



PERSPECTIVES ON THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

A Teaching American History Grant

# *Living the Civil War*



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## Perspectives on the American Experience

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Character Interpretation

# *Living the Civil War*

## *Overview of Project*

### **1. Project Summary**

I created this project so students can connect more personally with key figures during the Civil War. They tend to remember things better if they think of them as “real” people.

### **2. Standards**

8.10: Students understand the multiple causes, key events, and consequences of the Civil War.

### **3. Learning Objective**

Students will be able to better understand the personalities and contributions of influential Civil War figures.

### **4. Planning and Implementation Process**

I chose my Civil War figures based on those individuals covered the most on our district benchmark exam and in our state standards. I also chose Robert Gould Shaw because he was the leader of the 54<sup>th</sup> (the most famous regiment of African American soldiers) and we watch the movie, “Glory” after state testing.

Process/Assignment Steps to Completion:

-Students conducted research in self-selected groups of 3 or 4 on important figures during the time of the American Civil War. (Each group was assigned a specific person.) After conducting research during class time using one of our wireless laptop labs, they created posters with information split into three main sections: Background information, Contributions to the Civil War, Interesting or Amusing Facts. The posters were displayed on the classroom walls and student filled in a chart on the 9 selected Civil War individuals: Abraham Lincoln, Jefferson Davis, Ulysses S. Grant, Robert E. Lee, Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson, Winfield Scott, William Tecumseh Sherman, Clara Barton, Robert Gould Shaw. After completing the chart, students had to explain in a well-written and detailed paragraph who they admired the most out of the nine individuals covered in this activity.

-Simultaneously, students were also in the process of reading a Civil War novel of their choice. I had 6 options for them or they could get a book from a store or library. The novels I had to offer were: Boys War, Behind Rebel Lines, When Will This Cruel War Be Over, Soldiers Heart, Red

Badge of Courage, In My Father's House. \*\*\*Once the novel is read, students simply have to complete a test on the book (if it's one of my 6) OR schedule a book talk with me.

-Taking this one step further for my Honors classes, students could choose a Civil War figure or a character from the novel they read to complete a character interpretation. Performances would be in small group format to save on class time. \*\*\*Our district doesn't want us using too much instruction time for presentations. Students were given guidelines and instructions for doing monologues/character interpretations. They, by this point, will also have witnessed my example of a character interpretation on Clara Barton. Students will be in groups of 6 to allow time for all 6 presentations and reflections on those presentations. If time, each group will pick their best one to perform for the entire class.

#### Implementation Timeline:

- Students were given 3 weeks to read a Civil War Novel.
- Two class periods were given for research and poster completion.
- One period given to complete chart of all 9 individuals.
- 1/2 period to view my character interpretation of Clara Barton.
- One week after novel completion students need to present their character interpretation/monologue to small group within the classroom. (One class period designated for this.)

#### 5. Assessment

Small whiteboard review games/oral review, Teacher created assessment and district benchmark exam.

#### 6. Resources

Various internet websites, novels about the Civil War

Teacher Created Documents:

- Civil War Leaders document
- Powerpoint with information in case you don't trust a class's ability to find relevant information for the chart.
- Civil War monologue guidelines

#### 7. Tips for Success:

- The only change I might make to the assignment, after doing the actual character interpretation myself, is to offer an option for students to work in groups of 3, write a 3 act play about the person instead of doing a character interpretation/monologue, and then videotape it-bring the DVD/videotape to class to share. I really think asking kids to do a monologue/character interpretation is too much at the middle school level, even for honors kids. So many of them are shy and would be completely mortified. If they did

want to take on the monologue, I think I would also give them the option of videotaping themselves, instead of doing it live.

- Always be sure to give clear instructions to the students and walk them through everything. It definitely helps to have samples and do the character interpretation so they have something to remember as an example.

# HONORS U.S. HISTORY: MONOLOGUE ASSIGNMENT

## Lesson Objectives:

1. Use analysis in developing a character.
2. Write a monologue revealing the innermost thoughts of an original character.
3. Perform the monologue using vocal and physical characterization.
4. Perform the monologue using appropriate staging techniques.

Based on a character from your Civil War novel or a key figure during the Civil War , you will write, and later perform live, a **monologue. (a long speech spoken by one person, revealing personal thoughts and feelings.)**

Imagine yourself in one of the character's places, someone who has a good vantage point for assessing the conflict between the North & South.

Write a monologue in the persona of this character. In the monologue, explain his or her unique perspective on the complex events unfolding. Each monologue should show what the character is noticing about war, maybe some of the things that those caught up in the fighting might overlook or not see objectively. You can also discuss other events or issues unfolding in the novel.

Work on developing your chosen character. You must know his mind well. An interior monologue reveals what the character thinks and feels about a particular situation, person, or issue and what motivates his/her actions.

You can highlight an important character trait or discuss other characters through the eyes of your monologue subject.

Write the draft of your monologue. Let yourself write freely about the topic the character is reflecting on. Try to dig deep. Set your monologue aside for a day, then revisit it and cut out words or parts that blur the main issue or get in the way of what you really want to say. (Maybe writing in journal format will help.)

## **HOW TO ADD CREATIVITY:**



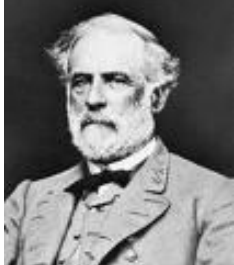


Decide whether your monologue will be serious, humorous, absurd, etc. Then make sure the mood matches. Use proper wording and imagery to portray this.





When composing your monologue, think of it as a short story. Begin with the introduction. Answer the questions: Who are you? What are you doing? What is your mood? What is your goal?

Add comments to truly personalize the monologue. This could range from jokes to political discourse to social commentary. Basically, add something personal.

Include historical facts and simple props.

\*\*\*The monologue should be 2-3 minutes in length.

Picture	Significant Individual	Background Information	Contributions to the War	Interesting Facts
	<p>Abraham Lincoln</p>			
	<p>Jefferson Davis</p>			
	<p>Robert E. Lee</p>			
	<p>Ulysses S. Grant</p>			
	<p>Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson</p>			

	<p>Winfield Scott</p>			
	<p>Clara Barton</p>			
	<p>William Tecumseh Sherman</p>			
	<p>Robert Gould Shaw</p>			

Which of the individuals in the chart do you admire the most?  
 Why? (Explain in 5 or more well-written, detailed sentences.)  
 \*\*\*Do this on a separate piece of paper.