



**A. Lesson Plan Title:** *Ely Parker- A Real American*

Developers:

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Grade Level: 6<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>

Length of Lesson: 3- 4 class sessions (45 mins.)

**B. Overview of this Collection-Based Lesson Plan:**

Park Name:

Appomattox Court House National Historical Park - P.O. Box 218 Appomattox, VA 24522

[www.nps.gov/apco](http://www.nps.gov/apco)

Description:

Ely Parker was born Ha-sa-no-an-da on the Tonawanda reservation of the Seneca Indians in western New York in 1828. Before he was born, Ha-so-no-an-da's mother had a dream which predicted that a son would be born to her that would serve as a bridge between the native world of the Seneca and that of the "white man." After being reared in Seneca tradition and receiving a non Seneca education, Ha-sa-no-an-da, who had by now adopted the English name Ely Parker, was called upon by his elders to act as spokesman for his people in a conflict with the federal government over Tonawanda lands. Parker studied to practice law, but because of his race, New York State law would not allow him to practice "before the bar." Parker then attended Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and became a civil engineer. It was while he was supervising the construction of the U.S. Customs building in Galena, Illinois, that Parker began his friendship with U.S. Grant. When the war began, Grant received a commission as Colonel of an Illinois regiment. Parker applied for an officers commission, but was turned down. His friend, by now General Grant, succeeded in securing Parker a commission as a military secretary on Grants staff. When Grant was promoted to command of all U.S. forces Parker was one of only a small cadre chosen by Grant to go east with him. And, so it was that Ely Parker ended up in the parlor of the Mclean house on that Palm Sunday afternoon in April 1865, writing out the official copy of the terms of surrender of General Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. Those terms so instrumental in bringing a divided America back together were written by a First American. Following the Civil War Parker went on to have an illustrious if not troubled career. Yet this "warrior in two camps" fulfilled his Mother's dream eventually being buried on historical Seneca land.

Essential Question:

Why was the presence of Ely Parker at the surrender conference considered so unique?

How did Ely Parkers background both aide and hinder him?

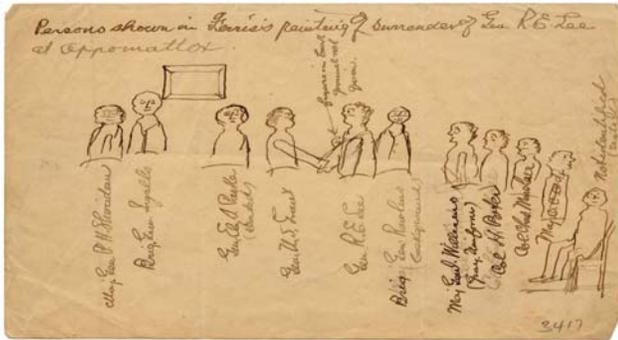
Why did some Native Americans consider Ely Parker a traitor? Was this a fair characterization?

Ely Parker was called a “warrior in two camps.” How did he bring these two worlds together?

**C. Museum Collection Objects Used in Lesson Plan:**

Objects, specimens, documents, photographs from the Park museum collection:

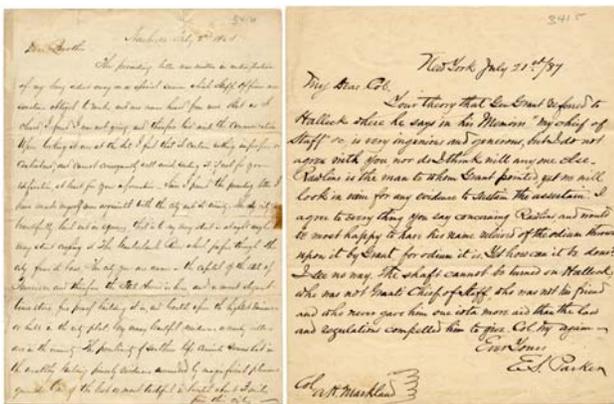
**1. Parker Sketch**



Paper, W: 13.8 cm H: 20.1 cm APCO 3417

In an 1876 interview newspaper man James Kelly produced this sketch, based upon Ely Parker’s memories of the meeting. Parker listed the officers present at the surrender meeting for Kelly, who was doing research for “Bryant’s Popular History of the United States” and had asked for Parker’s assistance.

**2. Parker Letters**



Paper, W: 14.7 cm H: 22.3 cm APCO 3415

Paper, W: 39.4 cm H: 25 cm APCO 3416

In a letter to his brother, from Nashville, while serving as an Adjutant on U. S. Grant’s staff, Parker speaks of the city with the eye of an engineer and student of American history. In the later letter Parker writes to a former Union officer to protect Grants reputation and set the record straight regarding the surrender events.

**3. Parker Books**



Paper-leather bound, W: 15.3 cm H: 29 cm  
W: 17 cm APCO 3922

Paper-leather bound, W: 12.5 cm H: 2.8 cm  
W: 12.5 cm APCO 3942

Paper-leather bound, W: 15.8 cm H: 3.2 cm  
W: 15.8 cm APCO 3962

These books are but a few in the collection of Ely Parker that his Widow Minnie had to sell off after his death. They run the gamut of his interests and career from elementary English to engineering to his stint as the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. The four books from the Parker collection at Appomattox Court House included here are:

Annual Report of the Commissioner for Indian Affairs  
APCO 3922

The Course of Reading For the Common Schools  
APCO 3942

An Elementary Course of Civil Engineering  
APCO 3962

A Manual of Elementary Geology  
APCO 3967

Paper-leather bound, W: 16.5 cm H: 4.8 cm

W: 23.9 cm APCO 3967

#### **D. National Education Standards:**

Meets National Education Standards for Social Studies as established by the National Council for the Social Studies, 1994. Middle grades & high school level.

Number I: Culture

Middle grades

- b) Explain how information and experiences may be interpreted differently by people from diverse cultural perspectives and frames of reference;

Number II: Time, Continuity, and Change.

Middle grades

- b) Identify and use key concepts such as chronology, causality, change, conflict, and complexity to explain, analyze, and show connections among patterns of historical change and continuity.

Number IV: Individual Development & Identity

Middle grades

- a) Relate personal changes to social, cultural, and historical contexts; describe personal connections to place — as associated with community, nation, and world;
- b) Describe the ways family, gender, ethnicity, nationality, and institutional affiliations contribute to personal identity;
- c) Relate such factors as physical endowment and capabilities, learning, motivation, personality, perception, and behavior to individual development;
- d) Identify and describe ways regional, ethnic, and national cultures influence individuals' daily lives;
- e) Identify and describe the influence of perception, attitudes, values, and beliefs on personal identity;

Number V: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions.

Middle grades

- a) Identify and describe examples of tensions between belief systems and government policies and laws.
- b) Describe the role of institutions in furthering both continuity and change.
- c) Apply knowledge of how groups and institutions work to meet individual needs and promote the common good.

Number VI. Civic Ideals and Practices.

Middle grades

- a) Examine the origins and continuing influence of key ideals of the democratic republican form of government, such as individual human dignity, liberty, justice, equality, and the rule of law.
- b) Identify and explain the roles of formal and informal political actors in influencing and shaping public policy and decision-making.

**E. Student Learning Objectives:** Upon successful completion of this lesson, students shall:

*Explain why Ely Parkers presence at the Surrender Conference was considered unique.*

*Explain how Ely Parkers background both aided and hindered him along his path?*

*Explain why Ely Parker was sometimes considered a traitor by other Native Americans and discuss whether you think this characterization fair?*

*As a "warrior in two camps" how do you think Ely Parker brought these two worlds together?*

## **F. Background and Historical Context:**

Ely Parker was born in 1828 to Elizabeth & William Parker. His given Seneca name was Ha-sa-no-an-da, often translated as "The Name that Leads." It is said that four months before the birth of her son, Elizabeth Parker had a dream in which she had a vision of her homeland in the winter of the year. Out of a snowy sky came a rainbow that broke in the middle. The rainbow had signs with letters upon them suspended "like those seen over white men's stores" according to Parker's great nephew & biographer Arthur C. Parker. When Elizabeth consulted one of the Seneca dream interpreters, he told her that:

"a son will be born to you who will be distinguished among his nation as a peacemaker, he will become a white man as well as an Indian. He will be a wise white man, but will never desert his Indian people. His name will reach from the east to the west, the north to the south. His sun will rise on Indian land and set on white man's land. Yet the ancient land of his ancestors will fold him in death."

This dream would prove prophetic as Ely Parker indeed walked the line between those two worlds; sometimes undoubtedly feeling as if he did not fit in either. By the time of Ely's birth the once powerful League of the Haudenosaunee or Iroquois League to which his Seneca tribe belonged had been reduced to five reservations throughout Western New York. Ely's parents, while raising him in full Seneca tradition, made sure he received an education at the local mission school where he began classes by age 10. It was here Ely adopted the name Reverend Ely Stone, the school's minister and a close family friend.

By the time he was in his teens, Ely was thrust into the frontlines of the conflict between the Senecas and "white America." With the Treaty of Buffalo Creek in 1838 and again in 1842 attempts were made by some white settlers to use the signatures of a few Haudenosaunee leaders to justify the wholesale takeover of Seneca and other lands. The Senecas faced forced removal to Kansas and loss of their ancestral lands. It was around this time that one of the formative events in Ely Parker's life occurred. While at Grand River, an Iroquois settlement in Canada, the young Ely was mocked by a group of British soldiers. Ely knew enough English to not appreciate the jokes the soldiers were making at his expense. Ely swore he would never be mocked again. To this end, with the help of his friend Lewis Henry Morgan, Parker attended prestigious Yates Academy in 1842. Although proving he could master the language and culture of the "white Americans" he still faced discrimination – being the only Native American among 250 students.

Seneca elders watched and encouraged Ely Parkers transformation. Due to his education, at the age of 14, Parker was chosen to act as interpreter and scribe for tribal elders as they went to Washington to plead their case to keep their land. This visit to Washington, D.C. made a strong impression upon him. Ely continued his education and again in 1848 was called upon, once again, to lead the fight to retain Seneca lands. In 1846, at only 18 years old, Parker pled the case, for his people, to the Congress and President Polk. Yet, when Ely returned the following year, he again felt the discrimination he had experienced so often before; discrimination that concluded with the President's refusal to meet with him and the Congressional vote against the Seneca. Parker left Washington and

not long after took up the study of the law, so that he could more effectively plead the Seneca's case. Yet again Parker's Seneca heritage meant he was *not* an American citizen and so was not allowed to practice law by the state of New York.

Parker was undeterred. With some help from a friend Ely Parker went on to become an engineer on the Erie Canal, the very project which had threatened the Seneca way of life when it's development led to the Buffalo Creek Treaty. By the time he was 23, Ely Parker was made a Sachem, or chief, of the Haudenosaunee and given a new name: Do-ne-ho-ga-wa "The Keeper Of The Western Door" further ensuring his role as liason between the Seneca and the world encroaching upon them. It was at this time Parker also was invested with the "Red Jacket Medal." The medal had been given to Seneca chief Red Jacket in 1792 by George Washington as a token of peace between the Haudenosaunee and the newly born American republic. In 1857, armed with his knowledge of the law, Ely Parker spearheaded an effort that won the "right" to buy back a portion of the Seneca lands from white settlers.

Following the Seneca "victory" Ely Parker fully immersed himself in the other American culture. While overseeing construction of the U. S. Customs House in Galena Illinois, Parker became friends with Ulysses S. Grant. When the Civil War broke out, Parker sought out William H. Seward-Secretary of War in an attempt to join the Union Army. Even though Parker had served in the New York state militia, Seward responded: "Go home, cultivate your farm and we will settle our own troubles among ourselves without any Indian aid." It was not until May of 1863 that Parker accepted a commission in the Army that was offered at the insistence of General U.S. Grant. Parker garnered a reputation among the other members of Grant's Staff for his penmanship, knowledge of the law, sense of humor and ability to carry his own and then some in a fight. For the remainder of the war Parker served as an Assistant Adjutant General and Military Secretary to General Grant. Parker accompanied Grant throughout his campaigns which ultimately brought the two to the village of Appomattox Court House on the afternoon of April 9<sup>th</sup>, 1865.

At Appomattox, Lee accompanied by one other Confederate and Grant accompanied by several Union officers made their way to the McLean parlor that Sunday afternoon. After Grant had written out a draft of his terms for Lee's surrender, Lee looked them over suggesting a few changes. When it came time for a formal copy of the terms to be written up in ink, the task was initially given to Colonel Theodore Bowers. But finding himself agitated Bowers handed the task over to Lieutenant Colonel Parker, whose "handwriting presented a better appearance than that of anyone else on the staff." Parker described the event thus: "Having finished it, I brought it to General Grant, who signed it, sealed it and then handed it to General Lee." When Grant formally introduced Parker to General Lee, Lee remarked to Parker, "*I am glad to see one real American here.*" Parker later stated, "I shook his hand and said, "*We are all Americans.*" And so it was that Ely Parker who had been in the middle of so many important events in the history of his Seneca people and of the United States; Ely Parker a non-citizen was the one who penned the formal copy of the terms that began the process of bringing about an end to the United States Civil War and reuniting the country.

Following the Civil War, Ely Parker's career was mixed. He received the title of Brevet Brigadier General and went on to become the first ever Native American to hold the office of Commissioner of Indian Affairs during the Grant administration. During this period, he married Minnie Orton Sackett, a young white Washington socialite, further removing himself from his Seneca traditions. As Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Parker was accused and then exonerated of charges of misconduct which led him to decide that his affair with Federal service was at an end. Parker and his

wife moved to Connecticut and from there he would make and lose a fortune on Wall Street and ultimately end up working as a desk clerk in the New York City Police Department. Parker's autumn years were brightened by the birth of his only child, a daughter named Maude, by participation in Union veteran affairs, and his revived interest in his Seneca culture.

Parker died in his sleep in 1895 after prolonged bouts with diabetes, kidney disease and several strokes. After first being buried near his Connecticut home, Parker was eventually re-interred in ancestral Seneca lands in Buffalo, thus fulfilling the prophecies that accompanied his Mother's dream – "*the ancient land of his ancestors will fold him in death.*"

### **G. Materials Used in Lesson Plan:**

Parker Sketch

Parker Letters

Parker Books

**Similar Items-** You may choose to have students bring in the following similar items that would correspond to items in APCO's Parker Collection- this would require grouping of students before the lesson plan was implemented.

**For Parker's Sketch-** Ask students to bring in a photo of an important moment in their life that they would want to remember (graduation, awards ceremony, a wedding they were a part of, etc..)

**For Parker Letters--** Ask students to bring in an important letter or note or other written document that is connected to an important moment in their life.

**For Parker Books -** Have students in this group bring in 3 of their favorite OR most used books.

### Item Support Materials

**Parker Images-** This collection of images is meant to be representative of Ely Parker throughout the various periods of his life. There are labels that accompany each image.

### **Parker Sketch**

Transcript of Kelly's notes on the original Parker sketch identifying each individual in the drawing.

### **Parker Letters**

Transcript of each letter.

### **Parker Books**

Images of pages from each book identifying them as Parker's and giving some of their substance.

### Other Materials:

*How to Read an Object* graphic organizers -- available at

[http://www.cr.nps.gov/museum/tmc/docs/How\\_to\\_Read\\_an\\_Object.pdf](http://www.cr.nps.gov/museum/tmc/docs/How_to_Read_an_Object.pdf)

Assessment Rubrics- available at the end of this document

### **H. Vocabulary:**

*Adjutant*-a staff officer who assists the commanding officer in issuing orders

*Brevet*-an honorary title of promotion given to a soldier in the field

*Haudenosaunee*-the Confederation of Native Americans throughout mostly Northeast North America also known as the League of Six Nations or Iroquois

*Legacy- anything handed down from, or as from, an ancestor.*

*Reconciliation- an act of making friendly again or winning over to a friendly attitude.*

*Red Jacket – ancestor of Ely Parker & renown Seneca Chief who had received a medal from George Washington symbolizing the “eternal peace” between the United States and the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy.*

*Sachem- a title within the Seneca nation similar to chief*

*Surrender- to give one’s self up to another’s power or control, especially as a prisoner*

*Tonawanda- home of a group of the Seneca Indian Nation, one of the Six Nations of the Iroquois located in Western New York*

## **I. Teacher Tips:**

This lesson plan is merely a suggestion for the use of these items. Although adequate time should be allowed for a thorough investigation of the artifacts and their history, these plans may certainly be tailored to the unique needs of your particular class. The particular subject matter of this lesson plan- Ely Parker’s dual role in Seneca tradition and American society make this a tremendously powerful teaching tool for the subjects of cultural identity, race and assimilation among others.

**J. Lesson Implementation Procedures:** This lesson plan may be tailored to suit the needs and abilities of specific classes and students. All hand outs are contained herein or are available at website addresses found within this document. Be sure to print out an adequate number of copies of all documents for the assignment. Allow adequate time for group discussion of all items associated with each artifact and preparation for group project.

## **INTRODUCTION:**

*Explain why Ely Parker’s presence at the Surrender Conference was considered unique.*

*Explain how Ely Parker’s background both aided and hindered him along his path?*

*Explain why Ely Parker was sometimes considered a traitor by other Native Americans and discuss whether you think this characterization fair?*

*As a “warrior in two camps” how do you think Ely Parker brought these 2 worlds together?*

## **1<sup>st</sup> Class Session**

1. Consider beginning this lesson with an introduction such as the following: “What does it mean to belong to a group? What groups do you belong to? What are some of the things that can happen when you belong to more than one group? Imagine you are a young boy/girl about age 12 or 13 traveling with soldiers from a foreign country. Although not out right mean or vicious these men make fun of you, making jokes about you all along your journey together. Now imagine only 5 or 6 years later you are being chosen by your people to plead your case to the American Congress and are meeting face to face with the President of the United States. Now imagine you are a Union Colonel during the Civil War and you are at Appomattox Court House when Lee surrenders and it is in your hand that the formal Surrender Terms are written. How did these things happen to you? How did you end up in the middle of all these situations? Have students brainstorm responses to these questions. Have students share their ideas. Write down responses on board/overhead device. (5 minutes)

2. Divide students into 3 groups. Before handing out items & their supplementary materials, provide each group a copy of the historical sketch of Ely Parker as well as the group of photos of Parker. Have students read & discuss the historical sketch & photos before they begin working with their

items. Provide student groups with images of the items from the 3 object groups. Have each group complete a “*How to Read an Object*” graphic organizer for their object. (15 -20 minutes)

3. Give the following group-specific-directions to each of the 3 groups and allow the remaining class time for them to investigate their supplementary materials, complete their assigned tasks and prepare a brief presentation for the class.

### **GROUP 1: Kelly Sketch**

Look at the sketch by James Kelly and read the accounts of the Surrender Meeting. Parker never wrote down his own memories of the meeting. His nephew did write a biography of his famous uncle (Parker’s quote in the Student Historical Sketch came from his nephew’s book), and James Kelly interviewed him, but that’s as close as we can get to Parker’s thoughts of that day.

Answer these questions.

1. What differences between the accounts can you describe?
2. Can you explain why these various accounts might exist?

From what you’ve read and learned of Parker so far, what do you think *his* observations of this important event would have been? As a group, imagine what the Surrender Meeting passage for Ely Parker’s *own* autobiography would look like. Create this portion of your imagined Parker autobiography or use one of the other approved group products to show how *your group* thinks Ely Parker would have described the Surrender Meeting. Remember to use all that you know about Parkers life to help you create your interpretation of his role in this significant event. At the end of this assignment, you will be asked to share your biography passage or other product with the class.

### **GROUP 2: Parker Letters**

After you’ve read the Ely Parker letters, answer the following questions for both.

1. Who is Ely Parker writing to?
2. When was the letter written?
3. Summarize what Parker says in each letter.
4. What differences do you notice between Parkers style of writing & writing styles today?

After discussing your answers to these questions in your group, choose a period or periods of time from the Student Historical Sketch of Parker’s & write a letter as Ely Parker describing what is occurring during this period. You may also choose any other approved product to convey your message to those who have not read his letters as you have. Remember to use all that you know about Parker’s life to help you create your interpretation of this period in his life. At the end of this assignment, you will be asked to share your letter or other product with the class.

### **GROUP 3: Parker Books**

After you have taken a look at the Parker books, answer these questions.

1. How does this selection of books match up with what you know about his education & career choices?
2. What other books would you expect to find in Parkers’ library?
3. After her husband’s death, Minnie Parker sold the prized Red Jacket Medal, his collection of books and most of his other valuable possessions. Why do you think she did this?

As a group create your own book - a biography of Ely Parker. To create this book, provide AT LEAST the following parts: an illustrated cover, a title, a table of contents or list of chapter titles and

a thesis paragraph. Work within the time limits given and have members of the group ready to introduce the class to your book.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Class Session:**

1. Begin class with a think/pair/share exercise in which pairs are created out of students from different groups. Students have 2 minutes EACH to tell each other about their objects & their project.
2. Allow student groups a whole class period to work on presentations if necessary (35-40 mins)

Homework Suggestion: have students take vocabulary items and in 1 – 3 sentences each explain what connection each term has with THEIR project.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Class Session**

1. Allow student groups the whole class to work on presentations if necessary or begin group presentations. (45-50 mins)
2. After groups present, have members complete brag sheet for their group and assignment rubrics for self evaluations. These items to be turned in the next day as a homework grade.

### **4<sup>th</sup> Class Session**

1. Allow student groups the whole class to present to the class. (45-50 mins)
2. Have students complete brag sheet for their team and assignment rubrics for self evaluations. These items to be turned in the next day as a homework grade.

### **K. Evaluation/Assessment for Measurable Results:**

Use the included Assessment Rubrics to evaluate individual & group efforts.

### **L. Extension and Enrichment Activities:**

<http://www.onondaganation.org/resource/lessons.html>

There is a video available telling the Ely Parker story: “Warrior in Two Worlds” 1999 by WXXI Public Broadcasting & Chip Taylor Communications (available from [www.chiptaylor.com](http://www.chiptaylor.com))

### **M. Resources:**

<http://www.cr.nps.gov/museum>

<http://www.nps.gov/apco/parker.htm>

<http://freenet.buffalo.edu/bah/h/parker/index.html>

[http://nativeamericanfirstnationshistory.suite101.com/article.cfm/we\\_are\\_all\\_americans](http://nativeamericanfirstnationshistory.suite101.com/article.cfm/we_are_all_americans)

<http://www.pbs.org/warrior/>

Armstrong, William H. Warrior in Two Camps- Ely S. Parker Union General and Seneca Chief. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1978.

Parker, Arthur C. The life of General Ely Parker Last Grand Sachem of the Iroquois and General Grant’s Military Secretary. Buffalo: Buffalo Historical Society, 1919.

Porter, Horace Campaigning With Grant. New York: The Century Company, 1897.

### **N. Site Visit:**

**Pre-visit:** Use the lesson plans contained herein as an introduction to Appomattox Court House NHP. Also, visit the website to become familiar with the other significant stories you may want to incorporate into an actual visit. Contact the park (434-352-8987) to request material and schedule your visit.

**Site visit:** Be sure to see the Ely Parker exhibit at the Visitor's Center. Once at the park, one idea would be to have the students attempt to locate their souvenir within the park collections and take notes on how the story of Ely Parker fits into the interpretation of the history of Appomattox Court House.

**Post-visit:** Have students write a summary of what they learned about the role played by Ely Parker in the Surrender at Appomattox Court House.













