

INTRODUCTION

This unit focuses on the Civil War. The session activities are designed to show how different people — common soldiers and civilians, men and women, blacks and whites — experienced and contributed to this volatile era in American history.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this session, teachers will

- explore the idea of “historical contingency” to understand what factors affected the outcome of the Civil War;
- examine the conditions under which soldiers lived and fought; and
- learn about individuals and groups who found new opportunities during the Civil War.

Before You Begin

Before the day of the *A Nation Divided* session, familiarize yourself with the reading materials assigned to the participating teachers. You should also review this facilitator's guide. Be sure to prepare the correct number of overheads, handouts, maps, charts, and illustrations needed for each activity. Each teacher should read the text materials for Unit 9 before attending the workshop (estimated reading time: two hours). Teachers should also complete the Web interactive *Evaluating Evidence*, which will guide them through the process of evaluating various sources to develop and support a thesis. Activities during the session will draw heavily on the content in the text materials, the interactive, as well as the video. Teachers should bring the unit text materials to the workshop session.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- This *America's History in the Making* facilitator's guide
- Text materials for Unit 9: *A Nation Divided*
- VHS tape and VCR, DVD and DVD player, or access to streaming video of *America's History in the Making* video for Unit 9: *A Nation Divided* available at www.learner.org
- Overhead projector
- Multiple copies of handouts (in the Appendix of this guide)
- Pens and paper for participating teachers and facilitator
- Chalkboard, blank transparencies, or overhead for reporting out

OVERHEAD AND HANDOUT INSTRUCTIONS

1. Using Appendix A, “Themes for *A Nation Divided*,” create an overhead transparency.
2. Using Appendix B, “Definition of Historical Contingency,” create an overhead transparency.
3. Using Appendix C, “Map of the 1860 Presidential Election,” create an overhead transparency; also make enough copies of the map for learners to work in pairs.
4. Using Appendix D, “Table of the 1860 Presidential Election,” make enough copies for learners to work in pairs.
5. Using Appendix E, “Definitions of Military, Political, and Social Histories,” create an overhead transparency.
6. Using Appendix F, “Directions for Creating a Civil War Commemoration,” make one handout for each participant.

Facilitator’s Note: You may want to prepare overheads of the reflection questions for teachers to reference during the activities.

LEADING THE SESSION

As participating teachers arrive, have an overhead set up that lists the main themes of the unit for teachers to review (Appendix A).

After you have completed any housekeeping announcements, ask one of the teachers to read the themes aloud. Explain that they will expand their understanding of these three themes through activities and video segments that build on the reading they did prior to the workshop session.

Warm-up and Activity 1 (40 minutes)

This activity serves as an icebreaker for the group, while introducing the idea of historical contingency as it is used to understand this historical period. Teachers will analyze data from a map and a graph to discuss some of the political factors leading to the Civil War. Begin by putting the “Definition of Historical Contingency” (Appendix B) transparency on the overhead projector.

Warm-up Brainstorming (15 minutes)

Whenever we study the past, it may seem that certain events and outcomes were inevitable, because those are the events and outcomes that we know occurred. Historians, however, consider the idea of “historical contingency” to focus on the turning points that led to particular events and outcomes — and to understand what factors might have caused different events or outcomes to occur.

Was the Civil War itself inevitable, or could the conflict have been avoided? Drawing on any previous knowledge of this era — as well as the reading for this unit and the reading, videos, and activities for the previous units — teachers should begin by brainstorming two lists. The first list will include factors that suggest the Civil War was inevitable. The second list will include factors that suggest the conflict could have been avoided.

As teachers share the items on their lists, remind them that there is no way to determine for certain whether, or when, the war became inevitable. The goal of the exercise is not to find the right answer; it is to understand how the outbreak of war was contingent on many different factors.

Activity 1

After the warm-up, put the “Map of the 1860 Presidential Election” (Appendix C) transparency on the overhead projector. Divide the group into pairs and distribute one copy of the map to each pair.

Part 1 (10 minutes)

Ask each pair of teachers to make a list of the types of data included in the map. Once they have made as complete a list as possible, have each pair list what conclusions about the election of 1860 are supported by the data. What conclusions cannot be drawn from the map — and what other data would be needed to draw those conclusions?

Part 2 (10 minutes)

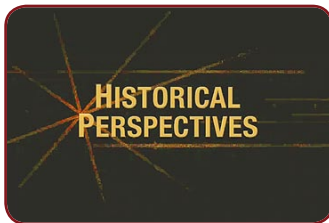
Distribute the “Table of the 1860 Presidential Election” (Appendix D) handout to the teachers. Ask them what new data the table includes. Have the group as a whole discuss whether the information provided in the table supports or challenges the conclusions they reached based on the data from the map. What new conclusions would they draw from comparing the map and the table — and what additional data would they expect or need to know about the election?

Part 3 (5 minutes)

Allow teachers to share their responses to the following reflection question with the group.

Reflection Question

How should the information about the 1860 election — particularly the amount of support for Abraham Lincoln — shape your understanding of this historical period?



Watch Video Segment 1:
Historical Perspectives (approximately 10 minutes)

Activity 2 (45 minutes)

Teachers should rely on material from the video and the readings to complete this activity. They should be encouraged to refer to the text materials as a resource.

Activity Overview

This activity focuses on the different approaches historians can take to learn about the past. It helps teachers understand how the same event or period can be examined in different ways.

Part 1 (5 minutes)

Ask teachers to compare what aspects of the Civil War they learned about when they were students with the aspects of the Civil War presented in this workshop so far (the reading for this unit and in the “Historical Perspectives” section of the video). Do the approaches seem similar or different?

Part 2 (5 minutes)

Put the “Definitions of Military, Political, and Social Histories” (Appendix E) transparency on the overhead projector.

Ask teachers to identify which of these approaches have been used in the classes they have taken or taught on the Civil War, and which approaches have been used in the reading, video, and opening activity for this workshop.

Part 3 (25 minutes)

Have the teachers review the following sources from the reading:

- Excerpt from the Diary of Elisha Hunt Rhodes
- Letters from Confederate Soldiers
- Civil War Battlefield Photograph

Divide the teachers into two groups. Ask the first group to consider the sources in terms of military history. This group should make a list of what information about the military aspects of the Civil War can be learned from these sources. Ask the second group to consider the sources in terms of social history. This group should make a list of what information about the social experience of common soldiers (and possibly civilians) can be learned from the sources. Each group may want to brainstorm additional sources they could consult to learn more about their topic.

Part 4 (10 minutes)

Have the two groups share their findings with each other. Use the chalkboard, whiteboard, or blank transparencies to document overlaps and differences in the information each group identified as important to their approach. (You may want to create a Venn diagram or other graphic organizer to represent the overlaps and differences.) Conclude the activity by asking teachers to consider the following reflection questions.

Reflection Questions

1. What can we learn from military history?
2. What can we learn from social history?
3. What can we learn from political history? (You might consider the earlier activity on the 1860 election as an example.)
4. How can we combine military, social, and political histories to help students best understand the Civil War?



Watch Video Segment 2:
Faces of America (approximately 10 minutes)

Activity 3 *(25 minutes)*

Activity Overview

The goal of this activity is to explore how commemorating the achievements of specific individuals can deepen our understanding of American history.

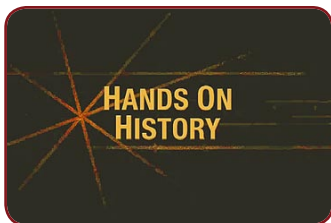
Part 1 *(5 minutes)*

Ask each teacher to write short descriptions of the achievements of Phoebe Yates Pember and William Carney. Teachers should consider what these achievements reveal about the Civil War in American history.

Part 2 *(20 minutes)*

Distribute the “Directions for Creating a Civil War Commemoration” (Appendix F) handout to the teachers. Read the directions aloud before asking them to plan their commemoration:

Phoebe Yates Pember and William Carney supported opposite sides in the Civil War, yet they both challenged stereotypes of the era to take on new challenges during the conflict. For this activity, please plan a half-day Civil War commemoration that focuses on the achievements of Pember, Carney, and others who took on new roles during this era. How can your commemoration illustrate the earlier constraints on white women and African Americans, while celebrating the important contributions of Americans who defied those constraints?



Watch Video Segment 3: Hands on History

(approximately 5 minutes to the end of the tape)

Activity 4 (10 minutes)

Activity Overview

This activity serves as a conclusion to this session of the workshop. It will provide you with an opportunity to reflect on what you have learned.

Part 1 (5 minutes)

Have the teachers make a list of any depictions of the Civil War in popular culture they think their students may know. (They should think about film, television, music, novels, and other sources.) Ask them to discuss how these representations shape students' understandings of history. Do popular culture representations give us accurate or inaccurate ideas about the Civil War? Do they increase or decrease our interest in studying historical sources and textbook accounts?

Part 2 (5 minutes)

Conclude the activity by asking teachers to consider the following reflection questions.

Reflection Questions

1. How can you use a popular culture depiction of the Civil War to introduce students to the idea of historical contingency?
2. How can you use a popular culture depiction of the Civil War to help students understand and differentiate military history, social history, and political history?
3. How can you use a historically inaccurate popular culture depiction of the Civil War to give students a historically accurate understanding of the Civil War?

APPENDICES – *A Nation Divided*

- A: “Themes for *A Nation Divided*”
overhead transparency
- B: “Definition of Historical Contingency”
overhead transparency
- C: “Map of the 1860 Presidential Election”
overhead transparency, plus copies of map for working in pairs
- D: “Table of the 1860 Presidential Election”
copies of map for working in pairs
- E: “Definitions of Military, Political, and Social Histories”
overhead transparency
- F: “Directions for Creating a Civil War Commemoration”
one handout for each participant

Appendix A: Themes for *A Nation Divided*

THEME 1

Americans today view the Civil War through the lens of the Union's ultimate defeat of the Confederacy. However, for much of the war, the Union victory was far from certain.

THEME 2

Rampant illness, shortages of supplies, poor camp conditions, and very high casualty rates quickly overshadowed the noble ideas that soldiers brought to the war.

THEME 3

Extremes of deprivation and opportunity brought on by the war transformed civilian life. While causing immense personal and financial losses to many Americans, the prolonged conflict simultaneously allowed white women and African Americans to take on new roles in both the North and the South.

Appendix B: Definition of Historical Contingency

Historical contingency:

The recognition that the outcome of historical events was not inevitable or predetermined.

Appendix C: Map of the 1860 Presidential Election



Item 3659

Gary B. Nash and others, eds. *The American People: Creating a new Nation and a Society*, 6th ed. (New York: Pearson Education, 2004), 501.

Appendix D: Table of the 1860 Presidential Election

Candidate	Political Party	Popular Vote	Electoral Vote
Abraham Lincoln	Republican	1,865,593	180
Stephen A. Douglas	Democratic	1,382,713	12
John C. Breckinridge	Democratic	848,356	72
John Bell	Constitutional Union	592,906	39

Peter H. Wood and others, eds. "The Election of 1860" in *Created Equal: A Social and Political History of the United States* (New York: Pearson Education, 2003), 457, Table 13.5.

Appendix E: Definitions of Military, Political, and Social Histories

Military History:

This approach focuses on battles, strategies, weaponry, and similar aspects of military conflicts.

Political History:

This approach focuses on the role of political leadership in shaping history.

Social History:

This approach focuses on how “common people” experienced events and eras in history.

Appendix F: Directions for Creating a Civil War Commemoration

Phoebe Yates Pember and William Carney supported opposite sides in the Civil War, yet they both challenged stereotypes of the era to take on new challenges during the conflict. For this activity, please plan a half-day Civil War commemoration that focuses on the achievements of Pember, Carney, and others who took on new roles during this era. How can your commemoration illustrate the earlier constraints on white women and African Americans, while celebrating the important contributions of Americans who defied those constraints?



NOTES
