

How Do You Know Anything About the Civil War?

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Overview

When pondering the question “how do you know?” many humans are bound to make assumptions. We have been assuming as a race for millennia that there is an order to things and that – if we look closely or study rigorously – we will discover and be able to explain that order. We also take for granted the concept of research and the resulting “canonical knowledge” from such efforts. If someone has taken the time and energy to make discoveries and if that someone has shared said discoveries with his or her peers, and furthermore if said discoveries are accepted and lauded by his or her peers, than it stands to reason that the human race has had a tremendous breakthrough and that all humanity now knows something that it did not before. These are the assumptions that humans make in justifying how they know something.

Consider for a moment that the human race is not composed of clones. If this assumption can be made, than it can also be assumed that “knowledge” is not a little bubble that gets deposited into our brains every night by the Smart Fairy. Everything we “know”, we know in context. More precisely, all of our individual knowledge is biased by how we learned, who taught us, and why we were learning it in the first place. In all cases, our knowledge of fact is tainted by the significant circumstances of our opinions.

In the case of something as factually grounded as a war, it is hard to believe that there could be more than one way to view soldiers and battlefields, dates and death tolls. History suggests, however, that our conceptions of war are biased either towards those who write the winner’s textbooks or the loser’s dissenting propaganda. Within our own American borders lie some of the bloodiest battlefields in modern history. Within each of our hearts lies an allegiance to a region as well as a country. Within our sacred documents lies a truth of freedom, whether for the rights of capitalists, governments, or human beings of all races. The American Civil War divided the nation almost 150 years

ago, but it still divides our minds when it comes to whose rendition of history we choose to believe.

This unit takes a look at how bias in source material plays a crucial role in deciding how history is written – and thus learned. It uses the Civil War as a focal point for looking at how different sides see the same issue, and it highlights the fact that people, places, and dates only mean something when you contextualize them a certain way. Students will be asked to look at what they know and dissect what it truly means to know in history. They will work with primary sources from both ends of the conflict to discover how politicians, authors, filmmakers, and historians have painted the message behind the Civil War to their advantage. Due to the complex nature of the source material and the assumed basic knowledge of Civil War causes, battles, and outcomes, this unit is intended to be used with middle or high school advanced history students.

Rationale

What lesson do we learn by studying the American Civil War? As Americans, what are we supposed to see when we look back on this tumultuous time? As historians, what aspects of life before, during, and after the war hold the most significance for us today?

Studying a war can be a very boring endeavor. Military History leaves the student with nothing more than people, places, and death tolls. Strategy only comes in handy for reenactments and medals of honor. While cannonballs shaped the landscape of our country, the words from the soldiers, generals, politicians, mothers, and sweethearts shaped our conceptions of a time and a place. In fact, the social aspects of history make us who we are today and affect our decisions of tomorrow. The past is always informing our present and predicting our future.

But what if the past were erroneously recorded? What if that which we parade as fact is only masquerading as such? What if the American Civil War didn't happen like the textbook says? Going back to our focusing questions, the answers change dramatically if we take our canon of knowledge on the Civil War and throw it out the window. If we accept some facts and ignore others in order to make a prettier picture, we compromise the outcome of the future in perhaps irreparable ways. What can we do to ensure that our concept of what really happened during the Civil War is what indeed *really* happened?

How Do We Know What Caused the Civil War?

Slavery. Economics. Politics. Pride. Land. Any and all of these have been cited as reasons that caused two sets of states came to literal blows in the 1860s. But where does the Civil War actually start? And furthermore, what actually caused the powder keg to explode at that particular moment? Many answers are plausible, most of these are

probable, but none are stand-alone or clear-cut in their depth or breadth. And that is the first thing we need to know about what caused the Civil War!

Many historians can trace the dissention of the Civil War back before the birth of any soldier who fought in the conflict. Before the American nation even had a name or a flag or a credo, it had factions. James Madison as early as 1787 in *Federalist No. 10* addresses the issue of competing interests in a government as something of which to be cautious. Before the American Constitution was adopted, he was aware that there are an infinite number of opinions on any given subject and that protection must be given in a democratic government to those with minority viewpoints. “Tyranny of the majority”, as it is now termed, was to be avoided in favor of allowing people to agree to disagree. This concept was meant to translate at all levels of American democracy – from town-hall direct democracies to state government communication with the federal branches. It might be regarded as the greatest achievement of democracy that the conflict which eventually erupted in the American Civil War was kept under control for nearly 90 years by a piece of paper we call the Constitution.

By “kept under control”, it is meant to say that armed conflict was avoided in favor of a war of mainly words. There were plenty of pairs of factions that exchanged heated arguments up until 1861: slaveholders challenged abolitionists, industrialists sparred with agriculturalists, states’ righters traded blows with federalists, and the wealthy squelched the cries of the poor and unlanded. All of these players (or more accurately, their grandchildren) eventually served in either the Union or Confederate army. But for what, exactly, were they fighting?

According to the *Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions* from the turn of the 19th century, the answer might have been freedom of choice. While these declarations from state legislatures deal with a law that was abolished more than half a century before the Civil War (the Alien and Sedition Acts of John Adams’ presidency), their message is hardly a “one note”. The ideas espoused in the *Resolutions* resonated just as soundly in 1861 – that no state government should stand to have its liberties truncated or erased by the federal government. The point of the protest literature was to bring to the president’s attention the part in the Constitution that protects each state’s right to nullify (refuse to follow) a federal law that encroaches upon its liberties and rights. While the Alien and Sedition acts are highlighted here, the *Resolutions* could just as easily be talking of the right to own slaves (property), trade them across state or national lines, or move them to another state where slaves don’t as yet live. Because the US Constitution never mentions slavery as a moral or economic issue (only for the purposes of determining legislative representation), who gets to decide how slavery progresses as a state-to-state institution?

It is difficult to deny that slavery had anything to do with the Civil War, but just how significant it was to causing the conflict can be debated. This is not to say that slavery was not a very important issue, arguably the most important issue of this era; it is simply

to say that nothing resulting in a war is a clear-cut thing. Slavery is as much an economic issue as a human rights issue, regardless of when or where it is, was, or will be practiced. In the case of the United States, slavery was a nearly 250 year investment on the part of planters, shippers/distributors, and consumers across the nation. American and Caribbean slavery impacted people, governments, and economies on four continents (perhaps more). In American history, it was an underlying factor for the Louisiana Purchase and the Mexican War, it was a principle factor of our alliance with Great Britain (and Great Britain's subsequent abuse of that alliance on many occasions), and it spurred massive industrial and interior improvements across the nation. Nothing about slavery, it seems, was cut and dried except for the fact that people were being subjugated by other people.

The social issue of slavery – its physical and psychological cruelty – put America on a world stage. Great Britain, America's role model in most things social and political, had abolished slavery in the 1840s, leaving many to wonder why a nation as great as America was destined to become could not follow suit. Religious revivals across the country helped to usher in a new breed of social reformer known as the abolitionist. As with most factions, propaganda proved helpful in disseminating the message of the cause. As Abraham Lincoln would famously utter upon meeting Harriet Beecher Stowe, the author of one of the most impressive propaganda pieces in modern history, "So you are the little lady who started this big war!" In a way, Lincoln was right.

Uncle Tom's Cabin, the definitive abolitionist read, is by most accounts a cause of the Civil War. The book discusses the tough issues of social justice, the rights of property owners, and human rights violations. Set against three very different backdrops of antebellum America, Stowe shows the reader principled Quakers, conflicted and well-meaning plantation owners, and sadistic, money-grubbing Southerners all playing their part in the great American saga that was slavery. While Stowe herself never encountered or sought out such conditions (hearsay was her research), she painted a convincing picture to readers both North and South. Her story mobilized outraged human rights activists and outraged slaveholders because she played the heartstring of morality with her bow of conscience. Her success can be measured by the mini-Civil Wars that broke out after *Tom's* 1852 publication: Bleeding Kansas, Dred Scott, and Harper's Ferry.

What caused the Civil War? Was it the decision of South Carolina to secede from the Union and for its own sovereign state? Was it the shots fired upon Fort Sumter? Was it Lincoln's catapult past a divided Democrat party into the presidency? Was it his rousing of troops and declaration of war on states in rebellion? Or are these events merely sparks that lit a powder keg of dissent that had been building for 10, 90, 250 years? How do we know?

How Do We Know What To Call The Conflict?

Naming something is the act of assigning and transferring power. What we call ourselves gives us power over our past and our future; what others call us – whether to our face or behind our backs – transfers power away from us. We demonstrate bias in our naming practices. National “monuments” suggest an air of awe and respect; “ghettos” denote places of ill-repute and squalor. “Magnet” schools attract the best students; “comprehensive” schools must admit all students. A plethora of examples can show what we think when we think of something – associations and subconscious judgments come to the surface in our words.

Bias places an individual’s context upon a given situation or moment. We all have biases. Being able to understand how our biases affect our decisions and future actions is essential to good practice. Learning the significance behind other peoples’ biases helps to eradicate misunderstanding and foster better communication. In the case of studying the American Civil War, Americans must take a close look at how the practice of naming a conflict gives and takes power and how biases are reflected and misconstrued in something as simple as a title.

“Civil War” is by its very definition a conflict fought by different factions within a country. Abraham Lincoln prophetically quipped that a house “divided against itself” cannot stand. In this sense, the term “civil war” has been most frequently used by historians, civilians, and politicians both during and after the conflict to describe the war. Many, including Southerners, refer to the war in this way because of the associations of brotherhood between the United States and Confederate States of America. Even though each side constituted its own nation (the CSA was never officially recognized as a sovereign nation, although claiming to be one), the two shared a history that made it difficult to completely separate their interests. A “civil war” necessitates the lack of a foreign enemy and the American Civil War – for all intents and purposes – is considered a war within a nation as opposed to between two nations.

A more politically correct title for the conflict could be the “War Between the States”. This title was not used much during the war, but it became popular in the South after the war was over. Southerners tend to use it not to denote a war between several states within a nation but instead to symbolize war between the Confederate States and the United States. The United States government to this day shies away from using the term in favor of the Civil War. However, some military units have been known to use War Between the States to commemorate anniversaries or monuments. This title is used almost exclusively in the South today and is the second most commonly used title for the war.

The term “War of Northern Aggression” is used primarily by the South to lay blame on the North for the conflict. While used infrequently, the title suggests that Lincoln’s call to raise a militia against the South after the firing on Fort Sumter was the true cause of the war. These people believe that there would have never been a war had the North let the Confederacy leave in peace.

During the conflict, many Southerners took to calling the war the “War for Southern Independence”. They likened this war to the other battles America had fought to gain freedom, namely the American Revolution in the 1770s and the War of 1812. In the first two conflicts, the British were the oppressors and America was obligated to assert its sovereignty and deliver freedom to its people. In the War for Southern Independence, the enemy was the oppressive legislature in the North and it was the job of the newly born Confederacy to provide legislative freedom to its people. The title fell out of use once the South lost the war.

A much less frequently used term, the “Second American Revolution” evokes images of rebellion and insurgency on the part of the South. It was coined by historian Charles Beard in the 1920s to support the idea that the Confederacy was fighting against the leading principles of the American Constitution in its rebellion. During the conflict, many Southerners would have opposed the term because of its negative connotation; many believed that it was the South’s right to separate from the North and that the war was not a revolution but a disturbance of the peace which Southerners so desperately wanted. Northerners laud the title as a demonstration of how completely they had squelched the revolution and won the war.

How Do We Know Where To Go From Here?

With the conflict over, many wondered how half of the country – battered, humiliated, and beaten – could hope to be reconciled with their fate as the losers. Both President Lincoln and eventually President Johnson had the desire to put aside the differences between the Union and the Confederacy in favor of rebuilding the nation on equal footing. The radical Republicans in the legislature were persistent in their efforts to humble the South through laws that required oaths of loyalty and the hostile assumption of property and wealth to pay for war debts incurred by both sides. White Southerners watched in horror as their political vacancies were filled with Republican puppets and former slaves and they resorted to secret fraternities of a violent nature to vilify their disenfranchisement.

What was a Southerner – or for that matter, a Northerner – supposed to think after the war was over? Are there winners and losers in a conflict that does not involve conquest? Was it not a conquest of the South by the North in the Civil War, at least psychologically? Can a united America move forward from such a severe separation of interests? Could the Union ever truly subject and destroy the Confederacy? Would the South in fact rise again?

Reconstruction has had a very interesting place in the American history textbook. Treated as a triumph for African-Americans in politics and the breeding ground of the Ku Klux Klan, the twelve years between 1865 and 1877 marked only the beginning of what

continues to be the revision of the social, political, and economic relationships between Americans. It generated resentment on the part of white Southerners who felt cheated in their right to own property; it generated cockiness on the part of white Northerners who berated the agricultural haughtiness of a backwards set of states; and it generated fear and distrust on the part of African-Americans who were subjected to lies and misdeeds by former masters and to racism by scared whites across the country. The legacy of Reconstruction falls short of its intentions. America has been paying for these shortcomings for decades. If the textbooks paint Reconstruction as the successful military takeover of the former Confederacy followed by the complete reversal of progress after the Compromise of 1877, then how can America have moved on?

The short answer is through fiction. While not intending to completely erase the Civil War from the hearts and minds of Americans, both popular authors and eventually filmmakers tried to gloss over the embarrassments and animosity of the conflict by altering the meaning behind the history. “Selective historical fiction” presented a new avenue of reconciliation that appealed to all Americans on some level or another. The film industry especially has reaped the rewards of portraying the Civil War and Reconstruction as the great American trial where no one is really at fault and everyone comes out on top; there can be no losers if we are all winners.

Take, for example, the Academy Award showstopper that is *Gone With The Wind*. Who else but Hollywood could endear a Southern harlot who beats her slaves to the American public? *Gone With The Wind*, produced in 1939, is truly the best example of the South rising as a phoenix out of the ashes of the Civil War. While the Confederacy may have been burned to the ground, the movie (and the Margaret Mitchell novel upon which it is based) demonstrates to viewers the sheer tenacity of Southerners such as Scarlett O’Hara, who vows to never go hungry again, as God is her witness. The strength and determination of Southerners is seen as a virtue here rather than a fault; while it may have gotten them into a war they could never have won, it also allowed them to rebuild and survive into a proud culture that can reminisce about the moonlight and magnolias of the antebellum years. Scarlett is surely a winner who employs the ultimate strategy: “I’ll just think about it tomorrow.”

In what might seem a contrast, *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* (1949) is a tale of cavalry men several years after the end of the war. The Union and Confederate armies have been untied under one flag of America again and this time the enemy is a foreigner – the American Indian. John Wayne playing Captain Nathan Brittles lauds a man who died fighting the Apache as “a great soldier who fought in the war for our freedom” as he lays a handmade Confederate flag over the makeshift grave. With constant references to Civil War battles and generals (the movie begins with a retelling of Custer’s last stand and the mourning of the loss of a heroic Civil War general), *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* shows Americans that there were more pressing issues to worry about after the Civil War than Reconstruction and hurt feelings and racism – namely bloodthirsty Indians.

Finally, by 1993 filmmakers addressed the need for Southerners to apologize for their missteps with the film *Sommersby*. Jack Sommersby returns to Tennessee from the war with an agenda – to right his wrongs once and for all. He proposes to his neighbors a joint-venture tobacco farming enterprise where he agrees to sell off his plantation lot by lot to those who invest in the capital and labor. His biggest (and riskiest) investment is in allowing his former slaves to purchase and own land the same as everybody else. He and his family are threatened by the Ku Klux Klan, but Jack stands his ground in an effort to make up for the sins of his past. This example of a Southerner doing the right thing in the face of danger is inspiring and makes you want to believe it could have been based on a true story.

All three of these films demonstrate the film industry's efforts to help alter American history, seemingly for good. Whether by convincing Southerners that they too were winners, uniting all soldiers under the banner of Indian removal, or proving that Southerners got the message about what all the fighting was for, these films gave Americans something upon which to think. Granted, few if any who fought in the war actually saw any of these interpretations. Perhaps this is even more important considering the fact that events not of our era hold an almost mythical place in our minds; at least the myth has a moral. Is it okay to look at these portrayals of history at all? Should historians disregard the messages they are trying to convey? Should the audience absorb the sentiment while taking the accuracy with a grain of salt? Does popular history count when we recall the past?

Objectives

The goal of this unit is to teach the social aspects of the American Civil War with a unique twist. So often the period between 1861 and 1865 is treated as a series of military victories and blunders. Students learn about the generals, soldiers, battles, and death toll – usually from the Northern (Yankee) perspective. Most students, however, are not made aware of the tricky nature of teaching the Civil War. The losing side was not a foreign power but a set of American states in rebellion. While students may understand that history is largely written by the victors, they come up against a very vocal counter-story from the South. These conflicting viewpoints can leave any student puzzled as to what really happened during the Civil War... or the War of Northern Aggression.

Perhaps the largest problem students encounter when studying the Civil War is that much of the material produced after 1865 was meant to heal the wounds of separation. Sources that span the war years are rife with harsh critiques and propaganda that paints each side in an unfavorable light. In fact, the differences that caused the Civil War were left unreconciled and allowed to fester to the point of eruption at Fort Sumter in 1861. But, as the war drew to a close, all parties realized that – in order to move forward – the atrocities of the differences needed to be ignored in favor of a celebration of similarities.

The resulting body of work prioritizes a reunion of soldiers and citizens as American rather than Rebs and Yanks. This revision of history carries the cost of ignorance and complacency in reference to the greatest conflict of our nation's past. It is the role of educators to help students reconstruct a more accurate appraisal of the events leading up to and between 1861 and 1865 that led to massive industrialization, segregation, racism, and political laissez-faire attitudes that exist to this day.

By the end of the unit, students will be able to converse intelligently upon many aspects of the Civil War from both a Northern and Southern perspective. Terms used to name the conflict – such as “Civil War” and “War of Northern Aggression” – will be dissected for regional significance and bias. Students will read *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to gain a Northern perspective at the start of the war. Students will also read the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions, which provide a Southern perspective on states' rights before the Civil War. The unit will also include lessons highlighting the process of reconciliation after the Civil War, with emphasis on the use of film (*Gone With The Wind*, *She Wore A Yellow Ribbon*, and *Sommersby*) to achieve this end. The assessment of the unit's objectives will be in periodic writing assignments and discussion related to the material.

Strategies

The goals of this unit are straightforward enough so as to provide room for simple and complex strategies in the classroom. Each strategy has pros and cons, but their use in this unit plays to the strengths of the students as well as the materials to be used. Because this unit works with primary sources, it stands to reason that the strategies are centered on reading comprehension. What follows are some strategies with specific resources mentioned to help teachers match relevant material to the desired concept.

Fruyer Model Maps

The Fruyer Model Map is a graphic way to organize thoughts about a concept or vocabulary word. There are five parts to the map: a center box that displays the concept or vocabulary word; a box (upper left) with an accepted “definition” of the word/phrase; a box (upper right) with “characteristics” that describe the word/phrase; a box (lower left) with “examples” demonstrating an application of the word/phrase; a box (lower right) with “non-examples” where the word/phrase would not be evidenced. The purpose of the Fruyer Model Map is to give a comprehensive understanding of something that may be taken for granted or that has many conflicting definitions and/or applications in English.

In this unit, the Map helps students understand the background behind each of the terms used to name the North American conflict occurring between 1861 and 1865. Because there are so many ways to label the American Civil War and because each label is attached to some deeper reasoning as to why the conflict occurred, a Fruyer Model Mapping of the terms can prove useful for understanding bias. Not only does each side in

America label the war differently, foreign countries and opportunists within this country label the war to fit their needs at the time. Using positive references to either side or demonizing either side shows allegiance not only to a group of states but also to the cause for which that group fought.

A “War of Rebellion” is much different from a “War of Aggression” and the Frayer Model Map helps to unearth these subtleties by isolating important aspects of the context behind the terms. The “characteristics” box is helpful to older students because it uncovers the intention behind the words that we use. When referring to the example above, “rebellion” connotes willfulness and spite whereas “aggression” connotes misplaced anger and the need to control. The “examples” box gives students the opportunity to activate prior knowledge by recalling other instances when the term or concept was applied. This teaching tool makes great use of the power of association to create meaning. For example, calling the Southern soldiers “Rebs” and calling the conflict a “War of Rebellion” infers that the Southern soldiers were spiteful and without just cause in starting the conflict; this meaning-making gives weight to further study of bias from a Northern perspective with reference to the word “rebel”. Finally, the “non-examples” box helps create connections between terms that are used to describe similar events, ideas, or time periods.

The Frayer Model Maps should be displayed throughout the unit as reminders of the concepts being discussed in subsequent lessons. A name can be a self-fulfilling prophecy and so diagramming the varied names used to label the American Civil War can be its own lesson on how people use words to possess power. The Maps demonstrate bias clearly and give students the opportunity to gain deeper understanding by using what they already know out of context. At the end of the unit, the Maps should be revisited and clarified with the new information learned from the text, movies, and discussions.

Guided Reading

Guided reading helps students to maintain focus, whether it be on content, context, vocabulary, or another element of the text. The large volume of text encountered in many history classrooms requires a creative way of calming students’ fears about missing important information. English teachers may read a book for imagery, science teachers may read the same book for content, and history teachers may read it for background information and context. Guided reading activities allow teachers to literally “guide” students through the type of reading required of a given text by providing focus questions and checkpoints that may detail pertinent information for gleaning the significance of a text.

Considering the large amount of reading this unit requires and the short span of the unit, guided reading can be invaluable for getting and keeping students on track with the themes. Taking the *Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions* as a whole, the guided reading can

serve as an opportunity to assess prior knowledge, to compare and contrast the texts, and to highlight the main idea that civil disunion was a bone of contention well before 1861. While guided reading for high school students does not necessitate reading text aloud, it is helpful to have students identify passages that support their answers to guided reading questions and to share those answers and passages with the class so that all students stay on track. The overarching question “What caused the Civil War?” helps to anchor the theme of the *Resolutions* to the reading of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*.

Reading novels in history class is an exciting and daunting exercise for teachers and students. Students tend to get lost in fictional pieces and the main idea can be muddled in love stories and plots of intrigue. Propaganda is an especially tough theme to ferret out in a longer text such as *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Guided reading for a (propaganda) book should pay close attention to vocabulary, character identity, important vignettes, and the author’s thesis. Students should be encouraged to read at their own pace, but there should be checkpoints throughout the reading to ensure that something necessary to discover in the first chapter is fully understood before building upon the theme in the fourth chapter. In this way, quizzes and/or chapter review questions are helpful in assessing understanding and in adjusting pace accordingly.

Providing a worksheet for guided reading activities with a running list of checkpoints and expectations can help keep students organized and will reinforce good critical reading habits. Allowing students to pair for review and share answers and thoughts (along the lines of a “think-pair-share”) can also be helpful if students are on many different reading levels. The important thing for a teacher to remember is that the students are reading a text as per the classroom instructions and it is the teacher’s job to make the purpose of the reading as clear as possible at all times. Referring back to the Frayer Maps might be appropriate at certain checkpoints to help students make more lasting connections with the point of the reading.

BDA (Before, During, After)

Watching films in class can be educational as well as entertaining. Many students in the 21st century are visual learners and benefit immensely from seeing an interpretation of a concept. In history, it is difficult to use the imagination to reconstruct the past without context. Many teachers find that film can provide context with the added bonus of a gripping storyline to keep students' attention. While film should not be viewed as a cure-all or the best representation of historical fact, if judiciously used it can convey important messages about how humans tend to rewrite their histories to fit with popular conceptions of the past. The method of watching film “before, during, and after” keeps students focused on teacher-chosen aspects of the film and can encourage deeper viewing practices.

The “before, during, and after” (BDA) method prepares students for the information

that will be taken out of the film and then encourages students to interpret that information outside of the context of the film itself. It is a good practice for this unit because each of the films used presents an interesting yet biased view of Reconstruction in American history. If all of the films are watched together (as suggested in the classroom activities), the BDA method helps to make comparisons and highlights contrasting elements of the stories. It also allows the teacher to guide the seeing of each film with emphasis on the varied interpretations of the success of Reconstruction and the legacy of the Civil War. The "before" element is very important because it addresses confusing elements of the film before viewing, creating a better viewing environment for the students. Things that should be addressed in the "before" questions include character identification and motive, vocabulary, setting, and theme. Some of the "before" activities will be questions or conjectures placed to the students and others will be summaries provided by the teacher.

"During" the films, students should be looking for reinforcements of the "before" elements. This forces students to visualize and clarify otherwise confusing concepts. "During" questions and observations should also have students find material that will be further synthesized after viewing the film. Examples of "during" observations from the Reconstruction films in this unit could have students comparing themes between the films, contrasting character roles between the films, and reading the regional bias of the thesis of the film. Bias is evident in the films chosen for this unit and a good lead-in activity to the "after" section could be making students rate the film pretending they are a Northerner, Southerner, city-dweller, country-person, well-educated, etc. This highlights the fact that station correlates to bias quite closely.

The major benefit from the BDA method is what comes out of the "after" section. This unit encourages students to refer back to the Frayer models to make connections between all of the materials presented. These connections help students understand why historians choose to emphasize certain elements of a story over others. The "after" section must be carefully crafted by the teacher to lead even the most reluctant learner to a better understanding of significance. Questions that refer back to observations or questions from the "before" section can prove effective for these learners.

Classroom Activities

What follows are lessons that serve to bring this unit to life. The three lessons here are a comprehensive journey through the Civil War, focusing on the differences between Northern and Southern interpretations. As previously stated, this unit is meant to be coupled with a more in-depth look at the military history of the Civil War; the lessons are more suited to teaching bias rather than strategy. The lessons should be taught in this order.

The Tell-Tale Titles: "Civil War" v. "War Between the States"

The objective of this lesson is for students to be able to identify the different terms used when referring to the conflict commonly known as the American Civil War. Students should also understand why certain groups use certain titles and what the significance of those titles can tell us about the place the conflict has in regional histories. The lesson should last for one to two 45 minute periods and should serve as the first lesson of the unit.

Students will be using the Frayer model map to diagram several titles related to the Civil War. The pre-class work should have students familiarize themselves with a Frayer model map (see strategies). Each block of the map should be explained as best as possible for the level of students. An example term or phrase could be used to help in this explanation. Once students have familiarized themselves with the technique of implementing the Frayer model map, the teacher should hang up five Frayer model maps in the front of the room with the following titles at the center: “American Civil War”, “War Between the States”, “War of Northern Aggression”, “War for Southern Independence”, “Second American Revolution”.

Ask students to brainstorm in pairs the different groups involved in fighting the Civil War. Some answers will be: the Union, the Confederacy, blacks/slaves, abolitionists, racists/bigots, agriculturalists, industrialists, Westerners, city people, country people, rich people, poor people. Once students have brainstormed and a class list has been compiled, ask students to guess at what the definition of each of the conflicts listed in the Frayer model maps would be. Challenge them by asking if a war of “aggression” would be considered the same as a war of “independence”. Ask them what emotional or social biases are being intimated by the terms; place all of this information in the definition box.

Next, discuss with the students the origins of the terms used to describe the Civil War (see rationale). Once the discussion is over, try to assign the different groups from the brainstorm list to the “characteristics” section of each of the Frayer model maps. This work will be incomplete and students should be made aware at this time that the Frayer model maps will be constant reference tools for use during the unit. Teachers should have the maps on display in the classroom throughout the unit. As they assign the groups to the “characteristic” section, students should be thinking of other characteristics of the titles. What possible biases could these groups have had when deciding how to name the conflict? Where did these biases originate? Do these biases still exist today? Why would this term be common or uncommon today? These questions should be asked in reference to each of the terms.

The lesson should end with the teacher informing the students that the “example” and “non-example” sections will be left open for now. During the unit, students may want to add information that they gather into the maps. All students should be given a set of five maps for themselves to place in their notebooks or folders so that during the reading or

movie sections of the unit they may make marks on the maps according to their own observations. Classroom accepted observations (that will appear on the classroom master maps at the front of the classroom) should be written in ink on these maps and personal observations should be made in pencil to facilitate editing.

The Frayer model maps will serve as the final assessment of the unit. Once the entire unit is complete, students will have a set of maps that reflect the class's journey through the readings and movies and that provides a good representation of the biases connected with the study and recreation of history relative to the Civil War.

Politics and Propaganda: How the Written Word Wrote a War

The objective of this lesson is for students to discover the underlying causes of the Civil War through political and popular writings. Students will be asked to read two sets of works critically in order to isolate the factors that led to political, social, and economic unrest between the Northern and Southern states prior to the Civil War. Because students will be reading a novel, the classroom portion of the lesson should last about three to four 45 minute periods while the out of class reading may take anywhere from one to two weeks (depending on the level of readers and whether a full or abridged version is used).

At the beginning of the first class, students should answer the following as best as they can, "what caused the Civil War?" There will be a variety of answers, probably revolving around slavery. All answers should be put on the board for reference. Once the students' answers have been shared, discuss more universal causes for the Civil War (see rationale) such as land, economics, and states' rights. Introduce the *Resolutions* reading by telling students that, while slavery has always been an issue in American politics, the root cause of dissention between the North and the South dating back almost 100 years before the conflict was the argument over a state's right to nullify the laws of the federal government.

At this time, students should be handed a copy of the *Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions* and a copy of the guided reading worksheet for these pieces (see appendix). During class time, either alone or in pairs, students should read through the *Resolutions* with an eye toward finding out what Madison and Jefferson were protesting in the early Republic. Once students are finished the guided reading worksheet should be reviewed as a class to check for accuracy and understanding. This should mark the end of the first class period. For homework, students should prepare themselves to discuss tomorrow's topic: how do larger issues like states' rights get translated into specific issues like slavery?

Day two should begin with a review of the previous day's lesson. The discussion topic should be written on the board and, depending on how discussions take place in individual classrooms, the method of sharing can be varied. One suggestion is to have

students prepare a short one to two sentence statement that can be shared with the entire group; it can be a question, comment, or concern. Another option is to choose eight to ten students to participate in a fishbowl discussion where they have an open forum and the remaining students write commentary and questions in their notebooks in response to the discussion being held by their peers. Regardless of the method used, the discussion should hit on the following points: 1) slavery was an underlying cause of the Civil War and permeated most larger issues, 2) issues such as states' rights, land rights, and economics touched on the individual liberties of many Americans, and 3) it was usually only the voices of the wealthy and influential that made any waves politically, explaining why slavery was a buzz word approaching the Civil War (rich Southerners probably owned slaves and rich Northerners had enough time and resources to call themselves abolitionists).

After the discussion, students should be introduced to the idea of propaganda. Propaganda is literature or art or another media used to persuade people to believe a certain message. Northern abolitionists spent a lot of time and money making the political issue of the right to own people as property into the emotional issue of the mistreatment of those people for profit. Propaganda such as the novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* helped to bring the emotional issue of slavery to the fore of the discussion over states' and land rights and economics. Before the end of the second class period, students should be given the book *Uncle Tom's Cabin* along with the guided reading for the novel (see appendix).

Reading of the novel can take place either during class time or after school for homework. However the novel is read, at the end of the reading period the following should be discussed: what imagery does Stowe use to prove her point about the cruelties of slavery and how effective overall was her message? This discussion topic should be the last piece of this lesson and the bridge into the next lesson on film. The takeaway message from the novel should be that Stowe's message was powerful and ignited the rages of people on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line over a morality issue – a very dangerous and potentially irreparable fission that led to the bloodiest conflict in American history.

What “Reel-ly” Happened: How Cinema Treats Reconstruction

The objective of this lesson is for students to critically analyze the immediate and lasting results of the Civil War by watching films about Reconstruction. Students will see three different treatments of the Reconstruction era with three different goals and will compare and contrast the films' themes and character portrayal relative to the textbook treatment of the Civil War. Because this lesson involves three films totaling approximately six hours, teachers may opt to reserve time after school for viewing and class time for discussion. The in-class portions of the lesson should take two to three 45 minute periods.

By this time, students will be finished reading the *Resolutions* and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. They have an idea of why the Civil War occurred and they know that the conflict was rooted far deeper than just a disagreement over slavery. With that background knowledge, they should be able to jump into a discussion about how Americans intended to reconcile themselves after the war. The start of the class should find students making a list of goals that each of the involved parties might have had toward reconciliation. For example, what did abolitionists want to see happen after the war? How about agriculturalists? This list should refer back to the Frayer model map lesson and use the same list of parties. Once the list has been shared out for the benefit of the entire class, a short history of Reconstruction (military, presidential, and congressional) should ensue. This will provide the necessary background knowledge for comparison of the films.

Students should be made aware that they will be watching three films that portray different fictional representations of life after Reconstruction. These movies may or may not have done extensive research on the time period and the production process for each movie happened at least 75 years after the end of the war. Knowing this, a “before” set of questions should be presented before watching any of the films: 1) What type of characters do you expect to see in the movies? Be specific to sex, age, race, occupation, and other characteristics. 2) How do you think the characters react to new conflict? Why do you think this is so? 3) Where will these movies take place? What is the significance of the choice of place? 4) Will there be any mention of the war? If so, will it be positive or negative? If no, why not? 5) What do you think the moral of the stories will be? Why?

Once students have had time to answer and discuss the “before” questions (this may be done in pairs or as a class), they should be given the “during” worksheet for the first movie, *Gone With The Wind* (see appendix). Depending on whether students watch the movie during class time or after school, once the movie is over the students should be asked to complete the “during” questions on this movie’s worksheet. The rest of the movies should be watched in order (*She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*, then *Sommersby*) with the same instructions.

At the end of all three movies, students should be asked the following “after” questions: 1) How does the time period of the production of the movie influence the theme of the movie? 2) What things do the movies portray similarly to one another? Differently? 3) How do the movies jibe with the historical depiction of Reconstruction? If there are differences, why do you think this is so? 4) What purpose did the filmmakers have for making these particular films? What do their individual messages say about the time period of their production? 5) Which characters are celebrated in the film? Which characters are made to look bad? Why do you think that is?

Once these questions have been discussed as a class, the students can refer back to their Frayer model maps to fill in “examples” and “non-examples” and to clarify the

“definition” and “characteristic” sections for each of the conflict’s titles. This is the final assessment of the unit.

Annotated Bibliography/Resources

Teacher Bibliography

Chadwick, Bruce. *The Reel Civil War: Mythmaking in American Film*. New York: Knopf, 2001.

A look at how American film-makers have twisted the Civil War in order to avoid further conflict over the issues. It also gives a good representation of how those treatments have hurt and hindered the racial relations of Americans since 1865.

Wikipedia. “Naming the American Civil War.” Accessed 30 March 2009.

< http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Naming_the_American_Civil_War>

A rundown of the known names of the Civil War and the people who most commonly use them.

Student Bibliography

Gone With The Wind (1939). Dir. Fleming, Victor. DVD. Warner Home Video, 2004.
A decidedly Southern view of the Civil War and Reconstruction. Perpetuates the “plantation myth” of the aristocratic South and biases viewers toward sympathy for slaveholders.

Jefferson, Thomas. “Avalon Project – Kentucky Resolution – Alien and Sedition Acts.” Yale Law Library. 4 April 2009
<http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/kenres.asp>.

Yale Law Library’s electronic version of the Kentucky Resolutions, fighting for states’ rights in response to the Alien and Sedition Acts of the Adams’ presidency.

Madison, James. “Avalon Project – Virginia Resolution – Alien and Sedition Acts.” Yale Law Library. 4 April 2009 <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/virres.asp>.
Yale Law Library’s electronic version of the Virginia Resolution, fighting for states’ rights in response to the Alien and Sedition Acts of the Adams’ presidency.

Stowe, Harriet Beecher. *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Eds. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Hollis Robbins. New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 2007.
A Northern perspective on the evils of slavery, the moral anguish slave owners experience, and the triumphs of abolitionists.

She Wore A Yellow Ribbon (1949). Dir. John Ford. DVD. Warner Home Video, 2007.

Reconciliation propaganda that depicts a united army (both Yankee and Rebel soldiers) fighting against a new common foe – the American Indian. Typical example of heartwarming western cinema aimed at forgetting the past to save the future.

Sommersby (1993). Dir. Amiel, Jon. DVD. Warner Home Video, 1999. Sympathetic Northern view of a Rebel soldier “making good” after the Civil War. Depicts scenes of conscience-clearing such as standing up to the KKK in a Southern town by a white man and selling black men property.

Classroom Materials

Materials for this unit are minimal. Wall space is required so that students have continuous access to the completed Frayer model maps (each student should have an individual map, but there should be a class master on chart paper) from the “Civil War names” lesson. The reading portion of the unit requires photocopied packets of the *Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions* and copies of the book *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (either complete or abridged version, based on the reading level of the student). The film portion of the unit requires the use of a television and either VCR (for videocassettes) or DVD player (for discs).

Appendices

Worksheet One: Guided Reading

Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions

Definitions You Should Know: when you find the following words in the reading, circle them and read the definition to see if you understand the word in context. If you are still confused, ask a partner. If you are still confused, ask the teacher.

- 1) Commonwealth – another term for a state
- 2) Alien and Sedition Acts – laws passed by Congress that would put people who spoke ill of the government under arrest
- 3) Calumny – to make false statements about somebody
- 4) Acquiescence – acceptance
- 5) Nullification – saying that a law is not valid and should not be followed
- 6) Peremptorily – can not be denied or refused
- 7) Sovereignty – a political unit, like a state
- 8) Unconstitutional – illegal according to the highest law in the land

Main Idea: use the following questions to discover the main idea of the reading.

- 1) Who is speaking? What do we know about these people (occupation, place, historical importance, etc.)?
- 2) When was this written? What do we know is going on during this time period?
- 3) Who is supposed to be reading this? How does the author want him/her/them to feel?
- 4) What is the issue being discussed in the reading? (this is the main idea)

Wrapping Up: *consider any outside information we may have discussed in class when answering these questions.*

- 1) While the reading specifically mentions the Alien and Sedition Acts, the authors are talking about the larger idea of a state being able to disagree with the laws of the federal government. Do you think that the federal government should allow the states to disagree and not follow its laws? Why or why not?
- 2) What political repercussions might occur if states were allowed to pick which federal laws they wanted to follow?
- 3) What is the role of the federal government relative to making and enforcing laws?

Uncle Tom's Cabin

Definitions You Should Know: *when you find the following words in the reading, circle them and read the definition to see if you understand the word in context. If you are still confused, ask a partner. If you are still confused, ask the teacher.*

- 1) Quadroon – someone mostly white with at least one recent black ancestor
- 2) Mulatto – someone with a pure white and pure black parent
- 3) Canada – the end of the Underground Railroad because American slavery laws could not touch blacks once they reached Canada
- 4) Ohio – the closest free state to Kentucky (where the story is set)
- 5) Quaker – a group of religious people who believe in peace and the civil rights of all people
- 6) Louisiana – one of the worst places to work as a slave before the Civil War due to the extremely lucrative cotton business and the expansive plantations

Main Idea: *use the following questions to discover the main idea of each chapter.*

- 1) Chapters One and Two – Why does Shelby not want to sell any of his slaves if he can help it? What does Haley say in response to this justification?
- 2) Chapters Three and Four – Why did George's master (Mr. Harris) refuse to let George work in the factory where he was successful? How did George deal with this refusal?
- 3) Chapter Five – What characteristics does the author give Uncle Tom and his family? How can you tell that she admires Christians?

- 4) Chapters Six and Seven – Why is Shelby’s wife, Margaret, unhappy with the sale of Tom and Harry and how can you tell? What does Eliza plan to do about her son’s fate?
- 5) Chapters Eight and Nine – Describe Eliza’s desperation as she tries to get to Ohio. Why is being across the river important?
- 6) Chapter Ten – Why does the author have a Senator and his wife help Eliza once she makes it to Ohio?
- 7) Chapters Eleven and Twelve – Why does the author describe the slave trade with such emotional detail?
- 8) Chapter Thirteen – why do the men at the inn insist on comparing slaves using the word “man”? What is the significance of thinking of yourself as a “man”?
- 9) Chapters Fifteen, Sixteen, and Seventeen – Explain Tom’s relationship with Eva. Why does Ophelia feel uncomfortable with the relationship?
- 10) Chapter Eighteen – Why does Loker eventually try to help the slaves get away to Canada?
- 11) Chapter Nineteen – What do Auguste and Marie think about the death of Prue? What does this say about their philosophy on slavery?
- 12) Chapter Twenty – Why does Auguste give Ophelia her own slave, Topsy?
- 13) Chapter Twenty-Three – Explain the exchange between Tom and Auguste. What justification does Tom give for wanting freedom?
- 14) Chapter Twenty-Five – Describe the pre-sale conditions in Louisiana and compare them to those Tom experienced before.
- 15) Chapters Twenty-Six, Twenty-Seven, and Twenty-Eight – Compare and contrast Tom’s stay with the Shelby’s, Auguste’s Family, and Legree.
- 16) Chapter Thirty – Explain James Shelby’s actions in coming to get Tom from Legree.
- 17) Chapters Thirty-One and Thirty-Two – Why does the author make all of the slaves related to each other? How does the reader feel after learning about this?
- 18) Chapter Thirty-Three – How has Uncle Tom’s death affected the Shelby farm?

Wrapping Up: consider any outside information we may have discussed in class when answering these questions.

- 1) What was Stowe’s purpose for creating characters to which people could relate? Do you think that she was successful in her purpose?
- 2) How would Northerners react to the characters in Ohio and on the Quaker settlement? How would they react to Ophelia’s character? Why does Stowe give two different treatments of white Northerners?
- 3) Stowe shows the reader three different types of masters. Do you think she believed any of them were “good” masters? In her mind, do you believe there was ever such a thing as a “good” master? How can you tell?

Worksheet Two: BDA

Gone With The Wind

Before The Viewing: *review your knowledge with this information.*

This movie was made in 1939, right before the Second World War. We are watching the last half of the movie and the time and place are Georgia (Atlanta and a plantation named Tara in the countryside) from 1865 onward. There are several main characters: Scarlett O'Hara, a rich, mean, and beautiful Southern belle in love with Ashley Wilkes; Melanie Wilkes, a weak and kind woman married to Ashley Wilkes; Ashley Wilkes, a philosophical Southern plantation owner torn between Melanie and Scarlett; Rhett Butler, a very rich, dashing, and controversial Southerner in love with Scarlett O'Hara.

During The Viewing: *review these questions before you begin watching and answer them as you watch the film.*

- 1) Do you think Tara looked like this before the war? Why or why not?
- 2) Why does Melanie think it is important to feed the soldiers and why does Scarlett think it is not important?
- 3) Why do Scarlett and her father get mad when Mr. Wilkerson (their old overseer, a Northerner) offers to buy Tara?
- 4) Why does Pork (the butler) not want Scarlett to give him her father's watch?
- 5) What do Mammy and Scarlett say is so different about Atlanta since the war is over?
- 6) Why does Big Sam save Scarlett when she is robbed in shantytown?
- 7) The "political meeting" is actually a Klan meeting to get rid of all the "bad people" that live in shantytown. Why do the police want to find them and why do Rhett and the women lie?
- 8) What do all the old women say behind Scarlett's back about her business practices? How does Scarlett feel about it all?
- 9) Why do Mammy, Pork, and Prissy all stay at Tara and move with Scarlett to Atlanta?
- 10) What is the moral of the movie? How does it represent Reconstruction?

She Wore A Yellow Ribbon

Before The Viewing: *review your knowledge with this information.*

This movie was made in 1949, after the Second World War. Western movies and television shows had become popular around this time. The time and place are the late 1870s (after Custer's Last Stand) in the wild west. This area is still inhabited by American Indians who are thought to be dangerous and hostile toward whites. The main character is Captain Nathan Brittles, an army captain near retirement who is asked to stop

a shipment of guns to the Indians and to safely deliver two women to the stagecoach headed East.

During The Viewing: review these questions before you begin watching and answer them as you watch the film.

- 1) Why does Capt. Brittles mention Custer's Last Stand?
- 2) Listen to the list of Civil War battles that Capt. Brittles runs off. Why are some of these important to the viewer?
- 3) What is Capt. Brittles last mission before he retires and why does he want it to be a success?
- 4) Why does Abby make a Confederate flag for the soldier who dies fighting the Indians? Why does Capt. Brittles make a speech about how great a soldier he was at the funeral?
- 5) When he reads his letter of recommendation aloud, why does Capt. Brittles laugh when the Confederate generals are mentioned?
- 6) How would making a movie about the time after the Civil War have special meaning after WWII?
- 7) What is the moral of the movie? How does it represent Reconstruction?

Sommersby

Before The Viewing: review your knowledge with this information.

This movie was made in 1993. During this time, civil liberties lawyers were trying to sue the government for reparations to be made to African-Americans for their ancestors' treatment during slavery. This was also the era when being "politically correct" started to become the fashion. The time and place are about a year after the end of the war 1866 in the town of Vine Hill, Tennessee. The main characters are: Jack Sommersby, a former Confederate soldier who was very mean before the war but has seemed to change upon his return; Laurel Sommersby, his wife who doubts whether the man named Jack is actually her husband and has promised to marry Orrin Meacham; Orrin Meacham, a Klansman and minister who is in love with Laurel and believes Jack is an imposter.

During The Viewing: review these questions before you begin watching and answer them as you watch the film.

- 1) At Jack's welcome home party, why do the townspeople not want him offering food to the black family?
- 2) At the town meeting, why is Jack insistent upon proving to the black people that they too can own his land? Why might they not believe him?
- 3) Why is it important that all of the townspeople work on making the tobacco crop successful?

- 4) During the cross burning scene, why did the Klansmen beat up Joseph and bring him to Jack's house? Who are the Klansmen (generally, you do not have to be specific)?
- 5) During the trial, what reasons does Jack give to Laurel for trying to prove that he is Jack Sommersby?
- 6) During the trial, why does Jack say that Orrin is trying to prove he is someone else?
- 7) What is the moral of the movie? How does it represent Reconstruction?

Pennsylvania State Standards

8.1C Historical Analysis and Skills Development – Historical Interpretation

8.1D Historical Analysis and Skills Development – Historical Research

8.3A United States History – Contributions of Individuals and Groups

8.3B United States History – Documents, Artifacts, and Historical Places

8.3C United States History – Influences of Continuity and Change

8.3D United States History – Conflict and Cooperation Among Groups