



**Unit Title:** The Civil War

**Topic:** Deaf Slaves, Soldiers and Civilians

**Name Of Lesson:** “Can You Hear Me?”- Deafness among Civil War Slaves, Soldiers and Civilians

**Suggested Time:** 1-3 class periods (each activity requires one class period to complete)

**Standard:**

SS5H1 The student will explain the causes, major events, and consequences of the Civil War.

**EQ (Essential Question):** How do I describe and understand the events that took place in the lives of deaf people during the Civil War period?

**Objectives:**

TLW (the learner will) understand the events that took place in the lives of deaf people during the Civil War period

TLW use a graphic organizer to compare and contrast finger spelling with sign language

**Brief Description:** This lesson will allow students to understand that people with disabilities do not allow the disability to hinder their lives. In the past, many doors were closed to people with disabilities because the world did not accommodate their disability.

**Assessment:** Informal assessment (Oral questioning and Teacher Observation)

**Materials:** The story entitled Sign Language Saves A Life In The Civil War ; Print-outs of the “Question and Answer” game cards

## **Instructional Methods**

**Hook/Activator:**

1. Explain to the students that they are going to simulate what it is like to be deaf.
2. Have the students place their index fingers tightly in their ears to block all sound. The teacher begins to speak but does not allow any sound to come from his/her mouth (lip sync a silent conversation).
3. Choose 2 or 3 students silently ask them any of the following questions. Do not allow any sound to come from your mouth.

-Where do you live and how do you get home?

-Do you have a pet and if so, what is its name?

-Tell me what you ate for dinner last night and did you enjoy your meal?

If the student doesn't understand your question, you may try to use hand gestures to pantomime your question.

4. Have students remove their fingers from their ears and ask them the following questions:

-Was it difficult to understand what I was asking you?

-How did you feel about not being able to hear my words?

-Were we able to communicate effectively?

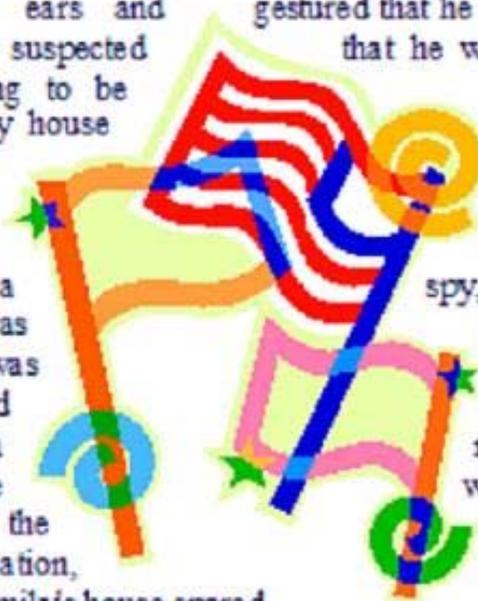
5. After you have completed the Hook/Activator activity, explain to the students that you will be reading a Civil War account about a young man who almost lost his life due to being deaf. But, in a turn of events, his life was spared because of a tool he used to overcome his disability.

# SIGN LANGUAGE SAVES A LIFE IN CIVIL WAR

Eighteen-year-old Joshua Davis was squirrel hunting one day near his parents' home near Atlanta, Georgia during the Civil War. Suddenly he found himself surrounded by Union soldiers. Davis was deaf, but he could tell that they were shouting at him.

The soldiers were members of General Sherman's army which was marching to the sea destroying everything in its path.

Davis pointed to his ears and not believe him. They suspected fool them by pretending to be pushed him to a nearby house front informed them that that he was, indeed, believe them either and to hang young Davis as a rode up. The officer was caught a spy who was rode over to the youth and you deaf?" The youth The officer asked "Where young man told him at the Spring. With that information, youth's release and the family's house spared



gestured that he was deaf, but the soldiers did that he was a spy and was trying to deaf. They shoved and where a couple standing in the youth was their son and deaf. The captors did not they were looking for a rope spy, when a mounted officer informed that they had "playing deaf" The officer fingerspelled to him: "Are responded in signs, "Yes." were you educated?" and the school for the deaf in Cave the officer ordered the

Greatly relieved at the unexpected turn of events, the family invited the officer to eat with them. During the meal, the officer and Joshua Davis conversed in sign language. The family learned that the officer had a deaf brother in Illinois who had taught him to sign.

Joshua Davis later moved to Texas, became a farmer and raised a family of seven. Five of his children were deaf, and one was hard of hearing. He lived to the age of 84, never forgetting how close he came to being hanged when he was only 18.

## **Procedure:**

### **Activity 1: Sign Language Saves A Life In The Civil War**

1. Divide students into 4 groups and give each student a copy of Sign Language Saves A Life In The Civil War . Have students silently read the story. Give each group two questions to answer. Have the groups work cooperatively to find the answers to their questions.

2. Questions for discussion:

-Even though Joshua Davis was deaf, how did he know that the Union soldiers were shouting at him?

-Why would the Union soldiers think that Joshua Davis was trying to fool them by being deaf?

-How do you think Joshua's parents felt when the Union soldiers brought Davis home and accused Joshua and his parents of lying about his deafness?

-Define "finger spelling"? How is it different from sign language? Create a graphic organizer by using a web search to compare and contrast both finger spelling and sign language. How did finger spelling spare the life of Joshua Davis?

-Joshua Davis and his family lived in Atlanta, Georgia. The Union soldiers assumed that Joshua and his family were Confederate sympathizers. If this was true, explain why his life and family home were spared?

-The Union Officer's brother was also deaf, what significance did this fact have as it related to Joshua Davis? What kind of ending would this story have if the Union Officer's brother had not been deaf?

-How did Joshua's education at the school for the deaf at Cave Spring, allow him to become a productive member of society? Can you locate Cave Spring on a Georgia map?

3. Each group should choose a spokesperson to read aloud their questions and answers. Discuss as a class.

## **Activity 2: I Have A Question, Who Has The Answer**

1. "I Have A Question, Who Has The Answer" is a matching game. (See the Deaf Slaves, Soldiers and Civilians lesson plan attachment)

Copy the attachment and cut apart the questions and answers. Give some students a question about a deaf slave, soldier or civilian during the Civil War. Give other students an answer about a deaf slave, soldier or civilian during the Civil War. Have the students with questions stand on one side of the room and the students with answers stand on the other side of the room.

2. Have students read their question or answer silently. Remind the students to listen carefully to the clues. Have the first student that holds a question cards read aloud their question. Have the students with answers cards decide which answer matches that question. Continue with the reading of questions until all answers are given. As matches are made, allow students to be eliminated and seated.

## **Activity 3: Graphic Organizer to Compare and Contrast Finger Spelling and Sign Language**

1. Allow the students to use a county approved search engine;
2. Have the students search for web information on both finger spelling and sign language;
3. Have them take notes about each and create a graphic organizer Venn diagram or Double Bubble) on paper to compare and contrast both;
4. Have students share their information.

## **Activity 4: How Stereotypes Can Hurt**

1. Define a stereotype and the types of stereotypes faced by "differently abled" people during the 19<sup>th</sup> century (please visit the sites below for more information);

<http://attitudes2disability.wordpress.com/2007/02/03/the-19th-century/>

<http://www.dsqsds.org/article/view/843/1018>

2. Have the students give different types of stereotypes they may face because of their gender, ethnicity, physical appearance (like wearing glasses, being tall) and how that makes them feel;
3. Discuss with students their attitudes toward people with a disability. Is that attitude based

on a stereotype? Ask if they know anyone with a disability; if they do, discuss how it makes them feel when people are mean to them;

4. Discuss with students the effects of stereotyping and what they would now do differently when they meet someone “different” from themselves.

### **More Discussion:**

1. *During the Civil War, deaf soldiers did not allow their disabilities to hinder their lives. Even though they had a disability, they still served their country. They had a yearning to serve! Discuss the heroism of deaf veterans.*
2. *During the Civil War, many doors were closed to disabled people because the world did not accommodate them. How is this different in today's world? Discuss the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.*

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Americans\\_with\\_Disabilities\\_Act\\_of\\_1990](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Americans_with_Disabilities_Act_of_1990)

<http://www.ada.gov/pubs/ada.htm>

3. *In the past, deaf people were called “deaf and dumb”. What does that mean? Do a web search for “deaf and dumb.” Do you think that term has positive connotations or negative? **How can you help educate others about people with disabilities?***