Teaching with Primary Sources—MTSU

HELP IS ON THE WAY:
CIVIL WAR WOMEN AND RELIEF WORK

Grade: 8
Subject: English/Language Arts
Time Required: One 50-minute class period
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OVERVIEW
During the Civil War, thousands of women worked to relieve the suffering of soldiers, refugees, and former slaves. While some of these women ministered to the sick and dying as nurses, most contributed from the home front. Both North and South, women made clothing, food, and bandages and sent these to the battle front. Women also held fundraisers such as sanitary fairs to provide additional supplies. Women accomplished these goals both by working individually and by forming groups such as soldiers’ aid societies. Women continued their relief efforts after the war by working to assist veterans.

In this lesson, students will analyze broadsides, letters, posters, and prints that solicited and advertised relief work by women. Students will evaluate the role that women played in relieving wartime suffering.

UNDERSTANDING GOAL
Students will critically analyze a variety of sources to gain a better understanding of women’s roles during the Civil War.

OBJECTIVES
The learner will:
• Analyze a print, poster, broadside, typed document, and handwritten document.
• Determine point of view in primary sources.
• Draw conclusions, individually and in groups, based on analysis of the sources.

INVESTIGATIVE QUESTIONS
How did women relieve the suffering of soldiers during the Civil War? How did this work reflect women’s traditional domestic role in society? How did women expand this role through relief work?

CURRICULUM STANDARDS
English/Language Arts
• 8.RI.KID.1 Analyze what a text says explicitly and draw logical inferences; support an interpretation of a text by citing relevant textual evidence.
• 8.SL.CC.1 Prepare for collaborative discussions on 8th grade level topics and texts; engage effectively with varied partners, building on others’ ideas and expressing one’s own ideas clearly.
• 8.RI.CS.6 Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how the author acknowledges and responds to conflicting evidence or viewpoints.
• 8.RI.IKI.7 Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of using different mediums to present a particular topic or idea.

A floral and fruit festival will be held at the Roxborough Lyceum Hall by the Roxborough Ladies' Aid Society! [Poster] [Sept. 23, 1863]
PROCEDURE

Day 1:

Step 1: Review “Women and the Civil War” and “Sanitary Commission (USSC)” for historical context. Review the “Women and Relief Work Glossary” at the end of the lesson plan.

Make one copy of each of the sources listed below under “Appeals to and from Women” (see page 3), as well as the transcription (included in this lesson plan) of the Van Antwerp letter to President Abraham Lincoln (after you click on each link below, print the screen that comes up so that students will have the bibliographic information for each document; then, click on the images to print the actual documents; make sure that you get each page of each document printed by clicking on “next image”). After printing the source entitled “North-Western Fair for the Sanitary Commission,” which is quite long, highlight paragraphs 1-3, 8-10, and the list of names at the end for the students to focus on.

Make five copies of the “Women and Relief Work Glossary.”

Make copies of the “Women and Relief Work Questions” handout, available at the end of the lesson plan, for each student.

Step 2: Ask students how sick and wounded soldiers are cared for today, and what roles women play in taking care of such soldiers. Then, share the investigative questions with the students and ask them to brainstorm about them before they read any of the sources. Record their responses.

Step 3: Explain to students that the purpose of this activity is to gain a better understanding of women’s experiences during the Civil War by focusing on their efforts to provide relief for suffering soldiers. Also let them know that the Library of Congress’s sources about women’s relief work are mostly Union sources, but that Confederate women did much of the same type of work. Women in the South, however, had fewer resources to draw upon, especially by the later years of the war. Tell students about soldiers’ aid societies and the United States Sanitary Commission.

Step 4: As a class, review the four sources in the section “Views of Women’s Relief Work” by showing the Views of Women’s Relief Work PowerPoint. Ask students the following questions for each source: What type of source is this? Is it clearly Union or Confederate? What are women doing? What is their goal? Are they working alone or together? How is what they are doing similar to traditional household work, and how is it different?
Step 5: Divide students into five groups and give each group a copy of one of the sources listed under “Appeals to and from Women,” as well as a copy of the “Women and Relief Work Glossary.” Distribute the “Women and Relief Work Questions” to all of the students and ask them to work in their groups to answer the questions. Circulate to assist as needed. If groups complete their analyses of their sources with plenty of time to spare, then let them exchange sources and brainstorm about those.

Step 6: Have students return to their individual seats. On the back of their handouts, ask them to list three questions about women during the Civil War that their source raised in their minds. Collect their completed handouts.

Step 7: Return to the investigative questions with the class. Ask them to evaluate their initial responses based on their analysis of the primary sources by discussing any additions or changes they would make. If time, ask for a volunteer from each group to introduce briefly the group’s source.

PRIMARY SOURCES:

Views of Women’s Relief Work


A floral and fruit festival will be held at the Roxborough Lyceum Hall by the Roxborough Ladies’ Aid Society! [Poster] [1863]

Making clothes for the boys in the army [1864] http://www.loc.gov/item/90709986/

Metropolitan fair, for the relief of sick and wounded soldiers . . . I present to you the claims of the Metropolitan fair for the benefit of the U.S. Sanitary Commission . . . New York, Feb. 25, 1864. https://www.loc.gov/item/rbpe.1250040d/ [focus on image in upper left of letterhead]

Appeals to and from Women

To the women of New England. We appeal to you in behalf of the United-States Sanitary commission. [1862]. https://www.loc.gov/resource/rbpe.06904000

North-Western Fair for the Sanitary Commission. [Chicago? 1863]. https://www.loc.gov/resource/rbpe.01807400

Making clothes for the boys in the army [1864]

Jane M. Van Antwerp to Abraham Lincoln, Monday, February 29, 1864 (Mississippi Valley Sanitary Fair) http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=mal&fileName=mal1/311/3111400/malpage.db&recNum=0 [transcription available at the end of the lesson plan]

Department of useful and fancy articles (Home-made) in aid of the Great Central fair, for the United States sanitary commission . . . It is purposed to hold a “Great Fair” in this city, in the first week of June next, on behalf of the United States S [1864] https://www.loc.gov/resource/rbpe.1580290j

A grand fair for sick and disabled soldiers and sailors, and soldiers’ widows and orphans will be held at the Horse-Guard armory, Bacon’s Block, on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, Dec. 1st, 2d, and 3d [1868]. https://www.loc.gov/resource/rbpe.07205000
EXTENSIONS

- Ask students to imagine that they lived during the Civil War and attended the Great Central Fair in Philadelphia in June 1864. Share with them the following sources that describe the fair in detail and include images of the fair:
  - Great Central Fair Buildings, Logan Square Philadelphia, June, 1864 [Picture and description.]
  - Buildings of the Great Central Fair, in aid of the U.S. Sanitary Commission, Logan Square, Philadelphia, June 1864

Ask students to write a diary entry or letter describing their experience at the fair, including their reactions to the event, their reasons for attending, and what they saw and did at the fair.

- Ask students to research the United Service Organizations (popularly known as the USO) and its work for servicemen and women. Students should consult the America’s Story piece on the USO, as well as the USO Web site. Ask them to write an essay or create a presentation that answers these questions: How is the USO similar to some of the relief organizations created during the Civil War? How is it different? How are women involved?

EVALUATION

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

90-100 Thoroughly fills out the Women and Relief Work Questions handout and frequently participates in class and group discussions.

80-89 Fills out most of the Women and Relief Work Questions handout and participates in class and group discussions.

70-79 Fills out some of the Women and Relief Work Questions handout and participates at least once in class and group discussions.

69 and below Only partially fills out the Women and Relief Work Questions handout and does not participate in class or group discussions.

TAKE A LOOK

For a lesson plan prepared by the Library of Congress about women and the Civil War, see Women in the Civil War: Ladies, Contraband and Spies.
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Women and Relief Work Questions

1. Record when and where your source was created.

2. Is your source written to women? Is it written by women? (Note: It could be both.)

3. What was (or were) the person(s) who created your source trying to accomplish?

4. Does your source contain information about women or descriptions of women? If so, then use descriptive words and phrases to summarize this information.

5. Are the women referred to doing traditional domestic work? Are they expanding on that work in any way?
**Glossary**

**Circular**—A printed notice intended to reach a lot of people.

**Confectionery**—Candies or other sweets.

**Express**—Rapid mail.

**Fancy articles**—Decorative homemade household items such as lampshades, fans, and baskets.

**Grand Army of the Republic**—The leading association of Union veterans founded after the Civil War; local groups were called posts, and the annual meetings of state departments were called encampments.

**Ladies’ Aid Societies, Women’s Auxiliary Associations, etc.**—Groups of women formed to create items needed by soldiers or to raise funds for such necessities and for medical care for soldiers.

**Rebellion**—Term used by Unionists to describe the war as they believed that the Confederates had rebelled against the United States.

**Relief work**—Efforts to provide assistance to soldiers, including nursing, sending supplies to the battlefield, and raising money for supplies and medical care for soldiers.

**Sanitary supplies**—Supplies used for health and medical care.

**Smithsonian Institution**—Museum in Washington, D.C. (it is unclear why Mrs. Van Antwerp sent her letter from the Smithsonian).

**Tableaux**—Scenes of well-known events or activities presented on stage by people in costume who do not move or speak.

**Temperance organizations**—Groups that sought to persuade people not to drink any alcohol.

**Union League**—Northern patriotic association that supported President Abraham Lincoln and his administration.
Transcription of Jane M. Van Antwerp to Abraham Lincoln, Monday, February 29, 1864
(Mississippi Valley Sanitary Fair)

Washington DC. Feby 29th 1864.
Smithsonian Institute

To the President,

Sir,

I have the pleasure of sending to you, herewith, a printed Circular from the Officers & Managers of the proposed “Mississippi Valley Sanitary Fair” to be held in St Louis on the 17th day of May next.

The object thereof & the purposes to which the proceeds that may be derived therefrom will be applied are stated in the Circular, as follows: “To raise a sufficient fund for the Sanitary uses of the Armies in the Mississippi Valley, & for the relief of the sick & wounded.”

For that noble object the “Officers & Executive Committees appointed to conduct the Mississippi Valley Fair propose to themselves & to their fellow citizens, to raise the sum of at least Five Hundred thousand dollars.” They believe it can be done. By the great fair in Boston, held for a similar purpose, the sum of $140,000 was raised; & by that in Cincinnati $220,000.

The Mississippi Valley Fair, as its name indicates is designed to embrace in its operations, especially the States bordering on the Mississippi river & its tributaries; though in undertaking the great task, its Officers & Managers, as their circular sets forth, rely upon the co-operation of “all their fellow citizens throughout the Union.”

The thought has occurred to me, Mr. President, that both as the head of our Great nation, & a citizen of the State of Illinois—the next neighbour to Missouri, & which has furnished so large a proportion of the soldiers “of the Armies in the Valley of the Mississippi”—a word, in season, of approval & encouragement of the project from you, would greatly help to promote the cause, & it is with the hope of obtaining that word that this communication is written.

very respectfully
Your obedient Servant
Jane M. Van Antwerp,
Corresponding Secretary of Ladies Executive Committee M.SV Fair,
St Louis Mo—