

Making History Come Alive
Caught in the Middle

A lesson from Wilson's Creek



TEACHER'S PACKET

4th – 5th Grade Level Curricula Guide

In order to make your visit to Wilson's Creek National Battlefield most beneficial to your students, you should consider addressing the following:

Provide your students with sufficient background to understand what they are observing.

Students should have knowledge of:

- **basic vocabulary words** that are necessary for understanding the concepts. See underlined words throughout this lesson (descriptions in appendix);
- **issues of slavery** in the new territories and different perspective on **states' rights**;
- **Missouri's** status as a **divided state**; citizens might be Unionist, secessionist, or neutral;
- **individuals' reasons** for joining companies of volunteers in both the North or the South: recent-immigrants' loyalties (i.e. Germans), community expectations and values, and the role of state militias;
- **a basic timeline** of events that lead to the Civil War and the battle at Wilson's Creek

Require students to be good observers and **guide their observations** with helpful information and questions.

- You can use *one* of these approaches or combine elements from *more than one* approach to guide your students' observations.
 1. Use *themes* to guide observations,
 2. Use *patterns* to guide observations, or
 3. Use *issue-centered* activities to guide observations

Encourage recognition of the unique experience the students have to study a primary source.

A preserved battlefield is one of the most primary of all sources. You are standing on the sacred ground where these historic events actually took place! Using what you've learned, allow yourself to use your imagination to experience the events and meet the people that, through their courage and sacrifice, made history here.

This is your opportunity to *be there*—caught in the middle.

1. *Guide* students' observations using a *theme*. (Samples using the Five Themes of Geography, NGS)

- **Regions:** there are common features (both physical and cultural) that set areas apart.
 - *Fact:* Regional tensions arising from diverse beliefs on the issue of slavery resulted in conflict.
 - *Example:* Kansas-Missouri border wars/neighbor-against-neighbor in Missouri
 - *Background:* The Rays were southerners by birth. Georgia-born Roxanna Steele Ray was given two slaves for a wedding present—Rhoda and Wiley were hers for life. Tennessee native John Ray was assumed to be a Unionist, even holding the *federal* job of postmaster for the community of Wilson's Creek. Some of their neighbors had come from *other* regions.
 - *Discussion questions:* What are some of the cultural beliefs that might set apart the people who emigrated from different regions when they became neighbors in Missouri? How could this result in conflict?

- **Human-Environment Interactions:** how the surroundings in which we live influence people and are influenced by people
 - *Fact:* The community of Wilson's Creek with its resources (Wire Road for transportation, access to water from Wilson's Creek, high ground overlooking cleared, flat land, and good foraging) made this an attractive spot for the armies.
 - *Example:* Union route to Springfield and Confederate encampments along Wilson's Creek
 - *Discussion questions:*
 - Compare the benefits of the resources of the area from the perspective of the Rays, (settlers) and the generals, like Lyon and McCulloch (battle strategists).
 - How might the surroundings have influenced the Battle of Wilson's Creek? (i.e. Lyon's troops occupied the high ground, Bloody Hill, as a tactical advantage so the Rebels were forced to attack uphill with the cannons and lines of soldiers firing down upon them)

- **Location:** finding exact or relative location of a place
 - *Fact:* Wilson's Creek is located 10 miles southwest of Springfield, a journey of several hours by foot. (Travel speed by foot is approximately 3 miles per hour.)
 - *Example:* Length of Lyon's march to the battle site
 - *Discussion questions:*
 - You are General Lyon. How did the distance between Springfield and Wilson's Creek influence your attack plans? (early departure from Springfield for troop's advantageous placement overlooking Confederate encampment)
 - You are General McCulloch. How did Springfield's weather influence your plans? (i.e. Rebels did not attack because of a storm)

- **Movement:** how people, goods, and ideas are moved around the world
 - *Fact:* The path Native Americans had traveled from ancient times later became the Wire Road and was used by European pioneers, settlers, stagecoaches, telegraph lines, and armies.
 - *Example:* The Wire Road of Civil War times stretched primarily along the hilltops from the end of the train tracks at Rolla to Fort Smith, AR.
 - *Discussion questions:* The path that became the Wire Road is mostly along the hilltops wherever possible.
 - Why would a route along hilltops be helpful if you were a traveling army? (i.e. fewer fords, overview)
 - How did the Wire Road contribute to the implementation of the technologies of the day, such as wagons, stagecoaches, and the telegraph? (i.e. roads permit land travel; cleared path for stringing of lines)

- **Place:** comparing the natural and human-made features of different areas.
 - *Fact:* Missouri was a slave state. The rich land along the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers had the largest concentration of slaves. These slaves helped make it a prosperous agricultural region.
 - *Example:* Southwest Missouri's Ozark region with its hilly, rocky land was not conducive to large agricultural cultivation and did not support a large slave population.
 - *Discussion questions:* Use your knowledge of our area of the Ozarks during Civil War times to make a hypothesis.
 - Do you think the majority of people of southwest Missouri would be strong supporters of secession from the Union to protect slavery? Why or why not? (i.e. Slavery might be supported for other reasons, but economic considerations would likely not be among them.)

2. *Guide* Student's observations to detect *patterns*.

Samples using some patterns of Social Studies

- **Great individuals** arise within a society to share their beliefs and talents.
 - *Fact:* Politically connected (had connections to the Lincoln White House) aggressive, passionate Nathaniel Lyon rose quickly through the ranks to become a leader in the midst of his Missouri campaign.
 - *Example:* Lyon was promoted from the rank of captain to brigadier general, passing over the ranks of major and colonel.
 - *Discussion questions:* What are some of the events where Lyon displayed his beliefs and talents? How did these influence his impact in the Civil War?

- **Character traits** of courage, honesty, humility, wisdom, or compassion are often embodied in these great individuals.
 - *Fact:* It can be said that Nathaniel Lyon was courageous and bold but lacked compassion and humility.
 - *Example:* While Lyon's decisive actions greatly contributed to Missouri remaining within the Union, he said he'd see every man, woman, and child in the state dead rather than allow the state of Missouri to dictate to the federal government (and secede?)
 - *Discussion question:* You be the judge. General Lyon stands before you. Would you judge him to be a hero or a villain? Explain.

- Ideas expressed in the **writings/oral traditions** of the times can have a major impact upon political and social events.
 - *Fact:* *Frank Leslie's Illustrated*, a widely distributed New York newspaper, reported the Battle of Wilson's Creek and the death of General Lyon as front-page news. (Read the newspaper in the display case in the Ray house.)
 - *Example:* The language of the article attempts to elevate General Lyon to the status of a martyr for the Union cause and a national hero. (This could be used as an opportunity to demonstrate bias in historical sources.)
 - *Discussion questions:*
 - What were the facts of the article? What were the opinions?
 - The war was going badly for the Union with losses in the first two major battles, Bull Run and Wilson's Creek. What was the purpose of this article from this pro-Unionist paper?

- Migrations, great movements of people, and political events often have **common causes**.
 - *Fact:* Settlers came for a new start on the frontier with its greater access to cheap land and opportunity to prosper economically, but newer settlements also held elements of uncertainty and hardships.
 - *Example:* The Rays, John and Roxanna, had emigrated from the south; John had come from Tennessee and Roxanna from Georgia.
 - *Discussion questions:*
 - Why would land be cheaper in the Ozark region? (i.e. more land was available; unimproved land; poorer quality of land for farming ; fewer goods and services available)
 - What would the economic cost for John and Roxanna Ray and their neighbors have been after the Battle of Wilson's Creek? (You might want to emphasize the effects of war on civilians caught in the path of war such as caring for wounded, loss of crops and livestock, and destruction of property.)
 - Would you stay or leave the area?

- **Technological developments** often have unanticipated effects on society.
 - *Fact:* Rifle technology made it possible for weapons (both guns and canons) to shoot farther and more accurately.
 - *Example:* During the Civil War, some soldiers carried rifles supplied to them by their army while others carried weapons from home, muskets or shotguns (barrels weren't rifled and ammunition was not supplied).
 - *Discussion questions:*
 - What impact could the new technology of rifling gun barrels have on a battle?
 - What other problems might using different weapons have on a soldier's effectiveness in battle? (i.e. range, ammunition supply, weight of weapon, speed of reloading)
 - Which *army*, the Union or the Confederate, do you conclude might have had better weapons available? Support your conclusion. (**Union**=more money/organization for supplies from the longer-established government; *regular* army forces were equipped with US issued weapons **Confederates**= less money/organization for supplies from a government established for less than a year; *US army-issued weapons* would be supplied to the Confederates mostly from securing them from US arsenals.)

3. *Guide* students' observations with an *issue-centered* activity

This activity using primary sources can be used *before* the visit to the battlefield to motivate and build background, or it can be used *after* the visit to help the students reflect on and clarify what they have experienced.

The debate over the power of government is central to the understanding of the American political system from its very beginning. The two attached sources, Patrick Henry's "Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death" speech and Abraham Lincoln's first Inaugural Address, take opposing views of the issue of challenging the authority of the government to the point of dissolving the attachment. The one argues to sever the ties (revolution) while the other makes the case for turning away from a split (secession) and maintaining the union between them.

Procedure

Give copies of the documents to the students. Have teams of students read (or have the teacher read) the two documents. Then have them answer the following questions for each speech. Use a graphic organizer if you wish.

- Compare the settings, the time and place.
- Who were the opposing groups of the times?
- What are the points of disagreement?
- Why was this an important public issue?
- What were the problems that required a solution?

WARNING Most students like to generalize a complex issue and see choices as black and white. It is important to help them recognize this problem, so before answering the final question, remind the students of two important factors:

- Your question must be answered in the light of the standards, values, and attitudes of *their* time rather than those of the present.
- Remember—issues and events are the products of many causes, not a simple single cause-effect relationship.

Finally, pose this question.

- If you were a resident of the state of Missouri on August 10, 1861, which side, if either, would you have been fighting for?
Based on the arguments presented in the speeches, explain your choice.

Basic Vocabulary

Descriptions

Kansas-Missouri Border War—

Destructive raids across state borders that took place *before* the Civil War began between people who held opposing view on slavery/state's rights.

Cultural beliefs—

Those ideas instilled in people by the norms of the surroundings in which they were born.

Foraging—

The habit of armies in which they obtain supplies and food from nature or from the belongings of the people of the community.

Perspective—

An individual's point of view.

Classroom Resources

*Battle in the Civil War,
Generalship and Tactics in America 1861-65*

By Paddy Griffith

Available at WCNB bookstore

The Civil War for Kids, A history with activities

By Janis Herbert \$14.95

The Fighting Men of the Civil War

By William C Davis

Available at WCNB bookstore

There are many good books available at all reading levels on the Civil War.

Teacher Resources

Read Alouds and Primary Sources for the United States
Scott Foresman Publication through the Pearson catalog

Wilson's Creek

The second Battle of the Civil War and the Men Who Fought It

By William Garrett Piston and Richard W. Hatcher III

Available at WCNB bookstore

Wilson's Creek National Battlefield Activity Book

Compiled by Dick Ruehrwein

Available at WCNB bookstore \$5.95

Reference used for discussion questions on issue-centered activity

Handbook on Teaching Social Issues

NCSS bulletin 92

Article #15 "Teaching issues-centered History"

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