

Lisa Green

A More Perfect Union: The Origins and Development of the U.S. Constitution
Northshore Consortium Year 2

Rethinking the Numbers: A Review and Sample Lesson Plans for A *Republic of Suffering* by Drew Gilpin Faust

In the current United States History classroom, teachers strive to teach the factors leading to the Civil War and the impact the war had on the nation. While I spend time on emancipation, I do little with the actual war itself. Drew Giplin Faust's *This Republic of Suffering* has transformed my thinking about teaching the war. In her portrait of loss and suffering, Faust reminds the reader not only of the enormous human loss of the Civil War, but also the way in which the Civil War reshaped American identity and purpose.

When I teach the Civil War, I give students numbers of casualties and dead; however, I do little to personalize these numbers. Faust's account adds a much-needed human dimension to my lessons on statistics. Certainly the numbers do impress students. Faust explains, "The number of soldiers who died between 1861 and 1865, an estimated 620,000, is approximately equal to the total American fatalities in the Revolution, the War of 1812, the Mexican War, the Spanish-American War, World War I, World War II, and the Korean War combined" (xi). According to Faust, our modern day society's equivalent to the loss felt from the Civil War would be to lose six million people. Part of the immense suffering that existed in this time period resulted from the lack of separation between home and battlefield. The home front during the Civil War was rife with disease, shortages, and even bullets. Faust recounts, "Civil War engagements respected no rigid delineation between home and battlefield" (137). Those persons on the home front comprised many of the fatalities: "Twenty-year -old Jenny Wade of Gettysburg died from a rifle bullet that passed through her front door as she worked dough to make bread for wounded soldiers" (137). Yet the depth of suffering transcended such numbers. The families left on the home front suffered from anxiety about their loved ones. Unlike more modern wars, communication and systematic identification of dead soldiers was only in the nascent stages.

The lack of communication or knowledge about a loved one's fate plagued those persons left on the home front. Faust explains, "Anna H., 'a little girl,' wrote the commission seeking her father because her mother was 'almost crazy' with the anxiety of having heard nothing for four weeks" (109). The government did not have organizations to meet this growing anxiety. Instead, "Voluntary organizations worked to fill the void left by the failure of military and governmental officials to provide information to families" (106). Often in my teaching of the Civil War, I mention the vast numbers who die, but I never pay attention to the loss that loved ones must have felt. I incorrectly assumed that in an age of disease and war and in a society that conformed to strict religious creed, citizens must have been inured to loss. Faust counters my ignorance by detailing the stories of those who were left behind. In Nantucket seventy-three people died out of a population of 6,000 (162). Faust recounts, "Residents watching for the boat would be weeping before it even arrived at the dock" (162). Mary Todd Lincoln who lost her son Willie wore mourning clothes for a year and she held séances to communicate with his spirit. Joseph of Tennessee assured "mourners that sorrow was no sin. 'There is no guilt in tears, if they are not tears of despair. It is no crime to feel our loss'" (165). Henry Bowditch "was not prepared for the force of grief that overtook him" (167). The tension between duty and obligation to one's country and the human sorrow of losing a loved one was difficult for the survivors on the home front to negotiate.

Mourning, though, became public work and one that the community supported. Mourning helped dictate for example, women's fashion for "mourning clearly did not dictate seclusion; the fashionable – and wealthy—bereaved woman sought appropriate attire for a wide range of social activities" (152). While the funeral provided "the opportunity for survivors to enact – and thus in some measure assuage – their grief" the community also took part. Faust notes "A community of friends and relatives shared this ritual affirmation of loss and marked the new status of each mourner, now deprived of husband, father, brother, or son" (153). As Professor Paul Finkleman commented in his lecture, every American had a deep connection to loss during the Civil War.

Faust also chronicles the transformative power of war. First, the war transformed the role of government. Faust notes that earlier volunteer organizations such as the

Christian Commission “was motivated by humanitarian sympathy and religious benevolence” whereas the “Sanitarians regarded such an approach as unduly sentimental, lacking the hard-headed realism and the order and discipline necessary to a modern age and a modern war” (110). Now paid agents “sought to bring dispassionate principles of science and efficiency” to communicating and organizing the dead to ease suffering of the unknown (111). The Sanitarians “dedicated to order and system” created a large bureaucracy to meet the demand. Creating a system to effectively centralize information from the battlefield was a relatively new idea in the long age of war. The divide between the burial practices and responsibility of the government to the soldier in the twenty-first-century and the government’s responsibility to soldiers in prior wars is dramatic. Commenting on earlier wars, Faust notes, “The dead of the Mexican War received no official attention until 1850, two years after the conflict ended, when the federal government found and reinterred 750 soldiers in an American cemetery in Mexico City” (103). The commitment for burial or naming did not exist. The Civil War represented a shift in “private and public belief and behavior” for this was a “war of mass citizens’ armies, not of professional, regular forces” (103). This willingness for the common man to risk his life for the nation “redefined the relationship between the individual and the nation” (103). In this sense, the national identity began to shift as the nation took responsibility for human rights and dignity. Probably at no other time in earlier history had the government truly recognized the role of the common man in the preservation of a nation. Through their participation in war, ordinary citizens became an integral part of national memory and history.

One of the classroom connections that fit with this theme of the common man transcending his ordinary existence is Stephen Crane’s protagonist, Henry, in the *Red Badge of Courage*. Crane explores the moment that this boy realizes that war will render him a man of importance: “The youth perceived that the time had come. He was about to be measured. For a moment he felt in the face of his great trial like a babe, and the flesh over his heart seemed very thin. He seized time to look about him calculatingly (17). Henry perceives war as transforming on an individual level. The Civil War, though, was transformative on a larger societal level as well. According to Faust, soldiers and the community began to lay a new premium on individualism and human rights. Faust notes

that “Four years of Civil War propelled a remarkable shift in attitudes and behavior toward accounting for the dead.” (135). A new special graves registration unit reflected this change. While the end of war did not commit to this unit, this unit and the beginning of the national cemetery system “marked a growing recognition of governmental responsibility for the remains” (135). The government made a commitment to individual rights in the face of this war. As the government paid attention to specific soldiers’ fates society came to realize that “honoring the dead became inseparable from respecting the living” (135). Soldiers too tried to alleviate the suffering of both themselves and their loved ones by “scribbling their names on bits of paper and pinning them to their uniforms before engagements they expected to be especially bloody” (121). Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. “was afraid he would faint or die and be left nameless” so he wrote his name and family on a piece of paper which he kept for the rest of his life when he recovered (121). The importance of identity was key. Interestingly, Stephen Crane often refers to Henry as “the youth” instead of by his name. Crane’s literary interpretation of the war may contradict Faust’s historical interpretation. Crane perceives Henry or the “youth’s” plight as a young man who loses his humanity throughout the war while Faust recognizes that society attempted to rectify this loss of humanity with the rituals of “naming” and “burials.”

Perhaps the community has transformed in its response to the fallen soldiers form years past, but Faust does agree with Crane’s literary interpretation of individual transformation during the war experience. Good Christian men who went to war had to learn to kill. Often, killing another Christian brother was at odds with a soldier’s belief system. Yet as Edwin Spofford noted, “I felt bad at first when I saw what I had done, but it soon passed off, and as I had done my duty and was not the aggressor, I was soon able to fire again and again” (35). War and the realities of killing grabbed hold of these moral, religious men. Faust notes, “Once the constraints of conscience and custom loosened, some soldiers, especially in the heat of combat, could seem almost possessed by the urge to kill” (36). Whether soldiers replaced their identities by dressing up as savage Indians, or whether they touted vengeance as their justification, war changed men. *A New York Tribune* reporter noted at Shiloh that “Men lost their semblance of humanity” (36). Crane explores this loss through Henry. During the first real battle,

Henry became “not a man but a member” of the army who “developed the acute exasperation of a pestered animal, a well-meaning cow worried by dogs. He had a mad feeling against his rifle, which could only be used against one life at a time. He wished to rush forward and strangle with his fingers. He craved a power that would enable him to make a world-sweeping gesture and brush all back. His impotency appeared to him, and made his rage into that of a driven beast” (Crane 25). While Henry or “the Youth” fails in the first battle because he runs, the war inevitably alters both his physical demeanor and emotional energy. His youthful face transforms into one “drawn hard and tight with the stress of his endeavor” and after his experience “he looked to be an “insane soldier” (77). Crane’s references to a “pestered animal,” a “driven beast” and “craved” power reveal the role of war in stripping a soldier’s humanity.

Men did not choose to lose their humanity without a fight. Faust portrays the intellectual crisis of consciousness that took place for soldiers during the Civil War. She offers,

“But just as human beings die differently in different times and places, they come to kill differently to. Human reluctance to murder expresses itself within a particular historical and cultural moment. Civil War killing, like death more generally, required work – intellectual and psychological effort to address religious and emotional constraints, as well as adaptation to the ways this particular war’s technologies, tactics, and logistics shaped the experience of combat” (33).

For many soldiers, issues surrounding race and any means of “dehumanizing the enemy” helped soldiers combat their religious and emotional constraints. Black soldiers became the target of Confederate propaganda and saw them as “so many devils” (44). Whites who allowed blacks to serve were acting as conspirators in essentially a slave rebellion. Naming one’s enemy and defining him with less than human qualities – as something different – made killing easier. Likewise for black soldiers, killing Confederate Soldiers seemed justified. For Frederick Douglass, killing was a “notion of fitting retribution” (52). Black soldiers were fighting for “God, race and country” (53). Notions of “the good death” also helped ease the guilt involved with killing. Faust comments, “Focusing on

dying rather than on killing enabled soldiers to mitigate their terrible responsibility for the slaughter of others” (6). Faust also points out the irony that soldiers were more prepared in their belief system to die than to kill.

The nineteenth-century notion of a “Good Death” permeated both the home front and the war front. This notion of “ars moriendi” or art of death revealed religious beliefs and practices at the time. A soldier expected to die; his goal was to “construct a Good Death even amid chaos, to substitute for missing elements or compensate for unsatisfied expectations” (9) Survivors needed to hear that their loved one had last words and that there was some larger religious meaning to their lives. The most difficult part for survivors was knowing that thousands of young men were dying away from home” (9). Family was an integral part of the “Good Death.” Photographs – a new technology – served to act as family surrogates during death. Condolence letters were used to share these last words and offer some proof that a loved one was indeed eligible for salvation.

The Civil War provided both a deeply intensely religious experience on one hand, and on the other, it allowed for many to question their religion and to experience religious skepticism. While the “image of the Christian soldier encompassed patriotic duty within the realm of religious obligation,” in some instances “patriotism and courage seemed to serve as a replacement for evidence of a deep religious faith” (24). Over the course of the war and after the war, this division between believing and doubting grew deeper – yet one more way the Civil War transformed American identity. On one hand, publishers, pastors, and others helped reinforced the “widespread assumption among Civil War Americans that they would one day be reunited with lost kin” (180). Men and women participated in spirit circles to communicate with their loved ones. Spiritualists tried to connect survivors with their loved ones; furthermore, spiritualists tried to differentiate between the damaged bodies of loved ones and their still existing soul. The Civil War, on the other hand, gave rise to a new genre of literature that questioned not only this spirituality but also religion. One of the literary artists, Ambrose Bierce, who emerged with his writing after the Civil War did not share notions of the “Good Death” or the ideas of the Spiritualists. According to Faust, “The yawning discrepancy between the hopes that inaugurated the war and the experience of its horrors deeply affected Bierce’s

subsequent view of the world. Surviving the war left him tormented by the ‘phantoms of that blood-stained period’ and by a bitterness that derived not just from his own loss of innocence in war but from his sense that he was among the few truly to admit war’s terror and its price.” (197) Mark Twain used parody and irony as a response to the brutality of war that had ravaged the American landscape. Other writers, like Emily Dickenson also questioned the meaning of life and the cost of war. A very different type of literature came out of the Civil War than went into the war.

The connection between literature and the Civil War is one that I will pursue this year in my eleventh grade American Studies program. I teach American Studies with an English teacher, and we are trying to incorporate a more unified approach in addressing the connection between history and literature for our students. My colleague teaches *The Red Badge of Courage* while I teach the Civil War; however, until now, while we teach them at the same time, we do not do enough to address the same themes. Faust’s study has allowed me to find the common ground I need to plan more integrated literary and historical lessons. I have designed two lessons that deal with why men go to war and the notion of the “good death.” My colleague and I will design a lesson on the transformative power of the Civil War both on a personal level as well as on a governmental level. I will complete these two additional lessons by December. Please note that I am happy to receive any suggestions to help make these lessons and the sources instrumental for student learning.

Lesson Plan: Perspectives on death and survival in the Civil War.

Background – This lesson is designed for American Studies, an interdisciplinary course of American Literature and American History. Students will be reading *Red Badge of Courage* while we are studying the soldier’s experience in the Civil War.

- **Massachusetts Core Standards in ELA**
Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.(CCR 7)
- Compare and contrast the experience of reading a story, drama, or poem to listening to or viewing an audio, video, or live version of the text, including contrasting what they “see” and “hear” when reading the text to what they perceive when they listen or watch (RL7)
- Read and comprehend literary nonfiction in the grades 11–CCR text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

-- from the Massachusetts History Frameworks:

- **USI.40 USI.41** Explain the policies and consequences of Reconstruction. (H, C) the presidential election of 1876 and the end of Reconstruction (1896) Analyze the roles and policies of various Civil War leaders and describe the important Civil War battles and events. (H)
- **USI.40 USI.41** Provide examples of the various effects of the Civil War. (H, E)
A. physical and economic destruction
B. the increased role of the federal government
C. the greatest loss of life on a per capita basis of any U.S. war before or since

Specific Mastery Objectives for Lessons

Students will be able to:

- Discuss reasons men went to fight the war.
- Compare literary interpretations of reasons for fighting with film and letters.
- Compare and contrast the paintings of Winslow Homer with the photographs from the Civil War Period.
- Examine multiple perspectives – visual, prose, and poetry – on camp life and death during the Civil War.
- Interpret and discuss point of view of the art and text.

Lesson 1: Why go to war? Obligation to God and Country?

Essential Questions

1. What factors motivated men to join the Confederate army? The Union Army?
2. Can we make any connections between motivations of soldiers during the Civil War and soldiers today?
3. Who comprised the ranks of both the Confederate and the Union Armies? What does this information say about the society at large?

DO NOW or Focus:

On a powerpoint slide project the final passage from *Red Badge of Courage*:

✦“He had burned several times to enlist. Tales of great movements shook the land. They might not be distinctly Homeric, but there seemed to be much glory in them. He had read of marches, sieges, conflicts, and he had longed to see it all. His busy mind had drawn for him large pictures extravagant in color, lurid with breathless deeds” (Crane 3).

Have students examine the passage for rhetoric devices:

Diction

imagery

tone

allusion

Students should try to provide an example for each category. Students may check in with a partner/or their table for assistance after a two minutes. Share responses with the class.

Ask students what they think is the motivation of the protagonist Henry. How does the author convey this motivation through language? Why might there be “glory” in these “movements?” Why would a young man want to go to war back in the 19th Century? Today?

Subject matter – Reasons for going for war – a study across time.

NOTE– This activity is adapted from Schur, Joan Brodsky. “Civil War Classroom Materials” Civil War. I used her recommendations on film clips and on using the Sullivan letter. I have replaced her questions with my own framework. Visit the website to get her entire lesson on using Civil War letters.
http://www.pbs.org/civilwar/classroom/lesson_letters.html

Show a segment from the first video of the PBS series *The Civil War*. Show the scene “Traitors and Patriots”

As students are watching segment, ask them to record information on graphic organizer where possible.

Now show the very last segment of the video, “Honorable Manhood” from 132:05 to 132:23.

Listen to a reading of the “Sullivan Ballou” letter. Have students consider the following:

(activity – from Gleason, Ann Marie at *Primary Source*. She presented this framework for examining war letters. July 2011.)

Letters 2-4 are from the following source:

Battlelines: Letters from America's Wars, Gilder Lehrman Institute,
http://www.gilderlehrman.org/collection/battlelines/index_good.html

First, teachers should have students examine the graphic organizer that I have attached under Student Handouts. . This organizer, designed by Ann Marie Gleason for a Primary Source workshop on War and Society, provides the approach to these letters that students should consider: Sourcing, Contextualization, and Corroboration. Review the meaning of these categories and answer any questions. Perhaps teachers could model the Sullivan Ballou letter and then allow students to read the other three letters.

Teachers can have students read the letters in smaller groups. I recommend a mini-jig-sawing activity. Divide the letters so that one person in a group reads one letter and then the group reconvenes to share information. For students who do better hearing the letters aloud, the Gilder Lehrman Institute has an actor reading the letter aloud.

After each student has read one letter, that student should try to complete the graphic organizer for his letter. The students in the group should then meet and see how each of the letters fits within the framework. Then, students should work together to address the following questions:

1. Why do men go to war?
2. What are universal themes among these letters? What are points that relate specifically to a time period?
3. What letters appeal to you the most? Why?

At the end of the workshop/lesson – Have students report their findings to the class. I like to go around and number students as they are working in groups (#1-4. .) and then I might call all the #2s to stand up and present their findings for the first question. . and then I might call the #3s to present findings for the next question. . .In this way, no one escapes presenting. .

Letter #1

Letter from Sullivan Ballou to his wife. Excerpt from “Civil War Letters. *The Civil War Classroom Materials*,” PBS Civil War. <<http://pbs.org>>.

July 14, 1861 Camp Clark, Washington My very dear Sarah: The indications are very strong that we shall move in a few days—perhaps tomorrow. Lest I should not be able to write again, I feel impelled to write a few lines that may fall under your eye when I shall be no more . . . I have no misgivings about, or lack of confidence in the cause in which I am engaged, and my courage does not halt or falter. I know how strongly American Civilization now leans on the triumph of the Government and how great a debt we owe to those who went before us through the blood and sufferings of the Revolution. And I am willing—perfectly willing—to lay down all my joys in this life, to help maintain this Government, and to pay that debt . . . Sarah my love for you is deathless, it seems to bind me with mighty cables that nothing but Omnipotence could break; and yet my love of Country comes over me like a strong wind and bears me unresistibly on with all these chains to the battle field. The memories of the blissful moments I have spent with you come creeping over me, and I feel most gratified to God and to you that I have enjoyed them for so long. And hard it is for me to give them up and burn to ashes the hopes of future years, when, God willing, we might still have lived and loved together, and seen our sons grown up to honorable manhood, around us. I have, I know, but few and small claims upon Divine Providence, but something whispers to me—perhaps it is the wafted prayer of my little Edgar, that I shall return to my loved ones unharmed. If I do not my dear Sarah, never forget how much I love you, and when my last breath escapes me on the battle field, it will whisper your name. Forgive my many faults and the many pains I have caused you. How thoughtless and foolish I have often times been! How gladly would I wash out with my tears every little spot upon your happiness . . . But, O Sarah! If the dead can come back to this earth and flit unseen around those they loved, I shall always be near you; in the gladdest days and in the darkest nights . . . always, always, and if there be a soft breeze upon your cheek, it shall be my breath, as the cool air fans your throbbing temple, it shall be my spirit passing by. Sarah do not mourn me dead; think I am gone and wait for thee, for we shall meet again . . .

(Notes from pbs.org: He died after his leg was amputated following the battle of Bull Run. His wife never remarried. As Sullivan predicted, Sarah was able to successfully raise their two sons; one graduated from Brown University and became a lawyer like his father. While Sullivan mailed other letters to his wife, this one was found in his trunk. It was probably intended for her eyes only upon his death, and may explain why he allowed himself to give into his forebodings. Another interesting fact about the letter is that it has never been found in Sullivan’s own handwriting. Perhaps he dictated it in the hospital, or perhaps his wife would never part with the original copy. Sullivan Ballou has no surviving heirs.)

Letter #2 Source: Battlelines: Letters from America's Wars, *Gilder Lehrman Institute*,
http://www.gilderlehrman.org/collection/battlelines/index_good.html

Braxton Bragg to Henry J. Hunt

Near Barrancas, 21 April 1861.

Autograph letter signed. 3 pages.

Near Barrancas,

Saturday Evening (21 Apl 61 H.J.H)

My dear Hunt:

How strange are the mutations of life! That we should be in hostile array against each other. A few short months since companions in army, and almost brothers in friendship, it is hard to realize the fact that we are in hostile array against each other. But so it is, and tho' I would have taken an oath that my old friend Hunt could never be the instrument of oppression in the hands of a Black Repub[lica]n yet we see strange things in this world, and even must be content to put up with it as we find it. Each one of us of course will follow the dictates of his own conscience. But for fear you may rest under a misapprehension in regard to this move in the South, I will give you a few facts on which you may rely. This is no movement of politicians. The people, en- mass, are the leaders - and every man is now united in the cause. You may destroy us, but cannot conquer.

Every class is represented in the ranks. Many of my privates here [2] are men of incomes from \$10,000 to \$50,000 a year and I could in twenty four hours raise \$20,000,000 by subscription, were it necessary to further our cause. I do not say this my dear old friend to influence you, I know too well your elevation of character, to allow me to trifle with it - but I merely wish you to have the truth before you. We feel that we cannot live with the North in peace and we desire to be left alone to pursue the even tenor of our way. We submitted until we could submit no longer, and we decided to quit, and now we merely ask to be let alone.

We have asked for peace, but shall not decline War. Your president has decided on War. His orders to you are to get you into position and war is inevitable. His policy is at last declared [inserted: "to subjugate us"] and the result is that Virginia has at once seceded by an almost unanimous vote, and taken the Navy Yard & Vessels at Norfolk, and report says Harpers Ferry. North Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, Missouri, & Arkansas have followed, and are pouring out troops by the thousands to defend themselves. Maryland has forbidden Northern troops to pass her borders, and every avenue to Washington [3] is closed. Hundreds of officers from these States are resigning daily, and the whole country is on the eve of a long and bloody civil war. Surely this ought not to be, but so it is, and there is no help for it now that I can see, but for the people to rise up & decide to separate peacefully.

Fort Sumpter has surrendered to a "military necessity" - would to God the whole question could be submitted to three plain sensible men to settle justly. There is room enough [sic] in this world for us all to live in peace, and why should we not do so?

I enclose a few slips of news, and only wish I could see you and my other old friends at the social board. For friends I still believe them, tho' I think them mistaken in their course.

Yours most Truly,

Braxton Bragg

Letter 3 Source: Battlelines: Letters from America's Wars, Gilder Lehrman Institute,
http://www.gilderlehrman.org/collection/battlelines/index_good.html

3/12/03

Dear Emileigh Ann,

Hello sweetheart! How is my little girl today? Have you been a good girl for Mommy today? How do you like staying at Bennie and Laura's house? I hope you are doing okay. Mommy said that you have started eating baby food now. No more of that old breast milk, hugh. I am sorry I wasn't there to see your big switch. Hopefully I won't miss too many big moments. Things here are starting to get busy. Remember how I told you about the bad man way far away, who daddy and his friends were going to have to go talk to? Well, I think it is getting close to time for us to make him stop being bad. I hope we can do it quickly so that I can get home to you and mommy. Please tell mommy I love her and give her a great big hug for me. Remember how we talked about you giving mommy lots of help and be on your best behavior with Bennie, Laura, and Stephanie. I love you big, big bunches.

Love,

Daddy

Letter #4 Source: Battlelines: Letters from America's Wars, *Gilder Lehrman Institute*,
http://www.gilderlehrman.org/collection/battlelines/index_good.html

Galesburg, Ill.

March 16, 1942.

Miss Le Hand

Washington, D.C. FOR THE PRESIDENT

Dear Miss LeHand I have read so much about you I feel I know you. But, I beg your pardon that's another story. For now please clench your handsgrit your theeth (sic) and read the following rapidly (sic) and grimly; I am not a ball player / I don't want out, I want IN. To date I have tried to get into 1. Naval Reserve Class V6, rejecteted (sic) only because (no matching molars) 2. Passed physical finger printed and interviewed by Douglass Aircraft, Dayton, Ohio for Foreign Service. Two out of the five examined with me from here have been accepted, for me nothing. Applied to Newfoundland Base Contractors but nothing open. Now, I am single 42 years old, 165 5 feet 6, and in fine health. I have had two and half years of college education. I am and have been in business for myself before during and since college. For eleven years I owned and operated a drug store. I hold an Illinois State Apprentice License in Pharmacy. As a pharmacist's mate in U S Naval Reserve Class V6 I was turned down because of no opposing molars. I am sure I can serve in this class. If I could keep myself, my sisters and mother all these years in business, can it be I am no good for the Navy? Now, Miss LeHand, won't you please have the President or any one else inauthority wire both me and Lt. David Goldenson USN Recruiting Station Chicago, Ill to appoint me CPO Acting, thus enabling me to go to training school, then to active duty, which I so earnestly desire. I do not know any Senators or their uncle I therefore apply directly to the President. I sincerely pray you to give this your kind attention. And if we are to have all out efforts please lets here. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Harry A Zeldes

421 E. Main St.

PS

My Military Record;

1918 US Army Discharge from Students' Army Training Corps

1940 Special Course CMTTC Ft Sheridan (my own expence (sic))

Now Sergeant Illinois Reserve Militia

THE “GOOD DEATH”

Essential Question:

1. Is a “Good Death” possible in war?
2. What is the role of religion in the soldier’s experience during the Civil War?

FOCUS:

Write the words “Good Death” on the board. Ask students to consider this phrase. Is it an oxymoron? What would be consider a “good death” in their mind?

Take some time to review with students the basics of “The Good Death” from Drew Faust’s *This Republic of Suffering* – Chapter on Dying. Discuss and list on the board the key points:

1. family surrounding/notified
2. foreshadowing/foreboding
3. communication with family and G-d
4. dying for a purpose – higher than one’s self.
5. Maybe use a quote from Faust – project on screen – notion of good Christian Soldier – “The image of the Christian soldier encompassed patriotic duty within the realm of religious obligation” (24) – Ask students to decipher this point.

Activities –

Stations – Set up the room in such a way that students can walk rotate among stations. Project the pictures if possible. Place the poems and the excerpt from *The Red Badge of Courage* on big paper. Students should have a conversation directly with the text and then with each other right on the big paper (like a silent conversation of sorts – but focus is on annotation). The objective is for students to reflect on how death is portrayed in the Civil War through poetry, photographs, sketches, and the novel. Students can use a graphic organizer/guide to help them process the visual information. See student handouts at the end of this document.

Document #1 – Sullivan Ballou’s letter – Place on big paper. See letter above.

Document #2 - Photograph

“Antietam. Bodies of Confederate Dead Gathered for Burial”
photographed by Alexander Gardner. Library of Congress



Document #3– Photograph



“Dead Confederate Soldiers Collected for Burial. Spotsylvania, May 1864”
Library of Congress

Document #4 – Sketch “The Letter Home” – from Faust, Drew Gilpin. *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War*. NY: Random House, 2008. – I retrieved a copy from google images.



Document #5 – Poem

Emily Dickenson “in Possibility” (idea from Drew Gilpin Faust – found poem on Barleby.com -- <http://www.bartleby.com/142/112.html>)

I dwell in Possibility-- A fairer House than Prose-- More numerous of Windows-- Superior--for Doors--

Of Chambers as the Cedars-- Impregnable of Eye-- And for an Everlasting Roof The Gambrels of the Sky--

Of Visitors--the fairest-- For Occupation--This-- The spreading wide my narrow Hands To gather Paradise—

Document #6 – Walt Whitman – from Drum Taps. Idea from Faust and PBS Civil War Classroom. I downloaded the poem from Barleby.com.

<http://www.bartleby.com/142/112.html>

112. Beat! Beat! Drums!

1

BEAT! beat! drums!—Blow! bugles! blow!

Through the windows—through doors—burst like a ruthless force,

Into the solemn church, and scatter the congregation;

Into the school where the scholar is studying;

Leave not the bridegroom quiet—no happiness must he have now with his bride; 5

Nor the peaceful farmer any peace, plowing his field or gathering his grain;

So fierce you whirr and pound, you drums—so shrill you bugles blow.

2

Beat! beat! drums!—Blow! bugles! blow!

Over the traffic of cities—over the rumble of wheels in the streets:

Are beds prepared for sleepers at night in the houses? No sleepers must sleep in those beds; 10

No bargainers' bargains by day—no brokers or speculators—Would they continue?

Would the talkers be talking? would the singer attempt to sing?

Would the lawyer rise in the court to state his case before the judge?

Then rattle quicker, heavier drums—you bugles wilder blow.

3

Beat! beat! drums!—Blow! bugles! blow! 15

Make no parley—stop for no expostulation;

Mind not the timid—mind not the weeper or prayer;

Mind not the old man beseeching the young man;

Let not the child's voice be heard, nor the mother's entreaties;

Make even the trestles to shake the dead, where they lie awaiting the hearses, 20

So strong you thump, O terrible drums—so loud you bugles blow.

Document #6 – Excerpt from *The Red Badge of Courage*

“At length he reached a place where the high, arching boughs made a chapel. He softly pushed the green doors aside and entered. Pine needles were a gentle brown carpet. There was a religious half light.

Near the threshold he stopped, horror-stricken at the sight of a thing.

He was being looked at by a dead man who was seated with his back against a columnlike tree. The corpse was dressed in a uniform that once had been blue, but was now faded to a melancholy shade of green. The eyes, staring at the youth, had changed to the dull hue to be seen on the side of a dead fish. The mouth was open. Its red had changed to an appalling yellow. Over the gray skin of the face ran little ants. One was trundling some sort of a bundle along the upper lip.

The youth gave a shriek as he confronted the thing. He was for moments turned to stone before it. He remained staring into the liquid-looking eyes. The dead man and the living man exchanged a long look. Then the youth cautiously put one hand behind him and brought it against a tree. Leaning upon this he retreated, step by step, with his face still toward the thing. He feared that if he turned his back the body might spring up and stealthily pursue him” (35)

Document #7 - Faust, Drew Gilpin. *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War*. NY: Random House, 2008, p. 197-198.

Document #8

Ambrose Bierce “What I Saw of Shiloh” excerpted in Faust’s Republic of Suffering.

Men? There were men enough; all dead, apparently, except one, who lay near where I had halted my platoon. . . – a Federal sergeant, variously hurt, who had been a fine giant in his time. He lay face upward, taking his breath in convulsive, rattling snorts, and blowing it out in sputters of froth which crawled creamily down his cheeks, piling itself alongside his neck and ears. A bullet had clipped a groove in his skull, above the temple; from this

the brain protruded in bosses, dropping off I flakes and strings. I had not previously known one could get on, even in this unsatisfactory fashion, with so little brain. One of my men, whom I knew for a womanish fellow, asked if he should put his bayonet through him. Inexpressibly shocked by the cold-blooded proposal, I told him I thought not; it was unusual, and too many were looking”

Document #8 – Civil War Song “Answer to: Let me Kiss Him for His Mother” found in Faust, Drew Gilpin. *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War*. NY: Random House, 2008, p.13.

Bless the lips that kissed our darling,

As he lay on his death-bed,

Far from home and ‘mid cold strangers

Blessing rest upon your head.

.....

Oh my darling! O our dead one!

Though you died far, far away,

You had two kind lips to kiss you,

As upon your bier you lay

.....

You had one to smooth your pillow,

You had one to close your eyes.

Student Handouts Source: Gleason, Ann Marie. "War and Society," *Primary Source*. July 2011.

| | | <i>Letter 1</i> | <i>Letter 2</i> | <i>Letter 3</i> | <i>Letter 4</i> |
|-----------------|---|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Part One | <p>Sourcing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is the author? • What date was the letter written? • Who was the intended audience? • Why did the author write the letter? | | | | |
| | <p>Contextualization:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was going on at the time the letter was written? • How does the author describe wartime life? • What does this letter tell us about wartime life? | | | | |
| | <p>Corroboration:</p> <p>Does this letter confirm or disconfirm what you thought or know about life during this war?</p> <p>What questions do you have about this source?</p> | | | | |

Student Handout #2

Examine visual documents

1. What grabs your attention in this painting or photograph? Why?
2. What details do you notice?
3. How do these details give meaning to the larger work?
4. What do you think is the point of view of this visual work?
5. Conversation on the piece – Do you think this work of art illustrates the “Good Death”
Why or why not?

Annotation Directions for Civil War study of “The Good Death.”

(annotating on big paper – idea from a *Primary Source Workshop* led by Andrea Popp of Framingham High School -- July 2011).

I have posted excerpts from texts, poems, and a letter around the room. Your job is to read the posted text and do the following:

1. Circle words that resonant for you.
2. Bracket/underline references to death.
3. Place comments/markings next to any religious messages you see.
4. Examine the text for any literary devices that we have studied in class.
5. Ask questions in the margins.
6. Place your opinion – Do you think the poet/writer is discussing the art of the good death or is the artist questioning the good death. Explain. What do you think the point of view is of the work.
7. Comment on other students’ comments. . .

Bibliography

Carroll, Andrew, ed. "Battlelines: Letters from America's Wars," *Legacy Project*. Gilder Lehrman Institute 2009-2011. Web 10 September 2011.

Crane, Stephen. *The Red Badge of Courage*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1990.

Faust, Drew Gilpin. *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War*. New York: Random House, 2008.

Gleason, Ann Marie. *War and Society*. Primary Source. Reading High School, MA. 9 July 2011.

Schaur, Joan Brodsky. "Civil War Letters" *The Civil War Classroom*. PBS, 2002. Web 12 September 2011.