Civil War Battle Experience Lesson Plan

**Minnesota K-12 or District Standards:**

Regional tensions around economic development, slavery, territorial expansion and governance resulted in a civil war and a period of Reconstruction that led to the abolition of slavery, a more powerful federal government, a renewed push into indigenous nations’ territory, and continuing conflict over racial relations. (Civil War and Reconstruction: 1850—1877)

**Minnesota K-12 Benchmark:**

(9.4.4.19.3) Describe the course of the Civil War, identifying key political and military leaders, issues, events and turning points on battlefields and home fronts, in South, North and West.

**Rationale:**

This lesson plan will allow students to see a first-hand account of the experience of battle during the Civil War. The students will be able to read about the specific duties of a soldier, the outcomes of these battles, and the emotions that the soldier felt during and after these battles.

**Objectives:**

* TSWBAT identify common words that were used by soldiers during the Civil War.
* TSWBAT explain why battles were both physically and mentally exhausting for soldiers.
* TSWBAT analyze the events of the battles in order to explain why the soldier had specific duties during the battles as well as to explain the emotions that the soldier expressed in his letters.

**Activities:**

* Brief Introduction to the soldier, Isaac Mark Abbott
* Class analysis of first letter
* Group analysis of second letter
* Class discussion of letter comparisons

**Materials:**

* Isaac Mark Abbott letters
* Primary Source Analysis worksheet

**Assessment:**

* Primary Source Analysis Worksheet

**Time:**

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| **Activity** | **Purpose** | **Est. Time (50 min.)** |
| Introduction to Isaac Mark Abbott | The introduction of the soldier allows the students to see a part of his past that will help them understand the letters | 5 min. |
| First letter analysis | The first letter gives a very straight forward account of a battle that Abbott participated in and it is a good starting point to analyze a primary document as a class | 15 min. |
| Second letter analysis | The second letter is not as straight forward and may need deeper analysis, this will be a good letter to have students practice analyzing primary sources | 20 min. |
| Class discussion | The class discussion will allow students to explain how battles were fought and how this impacted their thoughts on the war. | 10 min. |

**Interactive Lesson Plan Outline:**

1. Introduction to Isaac Mark Abbott
   1. This lesson should be used after the class has already discussed some sort of larger battle (such as the Battle of Bull Run, the Battle of Gettysburg, etc.) because this will allow students to see how battles were fought in a larger perspective, while these letters give a personal narrative from a soldier who fought in the Civil War.
   2. The introduction to the soldier will not only help students get a personal background of the person they will be studying, but it will also help them grow closer to the soldier as well.
   3. A detailed analysis of Isaac Mark Abbott can be found on the same page as the letters which will be connected to the lesson plan
2. First Abbott letter analysis: <http://digitalhorizonsonline.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/cord-dfah/id/175/rec/43>
   1. This letter should be analyzed as a class, so that the students are given an understanding for how one should analyze a primary source
   2. some parts of the letter may seem confusing to the students, here are some explanations for the confusing language of the letter
      1. Abbott’s knapsack
         1. Abbott describes his knapsack several time in the letter. Knapsacks were very important for soldiers during the war because they held all of their supplies that they would need for battle as well as personal possessions which would occupy their free time
      2. batteries
         1. a battery is a set of cannons that were used during battles
      3. picket
         1. soldiers who were posted on guard ahead of a main force. They were used to ward off incoming enemies as well as report back if any news needs to come to the camp
      4. breastwork
         1. a fortification that was set up during battles in the war
      5. rebs / johnnies
         1. Confederate soldiers
      6. Roe Abbott
         1. Roe, who is mentioned in the letter, is Isaac’s brother who also served with Isaac in the war.
   3. NOTE: The students do not have to read the full letter if you do not find it pertaining to the lesson.
   4. As the letter is analyzed the students should fill out the primary source worksheet provided below
3. Second Abbott letter analysis <http://digitalhorizonsonline.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/cord-dfah/id/133/rec/16>
   1. For the second letter, it is recommended that students be divided into groups to read them and try to analyze them on their own.
   2. Terms that might seem confusing
      1. the metal cars they talk about most likely refers to the train cars that were used during the war to transport supplies and people
   3. As with the other letter, if you believe that parts of the letter do not pertain to what you want the students to learn about battles, then only have them read parts of the letter.
   4. As the students work through this analysis, have the students fill out another primary source worksheet
4. Class discussion
   1. Recommended class discussion comparing the two documents to see what was different between the two battles (preparation, strategies, environment, emotions, etc.)

**Middle School Lesson Adaptation:**

* Recommended that the class only analyze one of the letters and have a class discussion on what they learned from the letter, possibly comparing it to previous ideas of what battles were like during the war.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Primary Source Worksheet

1. Who wrote this document?

2. Who was the document made for?

3. When was the document written?

4. Name 3 important points made in the document:

5. Write down any words or phrases that do not make sense to you, as well as a possible meaning for the words/phrases.

6. Why do you think the author wrote this document?