

**TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY PROJECT**  
***Lesson Title "Creating Photo-Narratives of the Civil War"***  
***From Steve Turgeon***

**Grade – High School**

**Length of class period – 90 Minutes**

**Inquiry –**

- What role does photography play in studying the past?
- How can sources be used to tell different stories about the past?

**Objectives –**

- Content:
  - Students will understand the role of photography in the Civil War era in the U.S.
- Skill:
  - Students will use primary sources to tell a story about the Civil War era in the U.S.
  - Students will make value judgments about the value of photos as primary sources.

**Materials –**

- Photo-narrative activity worksheet (aka “Photo Story Board” below)
- 4-5 packets of photos (aka “Photo Packet” below – one for each group - depending on class size)
- Writing utensils

**Activities – (Instructor activities in italics)**

1. *Students will be given a brief background of photography during the Civil War by instructor*
  - See Teacher Info Sheet for more background data to present to students
  - This part of the lesson should take no longer than 10-15 minutes.
2. *Students will be assigned groups (instructor should consider organizing students into groups as they enter the classroom on the day of this lesson, as group numbers and sizes will vary from classroom to classroom). Students should be provided:*
  - One copy of the “Photo Story Board” for each student
  - One copy of the “Photo Packet” for each group
3. *Students and instructor should read through directions together. Instructor should make sure all students are clear on the directions. Students should:*
  - Fill out the tops of their “Photo Story Board” Sheets.
  - Be looking through photo packet to extract 6 photos with a common theme about the Civil War Era. Examples: war, civilian life, technology, social/ethnic groups, etc.
    - Each student should get a chance to look through the photo set once, then decide on the theme as a group
  - Decide what that central theme will be within each group.
  - Decide what story could be told about that theme from the six photos selected
    - Encourage students to take a second look through the photos and see if the six they chose are the best ones to tell that story
  - Put the photos in order in whatever way makes sense for the story (chronologically?, etc.)
  - Write a 2-3 sentence caption for each photo that contributes to the central story (on “Photo Story Board” sheet);
  - Write any additional background information that students may know that would contribute to the story.
  - *While students are working in groups, instructor should scan classroom to make sure all students are on-task and are clear with what they should be doing. If a group finishes*

- early, suggest that they practice their presentation.*
- This part of the lesson should take 40-50 minutes.
4. After all groups are finished, groups will share their stories with the class.
- Share the title of the story, but **not** the theme
  - One person should hold the images up as the other person reads the caption for that image
  - *After story is read, instructor should ask class what they thought the theme was.*
  - *Instructor should ask group why they picked that theme.*
  - This part of the lesson should take 20-30 minutes. Be sure to leave at least 10 minutes for the last part of the lesson.
5. *Instructor should ask students the essential questions:*
- *What role does photography play in studying the past? Follow-up question: how are photos different from other primary sources (e.g. written word)?*
  - *How can sources be used to tell different stories about the past? Follow up question: why do you think*
  - **Moral of the story:** History is remembered in different ways, and written by many different people. The different sources and perspectives that we use to write and remember history allow the same events to be represented in different ways. To eliminate historical bias, we must look at history from many different perspectives and with many sources, to get a clearer view of the past.
  - This part of the lesson should take 10 minutes.

**How will you assess what students learned during this lesson?**

- Informally –
  - Checking for understanding during implementation of lesson
  - Asking students to build on their responses to questions
  - Making sure students are on task during implementation of lesson
- Formally –
  - Collecting student photo story boards (either each students’ or one for each group)

**Connecticut Framework Performance Standards –**

Literacy Standard #2 – Choose valid sources and provide evidence to answer a history/social studies question.

Literacy Standard #4 – Analyze and explain multipurpose visual materials.

Literacy Standard #6 – Detect bias in data presented in various forms.

Application Standard #1 – Use evidence to develop an interpretation of a historical event

Application Standard #2 – Evaluate primary and secondary interpretations of a historical event.

High School GLEs covered by this lesson based on the proposed standards here:

[http://www.eastconn.org/tah/socialstudiesfrmwk\\_10-6-09-3.pdf](http://www.eastconn.org/tah/socialstudiesfrmwk_10-6-09-3.pdf)

## The Civil War Era Photographs of the Civil War

### 1. Introduction to photography in the Civil War Era:

- Fourth war in History to be caught on camera (Mexican American, Crimean, Indian Rebellion of 1857)
- Best covered conflict of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in terms of photography
- Increased the role of photojournalism during wartime.
- Many different documentary photographers, for Union and South:
  - *To Consider: How might a Union Photographer or a Southern Photographer portray soldiers from their side? What about the other side?*
  
- Key Civil War Photographers:
  - *Matthew Brady, 1822 – 1896*
    - Northern Photographer
    - “Father of photojournalism”
    - Most prominent photographer of the Civil War period
    - Spent his own money to take pictures of the war
    - Hired employees, set up carriages as roaming dark-rooms, and paid for equipment at his own expense (total \$100,000 dollars – a LOT more in 1961 than today!)
    - Went bankrupt after the War
    - His photos and journals provide massive insights into Civil War history
  - *Alexander Gardner, 1821 - 1882*
    - Colleague of Brady
    - Committed Socialist
    - Named the official photographer of the Union Army in Nov. 1861
  - *George S. Cook, 1819 - 1902*
    - From CT, settled in Charleston, SC
    - Confederate photographer during the War
    - Photographed the attack and destruction of Fort Sumter
  
- Photography as a reflection of the Civil War – South and North
- What’s “real” vs. “staged” – the nature of photography
- “Candid” vs. “studio”