



Session 2: Discovering the Civil War in a Local Cemetery

Focusing Question: *Who in our town served in the Civil War?*

Overview: In this lesson students visit the cemetery to gather information about Civil War soldiers. Students use data collection forms to transcribe information. They also photograph or draw the stones. Finally, the class creates a map of the cemetery.

Topical Understandings:

- People in our community contributed to the Civil War.
- Historical evidence can be found on gravestones and in cemeteries.

Materials:

- clipboards
- pencils
- soldier names assigned to students on slips of paper
- data collection forms
- construction paper (for drawing)
- drawing pencils or other materials
- digital camera

Length: 1.5 to 2 hours

Procedures:

- A. Upon entering the cemetery, establish the cemetery as an outdoor classroom.
 - Elicit from the students appropriate conduct or behavior.
- B. As a class, find and decode one Civil War era stone (and nearby family stones) and review clues to finding and reading stones:

Clues to Civil War stones include:

Abbreviations on the stone:

CO = company

REG = regiment

NH VOL = New Hampshire Volunteer

VT VOL = Vermont Volunteer

Text on the stone:

Mentioning of Civil War sites

Rank

Dates that indicate the possibility of service

(A soldier born between 1810 and 1845 would be somewhere between 50 and 16 at the start of the war)

Markers:

Flags placed at stones

GAR markers = "Grand Army of the Republic"

Government issued gravestones

Make clear that students will be responsible for three things:

1. Finding their soldier's stone
2. Gathering data from the stone (and perhaps nearby stones)
3. Creating an image for the stone (sketch, photo, rubbing)

C. Hand out soldier names on slips of paper to pairs of students. Working in pairs or small groups, students find their stone, collect data, and create images.

- If you intend to do rubbings you must request permission from local authorities. Sketching the stone is always preferable. Make sure students do not lean on stones.
- A good resource for rubbing paper can be found here:

<http://www.granitecitytool.com/search/node/rubbing%20paper>

D. If your final product is a Quest, and you don't have the time to make two trips to the cemetery, take the time to create a rough map of the cemetery and have students create a logical order of directions from the parking area to each stone. See Session 4 for directions.

- E. You might close with a reflection/connection circle, and for a literary connection, recite Walt Whitman's poem "A March in the Ranks Hard-Prest."

A March in the Ranks Hard-Prest, and the Road Unknown

BY WALT WHITMAN

A march in the ranks hard-prest, and the road unknown,
A route through a heavy wood with muffled steps in the darkness,
Our army foil'd with loss severe, and the sullen remnant retreating,
Till after midnight glimmer upon us the lights of a dim-lighted building,
We come to an open space in the woods, and halt by the dim-lighted building,
'Tis a large old church at the crossing roads, now an impromptu hospital
Entering but for a minute I see a sight beyond all the pictures and poems ever
made,
Shadows of deepest, deepest black, just lit by moving candles and lamps,
And by one great pitchy torch stationary with wild red flame and clouds of
smoke,
By these, crowds, groups of forms vaguely I see on the floor, some in the pews
laid down,
At my feet more distinctly a soldier, a mere lad, in danger of bleeding to death,
(he is shot in the abdomen,)
I stanch the blood temporarily, (the youngster's face is white as a lily,)
Then before I depart I sweep my eyes o'er the scene fain to absorb it all,
Faces, varieties, postures beyond description, most in obscurity, some of them
dead,
Surgeons operating, attendants holding lights, the smell of ether, the odor of
blood,
The crowd, O the crowd of the bloody forms, the yard outside also fill'd,
Some on the bare ground, some on planks or stretchers, some in the death-
spasm sweating,
An occasional scream or cry, the doctor's shouted orders or calls,
The glisten of the little steel instruments catching the glint of the torches,
These I resume as I chant, I see again the forms, I smell the odor,
Then hear outside the orders given, Fall in, my men, fall in;
But first I bend to the dying lad, his eyes open, a half-smile gives he me,
Then the eyes close, calmly close, and I speed forth to the darkness,
Resuming, marching, ever in darkness marching, on in the ranks,
The unknown road still marching.

CIVIL WAR VETERAN DATA COLLECTION-BACK

Copy the inscription or epitaph (the words on the stone):

Does this stone have artistic features? If so, please describe:

Do you think this soldier died in battle? Yes No Can't tell

Why or why not? _____

If so, where do you think they died? _____

List any family members nearby: