**Teaching with Primary Sources—MTSU**

**LESSON PLAN:**

**WALT WHITMAN AND THE CIVIL WAR**

**Author:** Rebecca Byrd, New Center Elementary, Sevier County Schools

**Grade:** 8

**Subjects:** American History, Language Arts

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

**OVERVIEW**

Historians are constantly making judgments, not only about the people and events they research, but also about the sources they use. This lesson challenges students to critically examine three sources on Civil War field hospitals to determine their usefulness for historians.

**GOAL**

Students will critically examine three sources on Civil War hospitals and medical care and develop criteria for examining additional sources.

**OBJECTIVES**

The learner will:

- Identify bias or point of view in text and non-text sources.
- Evaluate the usefulness of a source for different types of projects.
- Work cooperatively to construct a checklist for evaluating additional sources.

**INVESTIGATIVE QUESTION**

What kind of medical care did soldiers receive during the Civil War? How do I interpret primary sources about Civil War medical care?

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**CURRICULUM STANDARDS** (continued on p. 2)

**8th grade Language Arts**

- SPI 0801.4.2 Identify levels of reliability among resources (e.g., eyewitness account, newspaper account, supermarket tabloid account, Internet source).
- SPI 0801.4.3 Determine the most appropriate research source for a given research topic.
- SPI 0801.4.4 Distinguish between primary sources (i.e., interviews, letters, diaries, newspapers, autobiographies, personal narratives) and secondary sources (i.e., reference books, periodicals, Internet, biographies, informational texts).
- SPI 0801.5.2 Evaluate text for fact or opinion.
- SPI 0801.7.3 Identify the purpose of a medium (i.e., to inform, to persuade, to entertain, to describe).
- 0801.7.4 Draw an inference from a non-print medium.
8th grade Social Studies

- 8.79 Cite textual evidence analyzing the life of the common soldier in the Civil War, including Sam Watkins and Sam Davis.

Materials Used

Library of Congress Resources

- **Manuscript page** from Whitman notebook LC#94 page 144. [http://www.loc.gov/resource/whitman.094/?sp=144](http://www.loc.gov/resource/whitman.094/?sp=144) (see Other Materials below for transcription)

- **Letter** “Letter from Dr. David Ramsey Crawford to Juliana Smith Reynolds, June 14, 1862” and [transcription](http://www.loc.gov/resource/whitman.094/?sp=144)


- **Photograph** “Keedysville, Md., vicinity. Confederate wounded at Smith’s Barn, with Dr. Anson Hurd, 14th Indiana Volunteers, in attendance” [http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/cwp2003000135/PP](http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/cwp2003000135/PP)


- **Background Information** Civil War Photography [http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/cwp/](http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/cwp/)


Walt Whitman, Page 144 of Notebook LC #94 [1862]

Other Materials


- **Transcription** of [Walt Whitman, Page 144 of Notebook LC#94](http://www.loc.gov/resource/whitman.094/?sp=144)

- **Background Information** Civil War Medical Care, Battle Wounds, and Disease [http://www.civilwarhome.com/](http://www.civilwarhome.com/)

- **Student Response Chart**

- **Student Response Chart (Sample)**
**Procedure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Instructions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 1</strong></td>
<td>Prior to class, print at least two copies each of the poem, diary page, photographs, and letter transcription for each group. If you will be using the diary transcription, prepare at least two copies per group as well. Print one copy of the response chart for each group. Read the background information on Whitman’s notebooks and Civil War photography. Review the sample student response chart.</td>
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<td><strong>Step 2</strong></td>
<td>Review the terms primary source, secondary source, bias and point of view with the students. Explain that they will be examining several different types of sources to determine their usefulness for researching the Civil War. Share the background information on Whitman’s notebooks, Civil War photography, and Civil War medical care with the students. Use the Library of Congress feature <em>“Does the Camera Ever Lie?”</em> to explain how photographs can also show bias or point of view.</td>
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<td><strong>Step 3</strong></td>
<td>Project the blank response chart and explain to students what type of information they should be recording. Divide the students into groups and distribute the materials excluding the two sources listed in step 8. Circulate among the groups to help guide discussion.</td>
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<td><strong>Step 4</strong></td>
<td>Have the students share and discuss their small group responses with the class.</td>
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<td><strong>Step 5</strong></td>
<td>Ask students what conclusions they have drawn about medical care during the Civil War. Discuss their responses.</td>
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<td><strong>Step 6</strong></td>
<td>Ask students “What questions did you have to ask of the sources to complete the chart?” Discuss their responses.</td>
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<td><strong>Step 7</strong></td>
<td>Have students work in their small groups to develop a checklist of questions for analyzing sources.</td>
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<td><strong>Step 8</strong></td>
<td>Give students two additional sources: “Letter from Dr. David Ramsey Crawford to Juliana Smith Reynolds, June 14, 1862” <em>transcription</em> and “Keedysville, Md., vicinity. Confederate wounded at Smith's Barn, with Dr. Anson Hurd, 14th Indiana Volunteers, in attendance” photograph. Have students analyze the sources using their checklist as a guide. They should record their responses on the chart.</td>
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<td><strong>Step 9</strong></td>
<td>Students should write a letter describing Civil War hospitals and medical care from the perspective of a wounded soldier, doctor or civilian nurse.</td>
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EVALUATION

Use the following rubric to evaluate student work:

90-100  Writing sample has 12 to 15 sentences, uses descriptive language and details from class discussion and correct grammar. *

80-89  Writing sample has 9 to 12 sentences, uses some descriptive language and some details from class discussion and mostly correct grammar.

70-79  Writing sample has 7 to 9 sentences, uses little descriptive language or few details from class discussion and incorrect grammar.

69 and below  Writing sample has 6 sentences or less, uses little descriptive language or few details from class discussion and mostly incorrect grammar.

*Civil war-era letters and diary entries often exhibit very inventive spelling and grammar. You may want to allow students to create an authentic feel to their writing and therefore not grade based on grammar.

EXTENSIONS

Social Studies

Student should research the role Clara Barton or the United States Sanitary Commission played in providing medical care during the Civil War. Students should write a short play based on their research.

Language Arts

Students should write a poem or short story from the perspective of the blanket in “A Sight in the Camp in the Daybreak Gray and Dim.”
Va on the Falmouth side

Friday, Dec 26th ‘62

Early this morning I walked out in the open fields, one side of the camp, I found some soldiers digging graves [dash]. They were for the 51st N. Y. and the 11th N.H. There was a row of graves there already. Each with a slat of board, generally a piece of barrel head, on which was inscribed the name of the soldier. Death is nothing here; as you step out in the morning from your tent to wash your face you see on a stretcher a before you a shapeless object extended and over it thrown a dark grey blanket. The corpse of some wounded or sick soldier of the reg’t who died in the hospital tent during the night—perhaps there is a row of three or four of these corpses lying covered over. No one makes any advance. There is a detail of men made to bury them; all useless ceremony is omitted. The stern realities of the marches and many battles of a long campaign make the old etiquets a cumber and nuisance.
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<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Bias/Point of View</th>
<th>Benefits of using source</th>
<th>Drawbacks of using source</th>
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<td>Whitman Diary page</td>
<td>Whitman was a Union supporter and only visited Union camps. Whitman was not a soldier himself and did receive treatment at a Civil War hospital. Whitman was also more educated and worldly than most soldiers.</td>
<td>Whitman was a first-hand observer; diary was presumably written on a daily basis.</td>
<td>Whitman was not a soldier; Whitman kept the diary for the purpose of recording ideas and observations for poetry; edited by the author.</td>
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<td>Whitman poem</td>
<td>Poem, while based on first-hand observation, was written later using the notes. The poem was not intended to convey facts, but rather emotions. Also see above.</td>
<td>Gives insight into the emotional costs of war.</td>
<td>Written after the events; very personal perspective.</td>
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<td>Photograph Savage</td>
<td>Photographers were limited by the equipment available to them. They could not take action shots. Most considered the commercial appeal of the photos. Photos could be staged or taken from multiple angles to achieve a desired effect. Most photographers traveled with the Union.</td>
<td>Allows the researcher to visualize aspects described in print sources; researcher may observe details not mentioned in print sources.</td>
<td>Photos do not convey action; many were staged.</td>
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