HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Women played an active role in the Civil War. A handful disguised themselves as men and served as soldiers; some went to the front as nurses, relief workers, and “daughters of the regiment”; and countless women contributed from the home front. North and South, women kept farms and families together, provided supplies to the men in the field, and conveyed information as spies.

Women and their families made great sacrifices during the grueling war. As mothers, daughters, sisters, and wives, women prayed for the safe return of their loved ones. Most women (and men) were shocked by the war’s terrible death and destruction. Mourning became commonplace.

Within the Confederacy, many women’s worlds turned upside down. Some families struggled to get enough to eat after soldiers took what they needed from farms. Enslaved women sought their freedom behind Union lines and created new lives for themselves. Many white women became refugees, fleeing the fighting or Union occupation.

SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

- Review these sources (or a selection) with students and create a list of all the women’s roles that are portrayed. Which roles are the most prevalent among the sources? The least?
- Ask students to identify the source that surprised them the most and explain why.
- Among the famous women portrayed, whom do students know the most about? Whom would they like to know more about?
- Assign students a textual source and a visual source; ask them to explain which one taught them more about Civil War women.

FROM THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS:

- Drawings (Documentary) (search on “Civil War drawings women”)
- Civil War Sheet Music Collection (search on “women”)
- Abraham Lincoln Papers (search on “women”)
- Civil War Treasures from the New-York Historical Society (search on “women”)
- Primary Source Investigation—Civil War—Harriet Beecher Stowe
- Women in the Civil War: Ladies, Contraband and Spies (lesson plan)
- Meet Amazing Americans: Harriet Tubman

ALSO SEE:

- Shades of Gray and Blue: Reflections on Life in Civil War Tennessee (search on “women”)
- Civil War and Reconstruction: Women’s Lives (Tn4me from the Tennessee State Museum)
- Help is on the Way: Civil War Women and Relief Work (lesson plan from TPS-MTSU)
- Occupied Home Front; Witnesses to Battle; Part I and Part II (lesson ideas from the Tennessee Civil War National Heritage Area)
Harriet Beecher Stowe, 1811-1896 [ca. 1880]


[Unidentified soldier in Union uniform with wife and daughters holding saxhorn] [between 1861 and 1865]

[Private Edward A. Cary of Company I, 44th Virginia Infantry Regiment, in uniform and his sister, Emma J. Garland née Cary] [between 1861 and 1862]

John H. Morgan & wife, C.S.A. [between 1860 and 1870]
Gen. Samuel P. Heintzelman and staff with their families at Robert E. Lee’s home, Arlington House, Virginia [1861]

[Harriet Tubman, full-length portrait, standing with hands on back of a chair] [between ca. 1860 and 1875]

Greenhow, Mrs. & Daughter (imprisoned in old Capitol Prison in Wash. D.C.) Confederate spy [between 1865 and 1880]

Antonia Ford Willard (1838-1871), Lace cap, ca. 1863

The Woman in Battle [1876]
TEXTS:

- **He has gone, and I have sent him** [sheet music] [1863]
- **Helen M. Linscott to Abraham Lincoln, Monday, November 14, 1864 (Seeks office)** [1864] (transcription)
- **J. Andrews Harris to Abraham Lincoln, Monday, January 23, 1865 (Poor treatment of women employed by military contractors)** [1865] (transcription)
- **Extracts from documents in the office of the General Superintendent of Refugees and Freedmen: headquarters, Memphis, Tennessee, March 1865** [1865] (See pp. 11-24 by Mrs. Canfield)
- **Women of the war; their heroism and self-sacrifice. By Frank Moore.** [1866]
- **Woman’s work in the civil war: a record of heroism, patriotism and patience. By L.P. Brockett and Mrs. Mary C. Vaughan. With an introduction, by Henry W. Bellows.** [1867]
- **Dixie after the War** [1906]
Pray, maiden, pray! [sheet music] [1864]

Print # 11, Making clothes for the boys in the army [Etching] [1863, detail]

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

[Sojourner Truth, three-quarter length portrait, standing, wearing spectacles, shawl, and peaked cap, right hand resting on cane] [Detroit], [1864]
East Tennessee Citizens to Abraham Lincoln, July 1863 (Petition regarding affairs in East Tennessee) [July 1863]

Negro slaves 1862 Edisto Island, S.C. (plantation of James Hopkinson) [1862]

[Woman at the helm of a boat] [between 1860 and 1865]

[Cumberland Landing, Va. Group of "contrabands" at Foller's house] [1862 May 14]

My only support. [Pictorial envelope] [n.d., detail]
Lizzie B. Bruce to Abraham Lincoln, Sunday, January 29, 1865 (Requests pass; endorsed by Francis P. Blair Sr.) [January 29, 1865]

[Unidentified girl in mourning dress holding framed photograph of her father as a cavalryman with sword and Hardee hat] [between 1861 and 1870]

Glimpses at the Freedmen – Ther Freedmen’s Union Industrial School, Richmond, Va. / from a sketch by Jas E. Taylor. [1866]

[Freedmen’s school?, possibly in South Carolina] / Sam A. Cooley, photographer, Tenth Army Corps, Beaufort, S.C. [between 1865 and 1870]
CITATIONS: Women in the Civil War

Teachers: Providing these primary source replicas without source clues may enhance the inquiry experience for students. This list of citations is supplied for reference purposes to you and your students. We have followed the Chicago Manual of Style format, one of the formats recommended by the Library of Congress, for each entry below, minus the access date. The access date for each of these entries is 11/9/12.


“Woman in Battle.” Broadside. 1876. From Duke University, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library. https://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/scriptorium/eaa/broadsides/B02/B0298/B0298-01-150dpi.html


