

Through the Lens of a Civil War Photographer

Grade Level: 9-12

Lesson Duration: 1 session

Introduction:

The Civil War was America's first war to be captured in photographs. Professional photographers followed in the armies' wakes recording the gruesome aftermath of battle and the devastated landscapes.

In this lesson, your students will examine real photographs taken from the Civil War in Tennessee. These photos illustrate how the army changed the landscape during the War. They will analyze these images to make assumptions about how the war affected Tennessee, but even beyond that they will consider the photographer's perspective at the time the photograph was taken. Too often, we analyze photographs as primary sources without considering what the photographer wanted the viewer to see. This lesson will bring the photographer from behind the camera and your students will consider the war from one photographer's point of view.

Goal: Students will learn how to critically analyze a photograph and use it as primary source evidence while learning the importance of Civil War photography as a primary source.

Objectives: Students will examine photographs for clues about the Civil War in Tennessee
Students will visualize various images from the Civil War in Tennessee.
Students will deduce the intent of the photographer when photographing his/her subject.

Curriculum Standards:

5th Grade:

5.5.01 Understand the causes, course, and consequences of the Civil War.
e. Describe the role of Tennessee in the Civil War.

5.5.tpi.7. Analyze primary sources not limited to but including artifacts, diaries, letters, photographs, art, documents, newspapers, contemporary media, and computer information systems to make generalizations about events and life in United States history since 1865.

8th Grade:

8.1.tpi.10. Describe how warfare influences cultural trends (e.g. French and Indian War, American Revolution, War of 1812, and Civil War).

8.5.20 Identify Tennessee's role within the Civil War.

8.5.18 d. Weigh the political, social, and economic impact of the Civil War on the different regions of the United States.

8.5.07 Use historical information acquired from a variety of sources to develop critical sensitivities such as skepticism regarding attitudes, values, and behaviors of people in different historical contexts.

- a. Read and analyze a primary source document such as diaries, letters and contracts.

Procedures:

1. Start by taking a picture of your class. Use your cell phone, smart phone, or digital camera. Begin a discussion about photographs. Why do we take them? Why do you think cell companies put them on every phone they make?
2. Transition to the picture you just took. Who was the subject of that picture? A: Class Who were the parties involved? A: Students, the classroom. Who was involved but not pictured? A: The photographer
3. To emphasize the importance of remembering the photographer when analyzing photographs as primary sources, display this image. Have the students look at it closely as a class.

http://content.mtsu.edu/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=%2Fstonesriver&CISOPTR=118&DMSCALE=100&DMWIDTH=600&DMHEIGHT=600&DMMODE=viewer&DMFULL=1&DMX=237&DMY=74&DMTEXT=%2520barnard&DMTHUMB=1&REC=8&DMROTATE=0&x=348&y=355

What do they notice? The boy? The road? The house? Now look closely at the bottom right. They should notice the shadow of the photographer. Never forget the photographer when studying photographs.

Why is it so important to remember the photographer? The photographer decides what we get to see. It was his or her decision to capture an image of that particular scene. This leads to another important consideration. What was the photographer's motivation? For whom is he taking the photograph? Who is his audience?

What about the photograph you took of the class? Ask the class why you took it of them and not your desk? If the audience was interested desk buyers on Craigslist, my subject would change from the class to the desk.

3. Next, transition to the Civil War photographs of one single photographer. Explain that your students will need to examine these photographs carefully to deduce two things. Display the following images. These images were all photographed by one man, George Barnard. Explain to the students that one man took these pictures, but do not give them any information about who he was or why he took the photographs he did.

4. Briefly go through all images.

http://content.mtsu.edu/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/shades&CISOPTR=47&CISOBOX=1&REC=4

http://content.mtsu.edu/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/shades&CISOPTR=71&CISOBOX=1&REC=13

http://content.mtsu.edu/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/shades&CISOPTR=206&CISOBOX=1&REC=3

http://content.mtsu.edu/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/shades&CISOPTR=230&CISOBOX=1&REC=14

http://content.mtsu.edu/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/shades&CISOPTR=111&CISOBOX=1&REC=9

http://content.mtsu.edu/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/shades&CISOPTR=42&CISOBOX=1&REC=12

http://content.mtsu.edu/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=%2Fshades&CISOPTR=74&DMSCALE=12.5&DMWIDTH=600&DMHEIGHT=600&DMMODE=viewer&DMFULL=0&DMX=20&DMY=10&DMTEXT=%2520barnard&DMTHUMB=1&REC=7&DMROTATE=0&x=148&y=118

http://content.mtsu.edu/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/shades&CISOPTR=60&CISOBOX=1&REC=5

5. Divide the class into groups of two or three students. Print out the images and place two each at different stations around the room. Have students rotate to each station to analyze all the photographs.

6. Using the photograph analysis sheet students will identify two aspects of the primary source. First, they will consider the images for their historical value. What do these images tell us about Tennessee during the war? Second, who was this photographer and what was his motivation for taking these photographs?

7. Allow considerable time for students to view and analyze these images. Be sure to facilitate this learning time by moving from station to station helping students with their analyses.

8. Teacher note: All of these images were taken by George Barnard. See these links for information on Barnard.

<http://www.civilwarshades.org/visualizing-the-war/photographers-and-special-artists/>

<http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USAPbarnard.htm>

These images were taken to document fortifications, military installations, and key strategic structures that the military needed to document. Officers at headquarters could get a good idea of what the fortifications, bridges, and other structures looked like in the field.

As for the impact they had on Tennesseans, it should be evident to students that the war and fortifications significantly altered the landscape, particularly stripping the land of trees. Notice how denuded many of these landscapes appear.

Also, point out to your students that the photographer may have captured multiple subjects in one image (i.e. fort, bridge, road)

9. After students have gone through all images, bring the class back together and hold a discussion about what they deduced from the images.

10. Ask the class what they learned from the photographs? What impact did the war have on Tennessee's landscape? Did anything jump out at them?

11. If there is time, quickly go back through all the images and ask students about the subject and what they perceived was the intent of the photograph.

12. Lastly, ask the class what they believe was the occupation of the photographer? What was his motivation? Why did he take these images?

Conclusion:

Disclose the information of George Barnard and show this photograph of him. Explain the reasons he took those images.

<http://www.civilwarshades.org/visualizing-the-war/photographers-and-special-artists/>

Did anyone in the class deduce correctly? Reinforce the importance of Civil War photographs as primary sources as well as considering the photographer when analyzing them.

Assessment:

Learning may be evaluated using the photographic analysis sheets and class and group participation.