

Title: Soldiers in the Civil War: Examining Primary Sources

Historical Background: The statesmen and the diplomats did their best to control and direct the war, but the real load was carried from first to last by the ordinary soldier.... In many ways he was just like the G.I. Joe of modern days, but he lived in a simpler era, and when he went off to war he had more illusions to lose. He lost them with all proper speed, and when the fainthearts and weaklings had been winnowed out, he became one of the stoutest fighting men the world has ever seen....

No matter which army is looked at, the picture is the same. On each side the soldier realized that he personally was getting the worst of it, and when he had time he felt very sorry for himself. But mostly he did not have the time, and his predominant mood was never one of self-pity. Mostly he was ready for whatever came to him.

from Bruce Catton, *The Civil War* (Houghton Mifflin Co., 1987 ed.), pp. 143-155.

Correlation to the New York State 7/8 Social Studies Core Curriculum:

Unit Six: Division and Reunion

II. The Civil War Breaks Out

Suggested Timeframe: One class period of approximately 45 minutes

Materials and Resources:

- Worksheet - Civil War Reading 1 (attached)
- Worksheet - Civil War Posters (attached)
- Handout – Civil War Artillery (attached)
- Worksheet - Civil War Reading 2 (attached).

Student Objectives: Students will be able to:

- Explain various roles of soldiers during the Civil War.
- Describe the function and uses of artillery during the Civil War.
- Evaluate the importance of soldiers in the success of an army.

Teaching Strategies and Methodologies:

1. This lesson focuses on accounts describing soldiers in a light artillery regiment, but should be illustrative of the important roles played by soldiers in all branches of service during the Civil War. It employs only primary sources (newspaper accounts, posters, photographs and official reports) to achieve its objectives. However, the teacher might also use high quality secondary sources, such as scenes from the movie “Gettysburg,” to supplement the lesson.
2. Hand out “Civil War Reading #1” to the class. Since it is a newspaper column written in 1863, both the vocabulary and style may be difficult for students. The teacher may choose to have students read it silently or aloud, or may read it to the class. Similarly, students may do the questions that follow the reading individually or in a whole class discussion. Note that the first set of questions (After You Read) call simply for recall of the assignment, while the second set (What Do You Think) require upper level thinking skills and might best be answered in discussions.
3. Note to students that in the reading Sergeant Hays is drawn to the artillery by a recruiting poster he sees in Rochester. Hand out “Civil War Posters” and note that the first poster shows “...a picture representing a mounted battery coming into action...,” similar to the

description in the reading. Review all three posters and have students either write or discuss their answers to the question. Additional posters can be found on the website cited on the handout; teachers might wish to make additional copies of posters that could be shown as overhead projections or posted around the classroom.

4. The next handout, “Civil War Artillery,” could either be distributed to students or shown as an overhead projection. Students should be made familiar with the terminology associated with an artillery field piece in order to better understand the next reading. The teacher may wish to show additional photographs or drawings of artillery pieces in action to further demonstrate the workings of this weapon.
5. Hand out “Civil War Reading #2” to the class. This excerpt from a field report is written in a more direct and simple manner and may be more appropriate for students to read and respond to individually. As before, the questions that follow the reading are divided by their complexity; note that the third “What Do You Think” question calls for students to reflect on Reading #1. The lesson may be concluded by a discussion of the fourth question in that section. As an alternative, the reading could be assigned as homework and discussed during the following class.

Evaluation/Assessment: The teacher should assign any of the questions that follow the two readings that seem appropriate for the purpose of student evaluation.

About the Author: Henry Mueller was formerly District Director of Social Studies for the Niskayuna Central School District in Niskayuna, NY, and is currently Project Coordinator of the Upstate New York Teaching of American History Project in Albany, NY.

Civil War Reading #1

The following is a newspaper clipping about Battery L of the 1st New York Light Artillery Regiment. You can read more of this newspaper account at the website of the New York State Military Museum and Veterans Research Center at <http://www.dmna.state.ny.us/historic/reghist/civil/artillery/1stArtLt/1stArtLtBatLCWN.htm>

Before You Read: Find the definitions of the following words.

countenance

sobriquet

geniality

fortuitous

conspicuous

caisson

commencement

unfathomable

meritoriously

emulation

From Reynolds Battery.
CAMP NEAR WAUGH POINT, Va.,
April 24, 1863.

Quartermaster Sergeant Hays, is an Ohioan, a thorough, full-bred Buckeye, an excellent representative of that corn-growing, stock-producing, large, magnificent and patriotic State.... His plain, ample, honest, good-natured *countenance*, the yellowish tinge of his hair and whiskers, and the open, frank expression of his features, have given him the expressive *sobriquet* of "Sunflower," a flower that is supposed to turn its face ever to the sun, and proclaiming more *geniality* than beauty.

Quartermaster Hays' connection with the Battery may be said to have been accident, a *fortuitous* one, as it has proved, to the company. He was passing through Rochester from Columbus, Ohio, his native home and residence, en route for Boston, to enter the service of the Navy, when he was induced to stop in Rochester a day or two, putting up at the New England House, where his attention was arrested by a *conspicuous* recruiting bill, setting forth in patriotic and persuasive language, and vividly portraying in a picture representing a mounted battery coming into action—the duty of every young man to enlist in defence of his country, and the great desirableness of serving in the artillery branch of service in preference to any other. Reading the one and looking at the other, caused the young man to call at the recruiting office of the then organizing Reynolds' Battery. The result was his enlistment in the company, and another volunteer added to the army.

On the arrival of the company in Washington he was appointed 1st Corporal, and before we left there he was promoted to a Sergeant. No drivers, cannoneers, horses, gun or *caisson* in the battery received more attention than his. Always on hand, ready to do anything or go any where whenever ordered. In consequence of the sickness, and absence of Quartermaster Sergeant A. A. Ganyard—recently discharged from service on account of continued disability -- it became necessary, at the *commencement* of last fall's campaign, to appoint

some member of the company to act in his place. Who should he be?

Do my readers know anything about the duties of a Quartermaster and Commissary in the army? Suffice it to say it is the hardest, most perplexing, trying, thankless, difficult post to fill satisfactory there is.... Soldiers must be fed daily and kept clothed, and horses must eat, and if supplies are furnished promptly, no matter what the circumstances may be about the difficulties of procuring them, of transportation through *unfathomable* seas of mud, &c....

Now, a Quartermaster Sergeant in a six-gun battery has 110 horses to supply constantly with forage, 150 men to supply daily with rations; has charge of and is responsible for the transportation and safety of all stores required for the company, and his position is one, especially in active service, that demands energy and force of character or action, the qualifications of industry, promptness, faithfulness.

Sergeant Hays possessed all these, and he must therefore act in the capacity of Q. M. Sergeant, and so he did, and to-day he fills that position in the most satisfactory manner. No man in the company is more popular than he— a popularity most *meritoriously* won. A characteristic of his is, that in the discharge of his duties, he goes to work as if the fate of the nation hung suspended on his correct performance of them. He displays an earnestness and practicalness worthy of *emulation* by some of the nation's higher officials.

After You Read: Write the answers to the following questions.

1. Why was Quartermaster Sergeant Hays called “sunflower?”
2. What made Quartermaster Sergeant Hays’ job important?
3. What made Quartermaster Sergeant Hays’ job difficult?

What Do You Think: You won’t find the answers to these questions in the reading.

1. Sergeant Hays was popular among the men of Reynolds Battery. What kinds of actions might make a Quartermaster Sergeant unpopular?
2. Do you think the Army has Quartermaster Sergeants today? How could you find out?

**NOW IN THE FIELD!
LOOK AT THE BOUNTIES**



United States Advance Bounty.....	\$25
United States Advance Pay.....	13
United States Enlistment Fee.....	4
New York State Bounty.....	50
New York City.....	50
Sixth District Committee Bounty.....	10
Total Advance Pay and Bounties, \$152	
United States Bounty when discharged.....	75
\$227	

Fourth N. Y. Battery!
CAPTAIN JAMES E. SMITH.

Easy Service! No Musket Drill! No Trenches to dig! No Heavy Loads or Knapsacks to carry!
Good Pay, Good Rations, and Good Officers!

40 MEN WANTED!
TO FILL UP THIS BATTERY.
RECRUITING STATION, **389 HUDSON ST.**
By Order of the Ninth Ward Committee,
1st Lieut. CHAS. H. SCOTT,
JNO. A. THOMPSON, Recruiting Officers.

'RECRUITS, READ!
EXTRA BOUNTY \$10
OVER ALL GOVERNMENTS' BOUNTIES!



**FOURTH BATTERY
N. Y. S. LIGHT ARTILLERY!**

Easy Service! No Musket Drill! No Trenches to dig! No Heavy Loads or Knapsacks to carry! Good Pay, Good Rations, and Good Officers!

60 MEN WANTED
TO FILL UP THIS BATTERY.
RECRUITING STATION, **389 HUDSON ST.**
\$10 EXTRA BOUNTY PAID
By Order of the Ninth Ward Committee.
JNO. A. THOMPSON, Recruiting Officer.

RALLY, BOYS, FOR THE UNION
Goodwin's Battery of Breech-Loading
LIGHT ARTILLERY!
SOON TO TAKE THE FIELD!



**LET THE REBELS TAKE WARNING!
NOW IS THE TIME TO SERVE YOUR COUNTRY!**
NO SKEDADDLERS WANTED! FALL IN, BOYS!
The Union MUST and SHALL BE preserved! The Rag of Treason must not longer defy us!

Young and Able-Bodied Men who are willing to sustain our Government and Fight for the Soil and Liberty so dear to us all, can join this Battery, assured that New York will feel proud of us if we but do our duty as Soldiers.

All the Bounties offered by City, State and Nation will be given for Recruits if soon filled up. Good Quarters and Camping Grounds provided. Fall in, Boys!

Wm. F. GOODWIN, Commanding Battery.

BAKER & GOODWIN, Printers, 214 Nassau Street, opposite City Hall, N. Y.

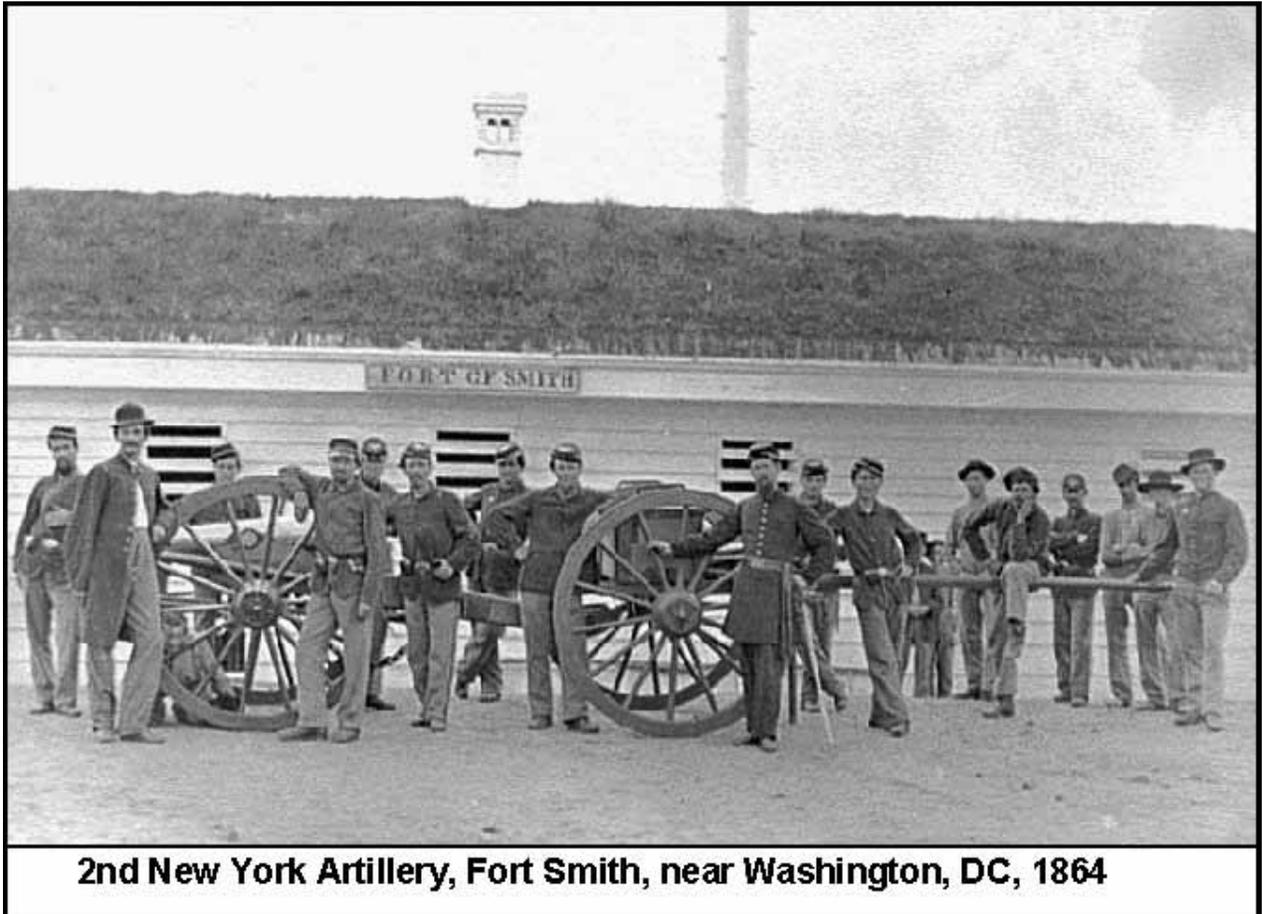
Civil War Posters

On this page are three recruiting posters, like the one that caught the attention of Quartermaster Sergeant Hays when he was in Rochester. Each poster suggests a different reason for joining the artillery. Explain why each of the following would attract recruits:

- 1st Poster: "Look At The Bounties"
- 2nd Poster: "Rally, Boys, for the Union"
- 3rd Poster: "Easy Service! No Musket Drill! No Trenches to dig! No Heavy Loads or Knapsacks to carry!"

These posters, and many more, can be found on the Library of Congress American Memory website entitled "Civil War Treasures from the New-York Historical Society" at <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpcoop/nhihtml/cwnyhshome.html>

Civil War Artillery



2nd New York Artillery, Fort Smith, near Washington, DC, 1864

From the website of the New York State Military Museum and Veterans Research Center at <http://www.dmna.state.ny.us/historic/pictures/civil2ndArt.htm>

Above is a photograph of the equipment used to bring artillery to a battle. To the left is the *cannon*, or field piece, which could fire shells at the enemy. The cannon rests on a two-wheeled *gun carriage* that holds the cannon in place when aimed and fired. This was attached to a *limber* (center), similar to a two-wheeled cart, which was used to haul the cannon and carry an ammunition chest. Teams of horses would be hitched to the limber to pull the cannon into battle. Other limbers were attached to *caissons* that carried additional ammunition chests and spare parts. A group of cannons, along with supporting limbers, caissons and other wagons, would be called a *battery*. Once the cannons were in place and began firing, the horses and limbers would be moved a distance away for safety.

Civil War Reading # 2

The following is from the official report of Capt. John A. Reynolds, 1st New York Light Artillery Regiment, describing his battery's participation in the Chancellorsville Campaign, April 27 - May 6, 1863. You can read their entire report on the website of the New York State Military Museum and Veterans Research Center at <http://64.233.169.104/search?q=cache:5Nat8o0exEsJ:www.dmna.state.ny.us/historic/reghist/civil/artillery/1stArtLt/1stArtLtBatLBreckChap34AppB.htm+%22John+A.+Reynolds%22+C hancellorsville%22+%22amos+gibbs%22&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=4&gl=us>

Before You Read: You'll need to know the definition of the following words.

earthworks

limber

APRIL 27-MAY 6, 1863.—The Chancellorsville Campaign.
No. 36.--Report of Capt. John A. Reynolds, First New York Light Artillery.
(OR 1: 25/1, pp. 275-276)
HDQRS. BATTERY L, FIRST NEW YORK [ARTILLERY],
Near White Oak Church, Va., May 9, 1863.

CAPTAIN: I have the honor to submit the following report of the operations of my battery in the late engagement:

....At 3 a.m. on (May 1st), I was directed to move my battery across the river and report to Brigadier-General Wadsworth, which I obeyed, taking position on the plain just above the bridge and behind *earthworks*, which had been thrown up during the night.

At about 9 a.m. on (May 2nd), when the First Division was about to retire across the river, a severe fire was opened upon us by a battery of the enemy in our front and near the foot of the heights. They had a perfect range of my battery. Eight of my men were severely wounded, 1 of whom died; 2 others received slight wounds. Ten horses were killed or disabled and 2 slightly wounded. Three *limbers* were injured by the fire; on one an axle broken, on another, part of the lid to chest blown off, and, on the third, one wheel knocked to pieces. The harness was also considerably cut up. The precise effect of our fire could not be observed on account of the trees along the Bowling Green road obstructing the view from thence to the enemy's position. We saw one limber or caisson explode, and the pickets, who could better observe, state that we disabled one of their pieces. The firing was kept up for about an hour and a half before we succeeded in silencing the enemy, and was continued slowly for another half hour, during which time the other troops were safely withdrawn across the bridge. I next withdrew my battery, piece by piece, keeping up the firing until the last gun was removed. We expended 303 rounds in this action. The distance between the batteries was computed-at about 2,000 yards....

The officers and men were cool and collected. Lieutenants Reynolds and Breck were especially so, watching carefully the effect of the fire from their sections, and giving directions accordingly, inspiring their men with coolness by their example. Sergt. Amos

Gibbs is also deserving of especial mention. Though wounded in the shoulder by a shell, thereby rendering him unable for duty, he persisted in remaining at his piece, and when by me ordered to go to the rear went to the bank, and in about a quarter of an hour I again found him at his post. This time I positively ordered him to the rear and to remain there. Sergt. William Henry Shelton is also deserving of special mention. He was as cool as on ordinary drill, and by his example inspired his detachment with courage and coolness. The earthworks thrown up in front of the pieces afforded great protection to the men, who would undoubtedly have suffered much more had they been entirely exposed, as several shots struck directly in front of the works and many pieces lodged in them.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,
J. A. REYNOLDS,
Captain Battery L, First New York [Artillery].

After You Read: Write the answers to the following questions.

1. How were men in Captain Reynolds' Battery wounded?
2. What did Sergeant Gibbs do that deserved to be mentioned in the report?

What Do You Think: You won't find the answers to these questions in the reading.

1. Several men were mentioned for their "coolness" during the battle. What do you think this means, and why was it so important to Captain Reynolds?
2. Reports like this one were collected after every battle. In what ways would these be of use to the Army?
3. In this assignment, you read about Sergeant Gibbs, and in the previous reading you learned about Quartermaster Sergeant Hays. Which of these non-commissioned officers was more important to the success of the Union army? Explain why you think this.
4. What is the single most important thing that you have learned about the Civil War from these two assignments?