Lesson Plan #4

Trains and Transportation in the Civil War

**Minnesota K-12 Standard:**

19. 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**:

Describe how the political policies, innovations and technology of the Civil War era had a lasting impact on United States society. (Civil War and Reconstruction: 1850—1877)

**Rationale:**

This brief lesson is meant to supplement a Civil War curriculum and focuses on one of the main advantages of the North over the South through the use of a primary source. The transportation industry was undergoing dramatic changes since the beginning of the industrial revolution in the United States. It was only a matter of time before the industrial might of the North became tools for the military in the Civil War. The use of trains to transport soldiers was a massive advantage for the North and analysis of the following letter will provide insight for students of this advantage.

**Objectives:**

* After completing this lesson students will be able to:
  + Identify at least two advantages of utilizing trains in the military
  + Use their math skills to determine the effectiveness of the North’s troop transport

**Activities:**

* Letter Analysis
  + Read the letter excerpt
  + Answer corresponding questions

**Materials:**

* Abbott letter excerpt worksheet
* Photocopy of the authentic handwritten letter is available in the following link:

<http://cdm16921.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/cord-dfah/id/194/rec/3>

**Assessment:**

* Primary assessment comes from the worksheet questions. Students must demonstrate knowledge of the North’s advantage of using their superior railroad network

**Time:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Activity** | **Purpose** | **Estimated Time** |
| Letter Analysis | Dissect Civil War Era letter to appreciate the advantage of using trains for transportation | 20 min. |

Directions:

1. Read the top and bottom of the letter and answer the first question.
2. Read the letter from beginning to end and highlight any unfamiliar words and check the Vocabulary Words for the definition.
3. Answer the remaining questions bellow.

Chattanooga, Tenn.

November 12th 1864

Dear sister,

I believe the last letter I wrote you left me at Bridgeport. Ha! Well we left there on the 26th & arrived here at 11 A.M. of the same day. Col. Espy received orders that afternoon to be ready to go to Dalton to command that post and we were making calculations to go there on the morrow, but after dark a little while an orderly came in with orders to be ready to march in light marching order as soon as possible. So at midnight we were routed up and spent the balance of the night drawing rations packing up & laying around. At daylight we got aboard of the train and there we stayed till 10 A.M. when we shoved out. The Rebs were reported at Decatur, Alabama and that proved to be our destination. Decatur is about 110 miles from here and it was 12 o’clock at night when we got off the cars on this side of the river. We crossed the river on a pontoon bridge! and took up a position in the trenches at 2 A.M.

…

Write soon & often and remember your brother,

I.M.A. [Isaac Mark Abbott]

Use the document above to answer the following questions.

1. Where was the letter written? When was the letter written? Who was the letter written for? Who wrote the letter? What is the relationship between the author and the person receiving the letter?
2. Why is this letter being written?
3. How far did the author travel in a train to get to Chattanooga, Tennessee?
4. What time did the author leave Bridgeport? What time did he arrive at Decatur? How many hours did it take him and the people in his army to travel by train?
5. What are 2 advantages of using a train in the military? Can you think of more advantages?

Vocabulary Words:

Col. Espy—Colonel Espy is the leader of the army group that I.M.A is in   
 post—a military assignment

morrow—the following day   
orderly—a soldier to carries out small tasks for an officer   
routed up—brought together   
rebs—short for rebels, the enemy

cars—each section of a train   
pontoon bridge—a bridge made out of rafts   
trenches—a series of ditches for soldiers to hide in to avoid enemy shots