

# **New Hampshire in the Civil War Lesson Plan**

## **Civil War Letters**

*Created by:* New Hampshire in the Civil War workshop participants Cheryl Allison and Terri Stack and the New Hampshire Historical Society, 2014-15

*Topic:* Civil War Letters

*Level:* Grades 6–8

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### **ABSTRACT / SUMMARY**

Using Rob Gragg’s book, *From Fields of Fire and Glory: Letters of the Civil War*, or copies of original letters found at a local historical society, students will learn about the realities of life during the Civil War. Students will complete a scavenger hunt designed to introduce them to reading and analyzing primary sources. Students will also research a battle, adopt a persona, and write a letter “home,” which includes details about their experiences in the battle.

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### **QUESTIONS / TASKS**

Working in groups of two or three, students read through letters written by soldiers in the Civil War. Using the letters, answer the questions to a scavenger hunt. Then research a battle and write a letter home.

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### **EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

- Use primary and secondary sources to answer research questions
- Learn about soldiers’ experiences during the Civil War

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### **SEQUENCE OF ACTIVITIES**

1. Students are given a packet of letters photocopied from Gragg’s book. These are actual facsimiles of real letters with transcriptions.
2. Students are given 10–15 minutes to look through the letters.
3. Students are handed a scavenger list of items that can be found in the letters. They need to find the letter that matches the item on the list.
4. If students need hints, the teacher can give them a list of hints or give them hints orally.
5. Teacher collects lists and checks off the correct answers.
6. (Optional) Prizes can be given to the groups with the most correct answers.

*Notes: Scavenger Hunt list, answers, and hints are below.*

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### **ASSESSMENTS**

Students are awarded up to 3 points for completing the activity.

1 = activity was attempted, but no real effort to complete it was made;

2 = activity was partially completed;

3 = activity was fully completed.

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### **PROJECT DURATION**

**In-Class Time (estimated):** 1 class period for scavenger hunt, 10 minutes to go over the answers the next day; 1 class period for research

**Out-of-Class Time (estimated):** 2 hours for research and writing letter

## NOTES

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This can be adapted to include letters written by local historical figures, which would most likely be found in a local historical society. Students also create a Civil War persona, research a battle, and then write a letter home as their persona.

## RESOURCES

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Gragg, Rob. *From Fields of Fire and Glory: Letters of the Civil War*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2002.

## RESOURCES AVAILABLE AT THE NEW HAMPSHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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### *Archives and Special Collections*

Daniel MacDaniel Correspondence, 1862–1863	1991.055 (m)
George H. P. Rowell Papers, 1862–1863	1967.024 (m)
Oliver H. Marston Correspondence, 1865	2008.011 (m)
Stephen S. Ford Correspondence, 1864–1865	
2004.025 (m)	

### *Library Collections*

Anderson, Isabel Weld Perkins. *The Letters and Journals of General Nicholas Longworth Anderson: Harvard, Civil War Washington, 1854–1889*. New York: Flemming H. Revell, 1942. 920 A5481

Chandonnet, Ann Fox, and Roberta Gibson Pevear. *Write Quick: War and a Woman's Life in Letters, 1835–1867*. Wilmington: Winoca Press, 2010. 973.78 W955

Child, William. *Letters from a Civil War Surgeon: The Letters of Dr. William Child of the Fifth New Hampshire Volunteers*. Solon: Polar Bear and Company, 2001. 973.781. C536

Greene, William B. *Letters from a Sharpshooter: The War Letters of Private William B. Greene*. Belleville: Historic Publications, 1993. 973.781 G812

Houston, Alan Fraser. *Keep Up Good Courage: A Yankee Family and the Civil War: The Correspondence of Cpl. Lewis Q. Smith of Sandwich, New Hampshire, Fourteenth Regiment New Hampshire Volunteers, 1862–1865*. Portsmouth: Peter E. Randall, 2006. 973.7478 Mr14h

Rogers, Joseph S. *The Effects of War: Letters of Joseph S. Rogers, Civil War Soldier, Warner, New Hampshire*. Warner: Warner Historical Society, 2008. 973.7478 R728

Silber, Nina, and Mary Beth Sievens, ed. *Yankee Correspondence: Civil War Letters between New England Soldiers and the Home Front*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996. 973.781 Y23

*Museum Collections*

Portable Desk, 1864

Campaign Desk, 1863–1864

Campaign Desk, circa 1862

Pen, 1861–1865

2013.012.01

2003.027

1983.002.03

2001.012.01a-c

## Letters of the Civil War Scavenger Hunt

Search for the following in your packet of Civil War letters:

1. Who believed the war would not last for the full year of service he volunteered for?
2. Who begged his father to forgive him for being so “Ugly and Headstrong”?
3. Who wanted his sister to write a letter to Lizzie Williams, even though his sister wasn’t very brilliant or learned?
4. Who thinks the doctors (“Surgeons”) are “flirts” who only came out to experiment on the soldiers with their “infernal poison”?
5. Who reported that his friend Charley was hit in the head by a piece of shell, but it didn’t hurt him much since he was at that moment sitting next to the writer, laughing?
6. Who was so homesick after reading the letter his sweetheart sent him that his buddies thought she had left him?
7. Who doesn’t mind the blood of the battlefield but can’t deal with writing letters home to the wives of injured or dying soldiers?
8. Who sent his wife a blanket and a pair of gloves?
9. Who says that in order to be “respected,” a man must be a drunkard, gambler, thief, and rake?
10. Whose brigade received a shipment of eight wagonloads of goodies, which included turkeys, chickens, ducks, and cakes?

## **HINTS!**

You do not get FULL credit if you ask for the Hint sheet

1. "This emergency may not exist for six weeks"
2. Brths
3. This letter details how the soldiers spend their days.
4. "TELL NO ONE WHAT IS IN THIS LETTER"
5. Manassas
6. Dear Emma...
7. "I am very tired tonight"
8. My Dear Companion
9. Goldsboro, N.C.
10. It's Sunday and just after Christmas.

## ANSWERS

1. Who believed the war would not last for the full year of service he volunteered for?

**A. F. Fewell**

2. Who begged his father to forgive him for being so “Ugly and Headstrong”?

**Felix Voltz**

3. Who wanted his sister to write a letter to Lizzie Williams, even though his sister wasn’t very brilliant or learned?

**Eugene Marshall**

4. Who thinks the doctors (“Surgeons”) are “flirts” who only came out to experiment on the soldiers with their “infernal poison”?

**Charles Morris**

5. Who reported that his friend Charley was hit in the head by a piece of shell, but it didn’t hurt him much since he was at that moment sitting next to the writer, laughing?

**Robert Henry Campbell**

6. Who was so homesick after reading the letter his sweetheart sent him that his buddies thought she had left him?

**Charles W. Smith**

7. Who doesn’t mind the blood of the battlefield but can’t deal with writing letters home to the wives of injured or dying soldiers?

**Cornelia Hancock**

8. Who sent his wife a blanket and a pair of gloves?

**Jacob Harvey**

9. Who says that in order to be “respected,” a man must be a drunkard, gambler, thief, and rake?

**James Stilley**

10. Whose brigade received a shipment of eight wagonloads of goodies, which included turkeys, chickens, ducks, and cakes?

**Rufus Ricksecker**