

New Hampshire in the Civil War Writing Tasks **Provided by Judith Moyer, PhD**

The History in Perspective (HIP) Teaching American History Project offered New Hampshire and Maine teachers professional development in American History from 2001-11. Here are five Civil War writing tasks that HIP teachers designed to use with their middle school and high school students. All tasks may be modified to make them more specific to New Hampshire by using New Hampshire primary sources.

HIP Civil War Writing Task 1

By Erin Bakkom

8th Grade U.S. History

Create two characters who would have been on opposite sides during the Civil War, one on the Union side and one on the Confederate side. They can be family members, women, men, soldiers, slave or free blacks, etc.

Part 1: The Civil War has just begun.

Write a letter from each character you have created to the other and craft a response back to the original sender for each letter. Each character needs to express their belief in the Civil War from the side they are on, as well as what they expect the outcome of the war to be. Please list at least three events that happened early in the Civil War that influenced their beliefs.

Note: Allow several weeks between Part 1 of the assignment and Part 2 of the assignment.

Part 2: The Civil War has just ended.

Now that the war is over, write a new letter and return response for the same characters you had created previously. Each character needs to describe life at the end of the war and how things have changed for them. Please reference at least three events they feel were pivotal in determining the outcome of the Civil War.

Addendum: Was the government justified in asking your characters to support the war? Why or why not? Your answer should be at least 1/2 page typed.

HIP Civil War Writing Task 2

By Jennifer Fritz

8th Grade Writing Task

The Civil War was also known as the War Between the States. We will be focusing the next few weeks on research of why the Civil War began and why people volunteered to fight for the Union or the Confederacy.

Part 1: Now that we have done the research and discussions, think about the reasons why there was a civil war. Write a paper responding to the following questions:

- a. Why did the Union and Confederacy enter into the Civil War? Give specific reasons.
- b. What is a legitimate reason for a country to go to war? Support your reason with specific details from the Civil War.
- c. Did Northerners and Southerners have the same reasons for joining the army or were their reasons different? Give specific examples showing the similarities and differences in the men's beliefs for joining and fighting in the army.

Part 2: Now that you have explained the Civil War and the reasons why men volunteered to join the army in the North or the South, write a letter to your family or friends explaining what cause or belief would lead you to join an army and fight for that cause or belief. Justify your reasons.

HIP Civil War Writing Task 3

By Katelyn Rideout

High School U.S. History

Civil War Journal and Letters

This past weekend you offered your services to an elderly woman who lives in your neighborhood. First, you help her rake up her yard, clean out the gutters, and other outside work. It was a nice weekend, so you did not mind being outside. Late in the afternoon, she asked you to help her go through some things in the attic. The two of you spend hours going through old boxes of books, clothes, pictures, and other odds n' ends. You notice there is an old trunk and ask her what is in it. She tells you that it was given to her by her grandmother when she and her late husband married. You ask her if you may look in it, and she eagerly agrees. Inside is her wedding dress, the knife that cut her wedding cake, school work done by her children, a blanket she knitted for her husband, and other important memories. At the bottom of the trunk you find an old tattered box held together by a piece of string. When you pick it up, the string snaps and papers fall to the floor. You slowly pick up the letters and notice they are very old. You very carefully gather them up and ask the elderly woman where these letters are from. She tells you they had always been in the trunk and she never really paid much attention to them because she did not know who wrote them. She notices that you are excited about the letters, and she gives them to you for all your generous hard work. You thank her and run home.

You are now sitting at your kitchen table with all the papers spread out. They date back to 1855 and end in 1866. In school you are taking US history, so you know the importance of these dates. You begin to read through the letters and quickly become engrossed by the story that unfolds.

This is where your task begins.

Your job as a historian in training is to help preserve the letters you have found. The papers are beginning to tatter, and the writing is difficult to read, so you know you need to type them out as a way to ensure that the text is not lost. In typing them out, you also decide to add pictures to the transcript you created. You bring five of the letters you have typed out to your town historical society to see if they are interested in them. The letters share the story of a person's life during the Civil War.

Writing Task Expectations:

First, create a character based on one of the following for the person who wrote the letters.

1. Union Soldier
2. Confederate Soldier
3. Battlefield Photographer
4. Field Surgeon
5. Wealthy Southern Plantation Woman
6. Northern Freed Black
7. Got another idea? Come speak to me.

Write two paragraphs describing the character you selected and the person they are writing the letters to. Give some background information on the personalities of your letters. You may

choose to create a fictional person, but you may also research and pick an actual person who experienced the Civil War.

Then, type out five letters written by this character. Each letter must be at least 200 words (use word count function).

Finally, add two pictures to each of the letters that relate to the letter in some way.

Your letters must be historically accurate and show reflection on how this person would have felt during the Civil War. You should also include important historical events that were occurring during that time that would have affected your person. Also, in most cases your letters should be written to the same person.

HIP Civil War Writing Task 4

By Adina Rowan
Freshman/Sophomore
History/Writing Class

Letters from the Civil War

This unit will ultimately put you, the student, in the shoes of a person living in Civil War times (1861-1865). Using the sources below, research both soldiers' and civilians' lives during this time and then create a character for yourself. Choose whether or not you are a soldier or civilian, male or female, free or slave, north or south. Choose a state from which you come. Consider whom you are leaving behind (if you are a soldier) or who is leaving you (if you are a civilian). Consider your age and family life. Consider your level of education or lack thereof.

With these considerations and characterizations in mind, write three letters to a person of your choosing that describe your setting, depict your thoughts and attitudes towards the war and politicians, and what your daily life is like. In each letter you should make several (5-7) historically accurate statements corresponding to your character and also ask the letter's recipient questions in return about their daily life and well-being. Your letters should represent the passage of time and show a development of your character. Each letter should be 1-2 pages in length.

Before writing the first letter, write a brief biography/prologue of your character's life so your letters make sense to readers.

Sources

Burgess, Lauren Cook, ed., *An Uncommon Soldier: The Civil War Letters of Sarah Rosetta Wakeman, Alias Private Lyons Wakeman, 153rd regiment, New York State Volunteers*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Burr, Virginia Ingraham, ed. *The Secret Eye: The Journal of Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas, 1848-1889*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990.

Higginson, Thomas Wentworth. *Army Life in a Black Regiment*. Boston: Fields, Osgood, 1870.

Watkins, Samuel. *Company Aytch, or a Side Show of the Big Show and Other Sketches*. Ed. M. Thomas Inge. New York: Plume, 1999.

HIP Civil War Writing Task 5

By Denise Sillon

7-8 Special Education Language Arts

Writing Task

As you read your book about the Civil War, identify the perspective from which the main character views the war. Keep the character's thoughts, feelings, and actions in mind as you read the book.

A list of books to choose from is attached.

Write an essay describing that perspective or point of view.

Key points you need to address include how the main character

- views the Civil War;
- feels about the war;
- reacts to the war;
- is impacted by the war.

In conclusion, reflect on the main character's attitude toward the war. Consider your thoughts and feelings about the book and describe how you would react to the Civil War if you were in the main character's situation.

Use specific examples and information from the book to support and explain each part of your essay. Indicate the page number of the examples that are cited.

Be aware of the following expectations as you write your essay:

- correct sentence structure;
- correct grammar and word usage;
- correct capitalization, punctuation, and spelling;
- identify a clear position;
- develop a logical argument;
- use evidence to support argument;
- acknowledge the opposing side.

Book List

Evvy's Civil War

Author: Miriam Brenaman

Lexile 730

Summary: In Virginia in 1860, on the verge of the Civil War, fourteen-year-old Evvy chafes at the restrictions that society places on both women and slaves.

With Every Drop of Blood: A Novel of the Civil War

Author: James Lincoln Collier

Lexile 820

Summary: Fourteen-year-old Johnny is on a bold mission to supply the rebel troops with his family's mules and wagon when he is captured by a Yankee-Cush, a runaway slave.

Dear Ellen Bee: A Civil War Scrapbook of Two Union Spies

Author: Mary E. Lyons

Lexile 780

Summary: A scrapbook kept by a young black girl details her experiences and those of the older white woman, "Miss Bet," who had freed her and her family, sent her north from Richmond to get an education, and then worked to bring an end to slavery. Based on the life of Elizabeth Van Lew.

Annie, Between the States

Author: Laura Elliott

Lexile 800

Summary: Instead of spending her teen years at parties and balls, Annie, an idealistic patriot, finds herself nursing soldiers, hiding valuables, and running the household as the Civil War rages around her family's Virginia home.

Two Girls of Gettysburg

Author: Lisa M. Klein

Summary: When the Civil War breaks out, two cousins, Lizzie and Rosanna, find themselves on opposite sides of the conflict until the war reunites them in the town of Gettysburg.

Numbering All the Bones

Author: Ann Rinaldi

Lexile 600

Summary: By 1864, the Civil War is moving toward an end. President Lincoln has proclaimed his "great measure," and Southern slaves are slowly gaining their freedom. But for thirteen-year-old Eulinda, a house slave on a Georgia plantation, it is the most difficult time of her life.

My Last Skirt: The Story of Jennie Rodgers, Union Soldier

Author: Lynda Durrant

Lexile 760

Summary: Enjoying the freedom afforded her while dressing as a boy in order to earn higher pay after emigrating from Ireland, Jennie Rodgers serves in the 95th Illinois Infantry as Private Albert Cashier, a Union soldier in the American Civil War.

The Drummer Boy of Vicksburg

Author: G. Clifton Wisler

Lexile 790

Summary: In this fast-paced story, fourteen-year-old drummer boy Orion Howe displays great bravery during a Civil War battle at Vicksburg, Mississippi.

March toward the Thunder

Author: Joseph Bruchac

Lexile 850

Summary: Louis Nollette, a fifteen-year-old Abenaki Indian, joins the Irish Brigade in 1864 to fight for the Union in the Civil War. Based on the author's great-grandfather; includes author's note.

The Last Silk Dress

Author: Ann Rinaldi

Lexile 630

Summary: During the Civil War, Susan finds a way to help the Confederate Army and uncovers a series of mysterious family secrets.

Red Moon at Sharpsburg

Author: Rosemary Wells

Lexile 760

Summary: A young Southern girl named India Moody finds courage she never thought she had as she musters the strength and wit to survive the ravages of the Civil War and keep her family together through it all.