Civil War photographer photographed
- Using both the analysis of the photographs and the analysis of the texts, conclude whether the pictures and texts are a truthful representation of an event, or if it was portrayed in a specific way to achieve the photographer's interpretation of the event



### INVESTIGATIVE QUESTION

How and why did Civil War photographers use photographs to convey information?

### CURRICULUM STANDARDS

#### Visual Art History Grades 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>

4.1 Demonstrate an understanding of the ways in which history and culture influence the production of art.

4.2 Research, analyze, and explain how visual art reflects and influences societies and cultures.

#### English I-IV Standard 7- Media

SPI 3001-3004.7.1 Draw an inference from a non-print medium.

SPI 3001-3004.7.4 Determine the impact of production elements (e.g., font, color, layout, graphics, light, camera angle) on a message.

SPI 3001-3004.7.6 Infer the mood represented in a non-print medium

SPI 3001-3004.7.7 Consider the treatment of a particular subject or event in two or more media (e.g. newspaper and visual art, narrative and poem, diary and magazine article)

## MATERIALS

- [Primary Source Analysis Tool](#)
- [Teacher's Guide, Analyzing Photographs & Prints](#)
- Worksheet 1
- Worksheet 2
- Worksheet 3 (optional extension)
- PowerPoint (optional)
- Background information on William Frassanito and Alexander Gardner (for the teacher)



## PROCEDURE

### Step 1:

Before class begins, print out copies of [\[Gettysburg, Pa. Dead Confederate soldiers in 'the devil's den.'\]](#), [\[Gettysburg, Pa. Dead Confederate soldier in Devil's Den.\]](#), [A Sharpshooter's Last Sleep](#), [The Home of a Rebel Sharpshooter](#), and [A rare specimen found on hill above Fort Riley, Kansas, 420 miles west of St. Louis, Mo.](#) for each student or use the PowerPoint presentation provided. Then print out two copies of the [Primary Source Analysis Tool](#) for each student.

### Step 2:

Explain to the students that they will be participating in a lesson that is based on a study conducted by William Frassanito, a historian and intelligence analyst, and they will be analyzing two images with accompanying text taken from *Gardner's Photographic Sketchbook of the War*, written by Alexander Gardner and published between 1865 and 1866. Inform students that an estimated 7,000-10,000 documentary photographs were taken during the Civil War. The case study they are about to explore is an exceptional, rather than a normal, example of Civil War photography.

### Step 3: **Connect**

Show the class the photograph, [\[Gettysburg, Pa. Dead Confederate soldiers in 'the devil's den.'\]](#) Then have each student fill out the [Primary Source Analysis Tool](#) for the photograph. Use the [Teacher's Guide, Analyzing Photographs & Prints](#) to prompt discussion as the students examine each photograph.

(Continued on p. 3)

## RESOURCES: Library of Congress Sources

- “[Gettysburg, Pa. Dead Confederate soldiers in ‘the devil’s den.’]” <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/cwp2003000206/PP>
- “[Gettysburg, Pa. Dead Confederate soldier in Devil’s Den.]” (see detail on previous page). <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/cwp2003000205/PP>
- “A Sharpshooter's Last Sleep.” <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/cwphtml/cwpcam/cwcam3a.html>
- *New-York Tribune*: “Pictures like These Have Inspired War! Pictures Like This Will Stop War!” <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030214/1912-05-23/ed-1/seq-7/> (optional extension)
- “The Home of a Rebel Sharpshooter.” <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/cwphtml/cwpcam/cwcam3b.html>
- “Gettysburg, Pa. Bodies of Federal soldiers, killed on July 1, near the McPherson woods.” <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/cwp2003000199/PP> (optional extension)
- “A rare specimen found on hill above Fort Riley, Kansas, 420 miles west of St. Louis, Mo.” <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2005684523/>

**PROCEDURE** *continued from p. 2*

- Step 4: Wonder** Allow students time to share what they want to know. Then, ask the students to speculate what the photographer must have been thinking or feeling when he took the photographs.
- Step 5: Investigate** Let the students read the accompanying text, [A Sharpshooter's Last Sleep](#).
- Step 6: Connect** Show the class the photograph, [[Gettysburg, Pa. Dead Confederate soldier in Devil's Den.](#)] Then have each student fill out another [Primary Source Analysis Tool](#) for the photograph.
- Step 7: Wonder** Allow students time to share what they want to know. Then, ask the students to speculate what the photographer must have been thinking or feeling when he took the photographs.
- Step 8: Investigate** After they have finished this step, let the students read the accompanying text, [The Home of a Rebel Sharpshooter](#).
- Step 9: Wonder** Allow students time to share what they want to know. Does the text change the mood of the photograph?
- Step 10: Construct** Divide students into groups of 3 or 4 and hand out a copy of Worksheet 1 to each group. Have each group designate someone to write down the group's answers to the questions. Allow the students some time to share their thoughts with one another on the images and texts, and give them time to answer the questions provided on Worksheet 1.
- Step 11: Express** Once all of the groups have answered the questions, allow each group to share its responses with the rest of the class.
- Step 12: Construct** Read [The Analysis](#) to the class on the Library of Congress Web site and watch the short video, [History Detectives: Civil War Photography](#) on the PBS Web site. What were the technological limitations of photography during the Civil War? How did this affect what a photographer photographed? Refer students to the photograph, [A rare specimen found on hill above Fort Riley, Kansas, 420 miles west of St. Louis, Mo.](#), to help them answer the question. Then, have students debate whether or not the photographer should have staged the photo. Was it ethical? Why or why not?
- Step 13: Reflect** Provide the students with Worksheet 2. If there is time allow students to answer the questions in class, if not, then use Worksheet 2 as a homework assignment. Allow students time to discuss their answers in class.

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**EXTENSION**

As an additional assignment, provide each student with a copy of [Pictures Like These Have Inspired War! Pictures Like This Will Stop War!](#), [Gettysburg, Pa. Bodies of Federal soldiers, killed on July 1, near the McPherson woods](#) (this is the photograph that appears in the newspaper article), and Worksheet 3. Have the students write an essay answering one of the questions on Worksheet 3.

## EVALUATION

Use the following rubric to evaluate student participation in group work and discussion:

90-100	Thoroughly fills out the Primary Source Analysis Tool, frequently participates in class discussions and group discussions, and makes specific references related to both the photographs and the text.
80-89	Fills out most of the Primary Source Analysis Tool, participates in class and group discussions several times, and makes one or more specific references related to both the photographs and the text.
70-79	Fills out some of the Primary Source Analysis Tool, participates at least once in group and class discussions, and makes one specific reference related to both the photographs and the text.
69 and below	Only writes one or two items under each category on the Primary Source Analysis Tool, does not participate in group and class discussions, does not make any specific reference related to the photographs and the text.

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## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Gardner, Alexander, photographer. “[Gettysburg, Pa. Dead Confederate soldiers in ‘the devil’s den.’]” Photograph. July 1863. From Library of Congress: *Civil War Photographs, 1861-1865*. [see detail on p. 2]. <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/cwp2003000206/PP> (accessed September 8, 2010).
- Gardner, Alexander, photographer. “[Gettysburg, Pa. Dead Confederate soldier in Devil’s Den.]” Photograph. July 1863 From Library of Congress: *Civil War Photographs, 1861-1865*. [see detail on p. 1]. <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/cwp2003000205/PP> (accessed September 8, 2010).
- Gardner, Alexander. “A Sharpshooter's Last Sleep.” 1865-1866. *Library of Congress, American Memory*. Library of Congress. May 27, 1998. <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/cwphtml/cwpcam/cwcam3a.html> (accessed September 15, 2010).
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- Gardner, Alexander. “The Home of a Rebel Sharpshooter.” 1865-1866. *Library of Congress American Memory*. Library of Congress. May 27, 1998. <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/cwphtml/cwpcam/cwcam3b.html> (accessed September 15, 2010).
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- PBS. “Civil War Photography.” [http://www.pbs.org/opb/historydetectives/video/3\\_civil\\_war.html](http://www.pbs.org/opb/historydetectives/video/3_civil_war.html) (accessed November 4, 2010).
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## DEBUNKING CIVIL WAR PHOTOGRAPHS THE CASE OF THE MOVED BODY BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### William Frassanito:

Today, William Frassanito is considered to be one of the most prominent scholars on Civil War photography. He is a graduate of Gettysburg College and a veteran of the Vietnam War. Fascinated by the Civil War and by the tens of thousands of photographs documenting it, Frassanito decided to take a closer look at the images of the war that had long been unanalyzed and unquestioned. In 1975, he published his first book on his findings, *Gettysburg, A Journey in Time*. Using the photographs as a guide, he retraced the steps of the photographers at Gettysburg by comparing geographical landmarks in the images to the actual Gettysburg battlefield of 1975. He made several landmark discoveries and debunked several myths, including that Gardner and his team dragged a body almost forty yards and propped it against a wall to photograph. He also finally gave credit to Alexander Gardner and Timothy O'Sullivan for their photographs. For nearly one hundred years, their photos had been misidentified as Mathew Brady's. Frassanito's work has shed light into the minds behind the famous images of the Civil War.



A rare specimen found on hill above Fort Riley, Kansas, 420 miles west of St. Louis, Mo. [1867]

(Alexander Gardner is seated in the middle of the image with a portable darkroom behind him)

### Alexander Gardner:

Alexander Gardner is best known for his images of the dead at Civil War battlefields. He was determined to photograph the battlefields with the unburied dead as much as possible in an effort to show the public the reality and cost of war. His bloody depictions of war are often what set his images apart from other Civil War photographers. Gardner was a former journalist before he became a photographer, perhaps a reason why he decided to publish the two-volume, *Gardner's Photographic Sketch Book of the War*, which originally sold for \$150.00 in 1865 and 1866. His work has often been mistakenly credited to Mathew Brady, until Frassanito corrected this myth in the 1970s. For additional background information on Alexander Gardner, please see [Alexander Gardner, Mathew Brady, and Gardner's Photographic Sketch Book of the War on the American Memory Web site.](#)

### Note about the photograph, “[Gettysburg, Pa. Dead Confederate soldier in Devil’s Den.]”:

The Library of Congress credits this image to Alexander Gardner; however, William Frassanito argues that the image was actually taken by Timothy O'Sullivan. This argument is based on the fact that a catalog, *Photographic Incidents of the War, From the Gallery of Alexander Gardner* (1863), credited the image to Timothy O'Sullivan.

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**WORKSHEET 1**

**Answer the following questions:**

1. Why did Gardner and O'Sullivan take these images?
2. Would these images have surprised the general public? Why or why not?
3. Compare the two images. What are the similarities and differences between the photographs, if any? Are there similar objects or scenery?
4. Does the accompanying text describe the images accurately? Why or why not?
5. What are some clues that suggest what you are seeing and reading may not be the truth?

**TEACHING WITH PRIMARY SOURCES ACROSS TENNESSE**  
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**WORKSHEET 2**

**Answer the following questions:**

1. Now that you know the photograph was staged, why did Gardner and O'Sullivan go to such great lengths to stage this photo?
2. Gardner was a former journalist. Did this influence the accompanying texts he wrote for the photographs? If so, in what way(s)?
3. Did this activity change the way you view and analyze photographs and texts? Explain.
4. Why is it important to analyze and investigate photographs?

## TEACHING WITH PRIMARY SOURCES ACROSS TENNESSEE DEBUNKING CIVIL WAR PHOTOGRAPHS

### WORKSHEET 3

**Instructions:** Read the article, "[Pictures Like These Have Inspired War! Pictures Like This Will Stop War!](#)" in the May 23, 1912 edition of the *New-York Tribune*, which is located in the [Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers](#) collection. Carefully compare the drawing of the battle (located on the top and left side of the paper) with Timothy O'Sullivan's image, "Gettysburg, Pa. Bodies of Federal soldiers, killed on July 1, near McPherson woods" (this is the photograph that appears in the newspaper article). Write an essay answering one of the following questions:

1. Explain the differences between the two images.
2. How does the drawing of the battle inspire war, rather than deter it?
3. How could Gardner's and O'Sullivan's images of the dead stop war? Use the newspaper article, the texts, "The Sharpshooter's Last Sleep" and "Home of a Rebel Sharpshooter," and all of the information you have learned from that activity to help you answer this question.
4. Define the term "propaganda." Is this article an example of propaganda? Why or why not?