

“As the War Turns”
Exploring the Drama of the Civil War

"It is well that war is so terrible, else we should grow too fond of it." ~General Robert E. Lee

Overview

When you think of the Civil War, it is likely that your mind is drawn to a common topic, such as Abraham Lincoln, the Battle of Gettysburg, the Emancipation Proclamation, Sherman’s march through Atlanta, etc. Yet, beyond the textbook stories of the Civil War, even more intriguing subjects can be found. Bioterrorism, espionage, gruesome diseases – the Civil War had plenty of soap opera-like drama. This lesson will focus on such captivating topics, beginning with an interactive warm up in which students learn about the effects of yellow fever during the period of Civil War. Afterwards, students will begin their exploration of Civil War “drama” by reading about bioterrorist plots involving diseases such as yellow fever, as well as other attempts of terrorism during this time. Students will then work on a group project in which they explore other intriguing aspects of the Civil War through reading and the examination of primary sources. They will then work with their group to create a creative and educational soap opera that will teach the rest of their classmates about their assigned topic.

- **Teacher Note Regarding Document Length:** All readings and primary sources for the group activity have been provided at the end of this lesson, thus making this document a lengthy 49 pages. Before printing, teachers should review pages 1-5 of the procedure, as well as review the document sets at the end of the lesson to confirm what needs to be printed.

Grade

8

Essential Questions

- What role did terrorism play between the North and the South during the Civil War?
- How did the amount of deaths occurring during the Civil War compare to deaths occurring during other wars?
- What advances in technology occurred during the Civil War and what impact did they have?
- What were sanitary conditions like during the Civil War and what impact did these conditions have on the Northern and Southern armies?
- What were the leading causes of death during the Civil War?
- What type of medical treatment was available during the Civil War?
- Why was the draft utilized during the Civil War and how did people react to it?
- How could someone avoid conscription entirely, or if drafted, get out of serving?
- What were conditions like in Civil War prisons?
- What were some of the strategies prisoners used to try and cope with their imprisonment?
- What was life in the army like for Civil War soldiers?
- What role did spies play during the Civil War?
- Why do you think so many brave African Americans served as spies when there were so many risks involved?

Materials

- Yellow Fever Simulation Squares, attached

- The Strange Saga of Civil War Terrorism, edited article attached
 - Taken from “The Fiend in Gray”
 - <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/magazine/2003/06/01/the-fiend-in-gray/818f9565-ca66-4ccc-b70d-c5023229966a/>
- As the War Turns, Creating Soap Operas on Civil War Topics; assignment sheet attached
 - Teachers should determine whether students will be assigned groups or allowed to choose
- Student Handout Sets (each includes an introductory reading and 3 primary sources), attached:
 - Set A - Civil War Casualties
 - Set B - Medicine & Disease
 - Set C - Conscription
 - Set D - Prison
 - Set E - Life of a Soldier
 - Set F - Civil War Spies

Duration

- 1 class period for setting up and describing project
- Teachers will determine how much additional class time will be provided for completion of soap opera project (at least 2-3 partial class periods is recommended)
- 1 class period for presentation of soap operas

Preparation

Students should have a basic knowledge of the Civil War (i.e. reasons for the conflict, knowledge of the two sides and their objectives, as well as an understanding of key battles.)

Procedure

Warm Up: Simulating the Spread of Yellow Fever

1. Previous to the start of class, teachers should cut the attached “Yellow Fever Simulation Squares” apart and place them into a container. (Another option involving less preparation is to use small Post-It notes of two different colors, with approximately 15% of the Post-It’s being one color and 85% being another color.) As students enter class, have them draw a square of paper, ensuring students cannot see what they are drawing out. Once students are seated, tell those who drew a paper with a mosquito on it to stand (or those who drew the 15% Post-It color.) Tell these students that you are very sorry, but due to having been bitten by a mosquito, they are now infected with yellow fever. Let students know that diseases such as yellow fever took more lives during the Civil War than actual battle violence did. Tell students that as if straight out of a drama or fear-filled horror flick, contracting yellow fever during the 1860s was gruesome.
2. Explain to students what to expect as the virus takes hold:
 - Generally there is an incubation period of three to six days.
 - The first signs of yellow fever include muscle pain (with prominent backache), headache, shivers, loss of appetite, and nausea and/or vomiting. (Tell students to remember a time when they have had the flu. Tell them to remember how bad they felt, and to imagine feeling worse than that!)
 - Depending on how many students are standing, tell most of them to sit so that only 15 percent of those infected are still standing. Tell those who sat that thought they experienced great sickness, they are lucky. After three to four days most patients improve and their symptoms disappear.
 - However, 15 percent of patients enter a toxic phase within 24 hours. Tell the students still standing that unfortunately, this is the situation they are in.
 - In the toxic phase, your fever reappears.
 - The patient rapidly develops jaundice and complains of abdominal pain with vomiting.

- Bleeding can occur from the mouth, nose, eyes and/or stomach.
- Once this happens, blood appears in the vomit and feces.
- Kidney function deteriorates; this can lead to complete kidney failure with no urine production.
- Generally half of patients recover from the toxic phase with no significant organ damage (tell half of the students still standing to sit). Most unfortunately however, the other half die within ten to fourteen days. Tell the student(s) still standing that you are very sorry, but they have passed away, dying a gruesome death, of yellow fever.

What a Drama! From Yellow Fever to Terrorism During the Civil War

3. Next, ask students to make estimates as to how many people died during the Civil War. Teachers may want to give students hints regarding how close or far off their guesses are. Finally, write the number 617,528 and explain to students that this is the estimated number of people who died during the Civil War (North and South.) Next, ask students to take a guess as to how many of these deaths were due to diseases, such as yellow fever. Again, once student estimates have waned, write the number 413,458 under the first number and point out that disease killed more people than the violence of the war itself!
4. Explain to students that during today’s lesson, they are going to be looking at some of the most surprising, shocking, interesting, and drama-filled aspects of the Civil War. Tell students that they are going to continue focusing on disease during the Civil War for a bit longer, specifically as it relates to bioterrorism. Discuss:
 - Do any of you know (or think you know) what bioterrorism is?
 - Ensure students gain the understanding that bioterrorism describes a terrorist act in which a biological agent (such as germs, disease, toxins, etc.) is used to harm mass amounts of people.
 - Can you cite any examples, present or past, when bioterrorism has been used?
 - Do you think bioterrorism would have been used during the Civil War? Why or why not?
5. Give students the attached “The Strange Saga of Civil War Terrorism” and let them know that they’ll find out the answer in the article, which details some intriguing aspects of the Civil War they may never have heard of. Either individually or in partners, instruct students to read the article and answer the corresponding questions.
6. Once students have completed the reading, discuss their answers to the questions as a class. Further discuss:
 - Had any of you heard any of this information before? What did you find most surprising about what you read?

“As the War Turns” - Creating Soap Operas on Civil War Topics

7. Let students know that beyond the “typical” topics of the Civil War that we usually study – i.e., key battles, famous figures, etc. – there are many more interesting aspects of the war. Tell students that they are going to be working together on a group project in they will explore some of the many, but perhaps lesser known, Civil War topics that are full of surprise, drama, and intrigue. Tell students that they will form six groups and that each group will be assigned a reading and several primary sources on the following topics:
 - Group A - Civil War Casualties
 - Group B - Medicine & Disease
 - Group C- Conscriptio
 - Group D - Prison
 - Group E - Life of a Soldier
 - Group F - Civil War Spies

(Note: Teachers can choose to eliminate or alter the topics as they see fit.)

8. Tell students that based on their reading and examination of primary sources related to their topic, they will then create a short, 5 minute soap opera detailing the drama and intrigue of their topic. Provide the attached assignment sheet, "As the War Turns, Creating Soap Operas on Civil War Topics" and go over the assignment in detail with students. Teachers should determine a timeline for completion that they share with students, letting them know how much class time will be provided to work on the soap opera, and how much time outside of class they are expected to spend on the project. Let students know the final due date/performance date.
9. Once the assignment is clear, allow students to get into their groups and give each group their set of documents. (While teachers may want to copy the introductory reading of sets A-E for each student in the group, only one copy per group of their set's primary sources will be necessary.)









Civil War Soap Opera Performances

10. Before the group performances begin, instruct students to create the following chart on notebook paper. Tell students that as they watch each scene, they should take detailed notes regarding what they learned about each particular topic. (Students should note at least 5 facts.)

Soap Opera Title and Topic	Facts I learned...	What I liked about the soap opera...

11. Go over respectful audience member expectations with students and allow them to present their soap operas. After each soap opera, lead a feedback and discussion with student. Student audience members should share what they learned and what they liked. Teachers should ask questions of the performers and the audience to ensure the main points of each topic are covered and learned by the class.

Yellow Fever Simulation Squares

The Strange Saga of Civil War Terrorism

The Washington Post - Sunday, June 1, 2003

by Jane Singer

The portly, middle-aged American doctor walked slowly through the thatched warren that served as a hospital, along the rows of the fevered, the dead and the dying. A yellow fever epidemic was raging in Bermuda, and Luke Pryor Blackburn, a doctor well known for treating and containing the deadly disease in the American South, had come to help. There was no need, he told grateful Bermuda physicians, to pay him for his services. Making his rounds on a warm night in April 1864, Blackburn sometimes wiped sweat from men's brows with a soft white cloth or poured lemonade and bits of ice through parched lips. He held patients in his arms, cradling their heads as they vomited black bile, a sure sign the end was near.

This night, he asked an attending nurse to help him take new woolen shirts from a trunk to cover the patients. Later, she remembered him saying that their rough warmth would aid "sweating." After the dead were carried away, the nurse saw the doctor collect a pile of dirty bedding and shirts as well as his perspiration-stained white cloths. He neatly packed them in trunks along with brand-new clothing fit for a fine gentleman, such as a president. An odd act, but the nurse did not question the doctor, who slipped out of Bermuda with his trunks the next day. Blackburn's destination was Toronto. His aim was nothing less than a deadly bioterror attack on Washington and President Abraham Lincoln.

Both sides in the Civil War contemplated acts beyond traditional warfare, according to legal documents, court testimony, historical records, books and newspaper accounts of the day. Artillery shells filled with chlorine for use on the battlefield were proposed by New York schoolteacher John Doughty early in the war. Lincoln refused to consider such chemical weapons, viewing them as being outside the laws of war. Sure that the Confederacy would rapidly overpower its enemies, President Jefferson Davis initially shied away from such measures as well.

But as the conflict lengthened from months to years, and the casualties mounted from the thousands to the hundreds of thousands, the South's desperation spawned a largely untold story: a series of terrorist plots against Washington and New York.

Hatched by politicians, rogue scientists, saboteurs and foot soldiers fanatically loyal to the Confederacy, the plans included spreading yellow fever to Washington and the White House; burning New York City to the ground; poisoning New York's water supply; and attacking Northern ports with a newly developed chemical weapon. There was even a scheme in the war's waning days to blow up the White House, though Lincoln refused to take it seriously. "I cannot bring myself," he said when told of the threat, "to believe that any human being lives who would do me any harm."

While most of the plots failed, their intent was clear. Then as now, they were designed to kill, terrify and demoralize civilians. Many of the plots against Washington and New York were dreamed up in Canada, a haven for Confederate agents throughout the Civil War who considered -- and embraced -- all kinds of acts of terrorism. Their schemes took on even greater urgency after a one-legged colonel named Ulric Dahlgren led a Union cavalry force on a mission to take Richmond, the Confederate capital, in the winter of 1864. When Dahlgren was ambushed and killed just outside the city, papers found on his body included detailed instructions for the assassination of Davis and his cabinet. The failed raid jolted Richmond, increasing its resolve to use whatever means necessary to destroy the North. Increasingly, Confederate funds flowed north to plotters in Toronto.

Luke Blackburn, a well-born Kentuckian and dyed-in-the-bones Rebel was too old to fight and too fired up not to, and thus hatched a plan to inflict a yellow fever epidemic on the North. The deadly disease had long been a

scourge in the South, where Blackburn had treated and saved many victims. Known colloquially as "yellow jack," "bronze John" and "black vomit," the disease includes symptoms such as fever, headache, vomiting, jaundice, bleeding, delirium, seizures and, finally, coma. With a 30 percent fatality rate and no known cure, any outbreak of yellow fever caused panic and despair.

By the spring of 1864, yellow fever was taking hundreds of lives in Bermuda. Blackburn set off for the island, promising his Confederate associates that the trip would yield "an infallible plan directed against the masses of Northern people solely to create death."

When he returned from Bermuda, Blackburn was carrying trunks that he believed were filled with disease. One trunk he fondly called "Big Number Two" would kill a man at 60 yards once it had been opened, the doctor boasted. Blackburn handed the trunks over to his operative, Godfrey Joseph Hyams, an impoverished Englishman who had lived in the American South for nine years. For a promised fee of \$100,000, Hyams had agreed to smuggle the trunks into Washington and other cities along the Eastern Seaboard. A special valise packed with fancy dress shirts and infected rags was to be delivered to President Lincoln.

Assured by Hyams that yellow fever was on its way to the North, Blackburn went back to Toronto. Soon he was at work on a new brainstorm, calculating just how much arsenic and strychnine would be needed to poison New York's water supply.

Eight operatives, led by Confederate officers Robert M. Martin and John William Headley, left Toronto for Manhattan in late fall of 1864 to carry out the most audacious terrorist attack of the Civil War: the effort to torch New York. Headley eventually published a detailed account of the operation in a book, describing how he and his accomplices were "ready to create a sensation in New York" with "Greek fire," a clear destructive liquid made of phosphorus in a bisulphide of carbon.

The fires would be ignited "so as to do the greatest damage in the business district on Broadway." The men set off on their mission on the evening of November 25, 1864, with bottles of Greek fire wrapped in paper and stuffed in their coat pockets.

"I reached the Astor House at 7:20 o'clock, got my key and went to my room," Headley wrote. "I opened a bottle carefully and quickly and spilled it on the pile of rubbish. It blazed up instantly . . . I locked the door and walked down the hall and stairway to the office, which was fairly crowded with people. I left the key at the office as usual."

The seven other accomplices apparently did the same in other locations, pouring bottles of Greek fire on mattresses and hallways, lobbing them against doors and hurling them against wooden wharves. Fire alarms began to sound. Before the night was over, 15 hotels and the Barnum museum, which housed a jumble of animals, freaks and frauds, had been set ablaze. Fire brigades tore through the streets and eventually put out the blazes, which caused much damage but no deaths. Within days, New York papers condemned the plot, calling it an act of evil beyond measure.

Meanwhile, Richard Sears McCulloh, a chemistry professor, had filled a small Richmond laboratory with cats. Early in 1865, as a delegation of Confederate congressmen watched through a small glass window in the door, McCulloh dropped a handkerchief saturated with liquid into the room. Within a minute, the cats began to gasp for breath. Seconds later, they suffocated as the handkerchief burst into flames.

McCulloh's new chemical weapon had performed perfectly. Oldham, the Confederate senator, from Texas, gushed about the weapon's possibilities when he reported the results to Jefferson Davis on February 11, 1865. McCulloh, who'd been a dutiful chemistry professor at Columbia until his defection in 1863, had spent a year hunkered in his secret laboratory, honing his formula for the Confederacy. Its contents were -- and remain to

this day -- a mystery, though Oldham boasted that the weapon could have laid waste to the enemy. Before it could be put to use, however, Richmond fell on April 3, 1865. McCulloh's laboratory was abandoned as he took flight. He was captured two months later off the coast of Florida and served nearly two years in prison, most of it in solitary confinement in the Virginia State Penitentiary.

As for Luke Blackburn, he abandoned his scheme to poison New York's Croton reservoir and -- just five months after his first visit -- returned to Bermuda, which in September 1864 was battling a new and even more terrible yellow fever epidemic. Once again, Blackburn collected infected clothing and packed it in trunks. Edward Swan, a hotel keeper in Bermuda, agreed to store the trunks until final shipping arrangements could be made.

However, by the time Blackburn had returned to the U.S., Godfrey Hyams (the Englishman who had smuggled Blackburn's first set of trunks), had gone to the U.S. consul in Canada with a terrible tale to tell. Angered that Blackburn had never paid him, on April 12, 1865, Hyams made a lengthy statement to the authorities about Blackburn's efforts at bioterrorism.

Blackburn had promised him "more honor and glory to my name than General Lee" for participating in the plot, Hyams told the consul. He acknowledged delivering "Big Number Two" and other trunks to Northern cities, but he said he "declined taking charge" of the valise intended for Lincoln. "I afterward heard that it had been sent to the president," he reported, though there is no known record of the valise actually reaching the White House.

On April 14, the day Lincoln was assassinated, a Confederate agent appeared at Allen's office in Bermuda and repeated many of the allegations made by Hyams. A bombshell discovery followed. Three infected trunks were still in Bermuda in the keep of Edward Swan. They were quarantined immediately and, according to one of Allen's agents, contained "dirty flannel drawers and shirts . . . evidently taken from a sickbed . . . some poultices and many other things which could have been placed there for no legitimate purpose."

Blackburn was arrested in Montreal on May 25, 1865. The New York Times trumpeted news of "The Yellow Fever Fiend," also known as "Dr. Black Vomit." He was called "a hideous devil" responsible for "one of the most fiendish plots ever concocted by the wickedness of man" and blamed for outbreaks of yellow fever.

But though yellow fever epidemics occurred regularly during the Civil War, they owed nothing to Blackburn's efforts. He and others were mistaken in thinking that soiled clothing could spread the disease. It is now known that yellow fever is spread by the bite of a mosquito.

Source: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A50445-2003May28?language=printer> (link and article unavailable online)

Answer/discuss:

1. Why did neither President Lincoln or Jefferson Davis consider using chemical weapons at the start of the Civil War?
2. What led to a series of terrorist plots being formed as the war waged on?
3. Summarize Luke Blackburn's plot. In your opinion, was his plan a good one? Why or why not?
4. Describe the plot against New York City and its outcome.
5. What was Richard McCulloh's plan?
6. What determines whether or not an act is terrorism?
7. In your opinion, are acts of terrorism ever warranted (for example, when at war)? Why or why not?

“As the War Turns”
Creating Soap Opera Dramas on Civil War Topics

Group Members: _____

Civil War Topic: _____

From disease and death, to riots and spies, your group will be assigned a reading on a Civil War topic that is filled with drama and intrigue. After reading about your topic, your group will create a 5 minute soap opera detailing your assigned topic for your classmates. Your soap opera should be entertaining and educational, teaching your classmates the facts you learned in a creative way.

Step 1: Review the roles below and determine who in your group will be responsible for each. While one group member will be in charge of each aspect of the project, all group members must actively contribute to each step.

- **Dramaturge:** Lead the group during Step 2, during which you will ensure everyone in your group engages in productive reading and discussion about your topic. Handouts and primary sources for your group to inspect will be provided by the teacher. Make sure each person reads carefully. Lead your group through discussing the questions provided (ensuring everyone, including yourself, contributes to the discussion) and summarize your group’s answers on notebook paper.
- **Script Writer:** Lead the group during Step 3, in which your group will brainstorm ideas for your short soap opera. Your soap opera should be creative and entertaining, but ultimately, it must teach the class about your assigned topic. After you have discussed various ideas for your soap opera, pick an idea and begin to stage your scene. While you will be responsible for writing down each actor’s lines on paper, everyone must contribute and offer ideas as to what they think their character would say.
- **Director:** You will lead the group during Step 4, when your group begins practicing and staging the script. Ensure everyone (including yourself) participates and stays on task during rehearsal. As you all begin acting out the lines you wrote in the previous step, you may find that some parts don’t work or need revision. Lead the group through making any changes necessary. Ultimately, you need to ensure that the group is as well-rehearsed as possible before presenting your soap opera in front of the class.
- **Artistic Designer:** After the soap opera script has been written and rehearsed, it is time to add some artistic touches to make your soap opera even more entertaining, believable, and educational. Lead the group during Step 5, brainstorming what materials can be brought to class or prepared to enhance your soap opera. This can include costumes, props, set pieces, music, etc. If your group will be creating some items in class, make sure everyone contributes and stays on task. If your group members are bringing items from home, make sure to divide up who is bringing what and remind your group members of their obligation. You should also go through a “final check” with your group, ensuring all aspects of the assignment are covered before the due date/performance date.

Step 2 - Research: Under leadership of the Dramaturge, read through the introductory information on your topic provided by the teacher and examine the primary sources in your packet. The Dramaturge will lead your group through discussing the questions provided.

After going over the questions, the Dramaturge will lead you in creating a list of what you all think are the most interesting, surprising, lesser known, or dramatic aspects of what you learned from your reading and primary sources. Talk about what you feel you need to teach your classmates about the topic assigned to you.

Step 3 – Brainstorm and Write: After your group has read and discussed your topic in depth, the Script Writer will lead your group through taking the information you’ve identified as most interesting or important and

turning those ideas into a soap opera script. Brainstorm as many creative ideas as you can then pick an idea and begin to write out your soap opera. Make sure your group considers:

- Where is this scene taking place?
- Who are the characters in the scene?
- What will the characters say and do in the scene? (Remember, the point is to have your soap opera convey the important information on your topic from your reading.)

While the Script Writer will write, each person must contribute ideas. Every group member must have at least one small part; group members can play more than one character if needed. You can also request assistance from other people in the school or class to play small parts if necessary.) The final script must be turned in on the day you perform and:

- Should be written with the purpose of educating your classmates about your Civil War topic
- Must contain accurate information
- Should be creative
- Should not contain grammatical errors (in written form)

Step 4 – Practice and Revise: Under leadership of the Director, you will begin staging and rehearsing your final presentation. (Remember, it should be at least 5 minutes long when performed.) All group members must take an active role in the final soap opera. Do your best to familiarize yourself with your lines; if you must keep your script in hand, do not read directly from it. Remember, your ultimate goal is to teach the rest of the class about your Civil War topic using this creative format.

Step 5 – Finishing Touches: Under leadership of the Artistic Designer, think about what materials you can create, use from the classroom, or bring from home to enhance your short soap opera. Consider how the use of props, scenery, costumes, music, etc. can make your presentation more believable, entertaining and educational. If you will need particular supplies, the Artistic Designer should consult with your teacher. All materials must be in class on the day you are scheduled to perform.

It is also the job of the Artistic Designer to lead the group through a final “check,” making sure all aspects of the assignment have been completed. Remember, your final soap opera should:

- Be presented as a serious performance (i.e. assume the appropriate persona of your character, keep a straight face, deliver your lines as believably as possible, support your fellow actors, etc.)
- Be organized and well rehearsed
- Be engaging and creative
- Teach us about your Civil War topic and make us interested to learn more. Your soap opera should convey an abundance of information clearly related to your topic. The information you share must be accurate and educational.
- Make sure each of you speaks at an appropriate volume and uses appropriate emotion to convey your character
- Props, music, costumes etc. if present in scene should be used effectively
- Once all steps are complete, give your soap opera a title (i.e. “As the War Turns,” “Battlefield Hospital,” “The Young and the Soldiers,” etc.)

In-class work days: _____

Due Date: _____

What questions do you have about this assignment?