

# Sounds of Antietam

Antietam National Battlefield  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



<b>Time:</b>	30 Minutes (On-site)
<b>Suggested Age:</b>	4th-6th Grade
<b>Group Size:</b>	20-50 Students
<b>Subjects:</b>	Social Studies, Language Arts, & Drama
<b>Skills:</b>	Listening
<b>Method:</b>	Students are given “sound” cards, and make those sounds when cued by the teacher while he/she reads a narrative. This activity is useful as a previsit or follow-up activity. It can also be used as a follow-up to the video Antietam Visit.
<b>Objectives:</b>	At the end of the activity, the students will be able to: 1) Visualize the events that occurred during many Civil War battles by adding sound effects to a narrative; 2) Prepare a diary entry or a letter home to describe what was “heard” during the battle.
<b>Materials:</b>	Provided by Teacher – Narrative and Surgeon’s letter home (both included in this guide). Provided by the Park – Set of laminated sound cards.
<b>Background:</b>	The narrative used in this lesson plan was written based on the historical accounts of the Battle of Antietam.

## Suggested Procedure: Pre-Visit Activities

- Introduce the Battle of Antietam by showing the video *Antietam Visit* and referring to the background information included in this guide.

## On-Site Activities

- Mix and hand out all the sound cards – some students may have more than one. (Note: If you are doing this activity in your classroom as a pre-visit or follow-up activity, you will need to use the sound list included in this lesson plan to make your own sound cards.)
- Explain to the students that you are going to read a narrative. When students hear you read the words on their cards, they should produce those sounds. Encourage the students to be imaginative in making the sounds. It is important, however, to instruct students not to get too carried away with this activity.
- Read the narrative. Words in bold print in the narrative correspond with sounds indicated on each of the sound cards.
- Allow ample time for students to make and add sounds.
- During the description of the battle, the students’ sounds should be continued and gradually built to a crescendo as the battle intensifies. There are notes regarding the sounds in the narrative.
- Pause at the end of the narrative, and then read the surgeons letter.
- At the conclusion of the letter, remain quiet until the students respond.

---

## Suggested Procedure Continued:

- For further impact, you can repeat the reading of the narrative.

### Follow Up Activity

- Ask the students to imagine that they have witnessed the Battle of Antietam. Have them write letters or journal entries describing the day before the battle, the battle itself, or the day after the battle.

### Suggested Assessment Tool

- Written letters or journal entries

### Sounds Cards:

Surgeons sawed off limbs-2	Shovels to bury the dead-2
Soldiers screamed in pain-2	Buglers blew the commands-2
Soldiers moaned for water-2	Horses shrieked-2
Soldiers called for friends-2	Rain started falling-2
Soldiers marching-2	Officers ordered the soldiers-2
Cannon fire-2	Rifle fire-3 or more
Civilians returned to their homes-2	Crickets chirping-2
Civilians began leaving their homes-1	Soldiers were eating apples-2
Horses' hooves-2	Tree frogs peeping-1
Rolling wagons-2	Owl hooting-1
Doctors shouted for bandages-2	Antietam Creek flowing-1
Fog settled-1	50 Cards Total
Mumma house ablaze-2	
Cannon balls whistled-1	
Drummers beat their drums-2	
Soldiers began charging and yelling-2	
Soldiers warned the civilians-1	

*(Note: The number after the sound card indicates the number of cards to make for that particular sound).*

---

## Sounds of Antietam Narration

### *Prelude – No sounds*

I am going to describe to you what happened before, during, and after the Battle of Antietam. You are going to take part in an interpretation of the sounds of Antietam. When you hear me read the words you see on your sound cards, please make the sounds that go along with the description.

There were a lot of different sounds before, during and after the battle. You are here at the Dunker Church, which was in the center of the battle. You, as a group, are going to re-create the sounds that would have been heard here September 16 and 17, 1862. You are a small number compared to the actual 100,000 people who found themselves here for the bloodiest single day in American history.

*Start sounds slowly and softly.*

The armies began to arrive in Sharpsburg. The dusty roads of Sharpsburg were filled with **soldiers marching** from many directions. **Rolling wagons**

---

## Sounds of Antietam Narration

laden with ammunition and supplies passed by the houses.

The sound of **horses' hooves** echoed off the storefronts. As the people of Sharpsburg stared out in wonder, some of the **soldiers warned the civilians** that there would soon be a terrible battle. The **civilians began leaving their homes**. The generals put their armies in position as night fell. Having had little food on their long march, some of the **soldiers were eating apples** they found in nearby orchards. Other soldiers listened to the **Antietam Creek flowing** under the lower bridge, to the ever-present **crickets chirping**, and to the **tree frogs peeping**. Soldiers' thoughts turned to home and loved ones, as they anticipated the battle to come. **Rain started falling** in the middle of the night. After the rain stopped, a **thick fog settled** over the field. All was silent except for a single **owl hooting**.

*Pause briefly. The sounds of battle should build to a crescendo. Students should keep repeating their sounds throughout the battle.*

As a gray light illuminated the foggy dawn, **officers ordered the soldiers into position. Drummers beat their drums** to keep the men in step while **buglers blew commands**. Fearful of a surprise attack, Confederates set the **Mumma farm ablaze. Cannon fire echoed** from the hillsides. Troops scattered as **cannonballs whistled** overhead. **Soldiers began charging and yelling. Rifle fire** erupted from all directions. **Soldiers screamed in pain. Horses shrieked** in pain. The fighting was over, but the misery was not.

*Battle sounds should now stop. Pause here for 10-15 seconds. Students should continue repeating the next group of sounds so that the sounds overlap, conveying the chaos of the aftermath of battle.*

Thousands of bodies littered the fields as wounded **soldiers moaned for water** and anxious **soldiers called for friends. Doctors shouted for bandages** as **surgeons sawed off limbs** to save lives. Meanwhile, weary soldiers used **shovels to bury the dead. Civilians returned to their homes**. The sounds of **rolling wagons** and **horses' hooves** accompanied the **civilians returning to their homes**.

*Read the following passage slowly and softly.*

Night had come again to find a very different landscape all in red. But some things remained the same – the **Antietam Creek flowing** under the lower bridge, the ever-present **crickets chirping**, the **tree frogs peeping**. Once again, a **thick fog settled** over the fields. At last, all that could be heard was a single **owl hooting**.

*Pause here, then read the surgeon's letter.*

---

Battlefield of Sharpsburgh Hospital Sept. 22, 1862

My Dear Wife,

Day before yesterday I dressed the wounds of 64 different men – some having two or three each. Yesterday I was at work from daylight till dark – today I am completely exhausted – but shall soon be able to go at it again.

The days after the battle are a thousand times worse than the day of the battle – and the physical pain is not the greatest pain suffered. How awful it is – you have nor can have until you see it any idea of affairs after a battle. The dead appear sickening but they suffer no pain. But the poor wounded mutilated soldiers that yet have life and sensation make a most horrid picture. I pray God may stop such infernal work – though perhaps he has sent it upon us for our sins. Great indeed must have been our sins if such is our punishment.

Our Reg. started this morning for Harpers Ferry –14 miles. I am detailed with others to remain here until the wounded are removed - then join the Reg. with my nurses. I expect there will be another great fight at Harpers Ferry.

Carrie I dreamed of home night before last. I love to dream of home it seems so much like really being there. I dreamed that I was passing Hibbards house and saw you and Lud. in the window. After then I saw you in some place I cannot really know where – you kissed me and told me you love me – though you did not the first time you saw me. Was not that quite a soldier's dream? That night I had been away to a hospital to see some wounded men - returned late. I fastened my horse to a peach tree – fed him with wheat and hay from a barn nearby – I slept and dreamed of my loved ones away in N.H.

Write soon as you can. Tell me all you can about my business affairs and prospects for the future in Bath. Will Dr. Boynton be likely to get a strong hold there? One thing for sure Cad, I shall return to Bath – if I live – and spend my days there. I feel so in that way now. Give me all news you can. Tell Parker and John and the girls to write although I can not answer them all. Tell Parker I will answer his as soon as I can.

In this letter I send you a bit of gold lace such as the rebel officers have. This I cut from a rebel officers coat on the battlefield. He was a Lieut.

I have made the acquaintances of two rebel officers – prisoners in our hands. One is a physician – both are masons – both very intelligent, gentlemanly men. Each is wounded in the leg. They are great favorites with our officers. One of them was brought off the field in hottest of the fight by our 5th N.H. officers – he giving them evidence of his being a mason.

Now do write soon. Kisses to you Clint and Kate. Love to all.

Yours as ever,

WC

*(Letter written by Surgeon William Childs)*

*When the teacher finishes the surgeon's letter, s/he should alert the students that there will be a two-minute period of silence for reflection. The teacher should remain silent and await a response from the students.*