



Letters Home Activity Plan

Overview: To soldiers, letters from home provided encouragement and welcomed information. During the Civil War these letters would arrive one to three months after they were written. It did not matter to the soldiers. They enjoyed reading about life at home, neighborhood gossip, and how the farm was doing. These letters helped the soldiers endure the hardships of battle and camp life.

In turn, family and friends were flooded with letters from the soldiers. In great detail soldiers described camp life, quality of food or lack of food, wrote with great joy of capturing enemy supplies and soldiers. Many wrote about their strong religious beliefs and their powerful sense of patriotism. The most horrifying letters described the screams and cries of dying comrades.

Although soldiers sometimes exaggerated their heroic battle deeds, these letters remain an excellent primary source for historical research. In addition to gaining historical insights from these letters, researchers learn more about the person who wrote the letters. The humor, misspellings, grammatical errors and penmanship speak of the common soldiers who wrote them.

Grades: 3rd, 4th, 8th, 9th- 12th

Time: 30 min. – 1 hr.

Learning Objectives: Students will assume the role of a Civil War soldier and write a letter to his family describing camp life and events prior to the Attack of Fort Sumter or during the Siege of Charleston.

Educational Standards

From the South Carolina Curriculum and Standards available online at

<http://ed.sc.gov/agency/offices/cso/standards/ss/> &

<http://ed.sc.gov/agency/offices/cso/standards/ela/documents/standards.pdf>

Social Studies

3-4.1, 3-4.4, 3-4.5, 4-6.6, 8-3.6, USHC-4.3

Language Arts

3-8-R1.1, 3-8-R1.3, 3-5-R1.15/16, 3-R3.8, 4-5-R3.4, 3-8-W1.6, 3-8-W1.6.1, 3-8-W2.2, 3-8-W4.1, 3-4-C2.1, 6-8-R3.3, E1-E4-R1.2, E1-E4-R3.1, E1-E4-R3.2, E1-E4-W1.6, E1-E4-W1.6.1, E1-E4 -W2.2, E1-E4-W4.1

Materials

- History sheet
- sample letters
- paper
- pens
- envelopes and stamps

Preparation for Activity

- Copy Background sheet
- Gather all necessary materials

Steps of the Activity

Step 1 - Have the students come into the area where the activity will take place. Have them sit at tables or desks.

Step 2 – Pass out copies of sample letters and background information to the students. Have the students read the background information and sample letters.

Step 3 - Have each student assume the role of a soldier in Charleston. (Union or Confederate, black or white, soldier, cannoneer, Chaplain, medical etc...) and write a letter to their home. Or assign a student a state to be from, have them write a letter describing their first impressions of South Carolina.

Step 4 - Mail the letters a month later. This will help students understand the sense of waiting the soldiers experienced.