

# Walking a Fine Line: Examining the Lives of Tennessee Artists during the Civil War

**GRADE:** 8

**LESSON DURATION:** 1 Class Session

## **INTRODUCTION:**

The Civil War impacted all who lived through it. At some point everyone was forced to choose a side, and then to face the consequences of that decision.

This multi-disciplinary lesson examines how the Civil War impacted common citizens in Tennessee. More specifically, it investigates how artists navigated their way through this tumultuous time. Artists, like everyone in Tennessee, were confronted with the war. Many were reliant on wealthy patrons as a source for their livelihood. As some prominent

citizens left home to wage war or became concerned about defending their property, there would have been few orders for portraits, furniture, or housewares. Artists were forced to adjust to a new life. Some left the state. Some lost their lives. Others saw their artistic careers all but curtailed. All were changed by the war.

In this lesson, students will step into the shoes of Tennessee artists during the Civil War. They will learn their stories: who they were, what they created, and what happened to them. More importantly they will contemplate the decisions artists faced and the consequences of making them.

## **GOAL:**

To learn about the lives of artists during the war and to learn how decisions people made impacted their lives.

## **OBJECTIVES:**

The students will [TSW] read and comprehend the stories of four artists affected by the Civil War in Tennessee.

TSW contemplate decisions each artist made during the war.

TSW analyze the impact of the war on the artists' lives.



## **CURRICULUM STANDARDS:**

8.5.20 Identify Tennessee's role within the Civil War.

c. Discuss the contributions of significant Tennesseans during the Civil War.

8.6.01 Recognize the impact of individual and group decisions on citizens and communities.

8.6.spi.1. Identify the impact of individual and group decisions on historical events.

8.6.tpi.1. Create a chart for individual decisions and a chart for group decisions that impact historical events.

## **PROCEDURES:**

1. Divide the class into four groups and tell them they are going to be artists during the Civil War.
2. Each group will be assigned the story of an artist in Tennessee during the war. They will learn their story and decide how the war affected their lives.
3. One group will take the story of Christopher Haun, a potter from East Tennessee, another group will learn about portrait and landscape painter James Cameron, the two others will explore wood craftsman and freed slave Richard Poyner, and Johann Albert Lotz, a woodcarver.

<http://www.civilwarshades.org/walking-a-fine-line/>

Christopher Haun - <http://www.civilwarshades.org/walking-a-fine-line/christopher-haun/>

James Cameron - <http://www.civilwarshades.org/walking-a-fine-line/james-cameron/>

Richard Poyner - <http://www.civilwarshades.org/walking-a-fine-line/richard-poyner/>

Johann Albert Lotz - <http://www.civilwarshades.org/walking-a-fine-line/johann-albert-lotz/>

4. Each person faced a critical decision at some point during the war. Have students discuss with their team the decision their person faced. What did they choose to do? How did that decision affect their lives? Was their life better or worse as a result of the Civil War?

5. Have each group read about their artist. Then have the students complete the investigative worksheet entitled "Profile of War" about their life.

Multi-disciplinary Option for Art Class:

Have each group use the appropriate art medium for their assigned artist.

- For instance, for Christopher Haun, the students would use "Magic Mud" or pottery clay to make a ceramic jug.

- For James Cameron, students might photograph a group posed to look like a family, adding some symbolic or significant details and landscape background to make a similar composition, or draw or paint their own landscape or portrait painting.
- For Johann Lotz, have students carve a piece of soap in low relief with sculpture tools to look like the fancy wood carving on the exterior of the Lotz House in Franklin.
- For Richard Poyner, students may use popsicle sticks to make a reproduction chair or create a three-dimensional model of a chair by drawing it flat on paper, then cutting out and glueing to cardboard so it will stand up.

6. At the end, write a chart on the board to discuss things each story has in common as well as differences in each. The point here is to distinguish that although their lives were very different, and they made different decisions, they all “walked a fine line” during the war and no matter what side they were on, the war had a monumental effect on all who lived through it.

7. While having a group discussion about each person, be sure to demonstrate the artistry and craftsmanship of each individual.

- Christopher Haun - <http://www.civilwarshades.org/jug-2/>
- James Cameron - <http://www.civilwarshades.org/colonel-and-mrs-james-a-whiteside/>
- Richard Poyner - <http://www.civilwarshades.org/poyner-armless-sewing-rocker/>
- Johann Albert Lotz - <http://www.civilwarshades.org/lotz-house/>

8. Conclude with a discussion on the multiple perspectives of these men. They were all very different, led different lives, but the war had similar effects on each. Discuss those affects. Were any students surprised by what they learned?

#### **ASSESSMENT:**

Use the “Profile of War” to evaluate student understanding. Then use informal assessment during discussion to evaluate students’ grasp of the how individual decision-making and the war affected them during the Civil War.

#### **EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:**

Research your artists. Write to the author of the article you read and ask them questions. Learn more about the type of artwork your artist created. In an art class try using the medium that your artist (or all four artists) used.

Take a field trip to see the works by the four artists. All of these artifacts can be seen in museums. One can visit Johann Lotz’s house, which is now a museum, in Franklin, TN. The chair made by Richard Poyner is located across the street, at the Carter House, which is also a museum. Christopher Haun’s pottery can be found in the permanent collections of the Museum of East Tennessee History in Knoxville and the Tennessee State Museum in Nashville. James Cameron’s monumental portrait of the Whiteside family on Lookout Mountain is in the collection of the Hunter Museum of American Art in Chattanooga.

