

Unit 2

Analyzing the Impact of the Civil War – In the Field & at Home

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The Civil War has often been referred to as the “Second American Revolution” or the “People’s War”. Soldiers on both sides – whether from the North or the South were fighting for what they considered to be a just cause. During the long and bloody confrontation from April 1861 through May 1865, states, communities and even families were divided. Unlike earlier wars, the Civil War soldier and his family were largely literate. Soldiers’ letters and sending newspapers to and from home helped families remain connected albeit tenuously. Because Civil War-era letters were often the only means of communication, they were written in the style of conversations and the reader quickly feels a bond with the writer.

PROCESS

The following lessons should be presented in the order they are described on this sheet. These lessons build on one another and help the students learn cumulatively

OUTCOMES

Students will gain empathy for a citizen-soldier long absent from his family. Students will be positively challenged as they learn how to read 19th century style correspondence.

Union soldier, Private Pleasant M. Bolin of Terre Haute, Indiana in the Thirty-first Indiana Volunteer Regiment

Pleasant M. Bolin was a member of the 31st Indiana Volunteers. He was married to Mary M. Phillips in 1855 and they had two children, Lorinda Arabel Bolin and Thomas Jefferson Bolin, born 1857 and 1859, respectively. He lived with his wife and young family near Terre Haute, IN until the war started, at which time he enlisted on March 14, 1862. His regiment fought in the Western theater for the entire war.

GRADES 4-5

Language Arts

- Examine a letter written by Private Pleasant M. Bolin on January 18, 1863 on pages 4-5, I. Suggested activities may cover from two to four days and may be implemented in language arts, social studies and drama classes.
- Present Bolin’s letter (page 4, I) without explanation. Have the students read it silently, and then read the letter aloud. What makes this letter different from letters we might write today? (Language, phrasing, punctuation, etc.) They may discover they cannot read the letter. *Why not? Can the students identify the letter’s unusual traits?*
- Discuss the education system of the mid to late 19th century. Include discussion of levels of education available to common person, economically advantaged people, etc.
- Create a vocabulary list and find definitions.

Drama/Language Arts (In the absence of a drama class, this exercise may be used in the context of language arts.)

- Copy Workbook Handout #1 of Bolin letter.

- Use reader's marks to create dramatic effect: They may work independently or in pairs to inset marks indicating pauses, emphasis or expression. Syllables or words may be underlined to indicate emphasis. One slash mark may be used within a sentence to indicate a short pause (the length of a breath) and two slashes may be used within a sentence or at the end of a sentence to indicate a longer pause.
- After reading the letter and having a discussion on writing and education, instruct students to place readers marks within the text. Students may write adverbs in the margins beside lines or phrases to indicate how a phrase or sentence should be said (slowly, quickly, with sadness, etc.)
- Students should be instructed to pay attention to the intent of the writer; in other words, what do they think Private Bolin's emotions were as he wrote his letter home.
- Use reader's marks to read the letter with expression. Mark the letter with reader's marks, showing pauses, breaks and special emphasis by speaker.

Readers Marks Key / - pause // - long pause _____ [*underline*]-
emphasize a syllable or word

- Dramatize the letter

Math

- Compute regiment, division, brigade strength. Find out how many men were in Bolin's regiment? Division?

Social Studies

- Ask students to read the letter for historical and social information. *When and where was Bolin writing the letter? What were the physical conditions like? What job did Bolin have? To whom was he writing?*
- Create an organizational chart of the army.

Group Activities:

Class may be divided into three groups 1) "Surveyors" for map work, 2) "Planners" for timeline development, and 3) "Organizers" for military chart work.

- Map Study – investigation of the war in the East and the war in the West. *Why was the Western Theater such an important part of the entire Civil War? Give the Surveyors a copy of a modern road map. (See also Civil War era map in Handout #4, Unit 2.) Ask students to track movement of the 31st Indiana Infantry Regiment from Dunlap to Chattanooga, Tennessee. How many miles did Bolin's unit travel? What types of physical hardships might they have encountered? Bolin's unit was fighting in the Western Theater. Where is this in relation to the Eastern Theater (Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, etc.)?*
- Give the Planners a list of the regiment's engagements. (See Handout #3, Unit 2.) Read the dateline on Bolin's letters. *Do they agree with the regiment's postings? What was the furthest distance Bolin's regiment had to march in order to be ready for the next engagement or battle? What was the weather like along the line of march? How do we know this?*

- Give the Organizers a list of military unit definitions and numbers. Complete a matching exercise using these terms. *What does Bolin's letter say about numbers in his regiment? How many men should a typical full-strength regiment have in the Western Theater? Is the 31st Indiana at strength or under-strength?*

Culminating Activity:

Putting the pieces together with discussion questions

- *What do we know about the Civil War now that we did not know before?*
- (Now go deeper) *What do we know now about the Civil War from a soldier's point of view? What is important to him?*
- *What was Bolin's job?*
- *Would you want Bolin to care for you?*
- *Would you volunteer to go to war?*

GRADES 6-8

Examine two letters written by Private Pleasant M. Bolin on January 18, 1863 and March 23, 1863 (pages 4-6, I). Suggested activities may cover from two to four days and may be implemented in language arts, social studies and drama classes.

Language Arts

DAY 1

- Examine and discuss in class Bolin's first letter, January 18, 1863 (page 4, volume 1). Give students a copy of the letter (Handout #1 (optional # 2), Unit 2). Without any comments, ask them to read the letter silently. Then lead discussion to include the mechanics of the letter, and why it is written with grammar errors, misspellings, etc. *Why was it written the way it was? What does this tell you about the social and educational level of the writer?*
- Assignment for Day 2: Read and study Bolin's second letter from March 23, 1863 (pages 5-6, I).

DAY 2

- Compare and contrast Letter 1 and 2. *What did we learn about Bolin? Why is he fighting in this war?*
- Other options for an assignment: 1) Ask students to rewrite the letter in modern terms. Students assume the role of P.M. Bolin. Their task is to rewrite this letter as an e-mail and send it to you. Discussion: *what is gained or lost from the letter as a result? How does the e-mail compare with the original letter?* Or 2) write a response to Bolin's letters as if you were his wife, Mary.

Drama

- Read and discuss the letter together.
- Divide into small groups. Each group should add reader's marks to the letter to make an oral presentation more clear.
- Practice a dramatic reading of the letter. Some groups will read as if they are Bolin, the writer of the letter. *What type of mood might he be in? Under what conditions is he trying to write the letter?* Other groups will read the role as if they are Mary, the recipient of the letter. *How might she react to the news from Tennessee?*

Reader's Marks instructions:

- Syllables or words may be underlined to indicate emphasis. One slash mark may be used within a sentence to indicate a short pause (the length of a breath) and two slashes may be used within a sentence or at the end of a sentence to indicate a longer pause. Students may write adverbs in the margins beside lines or phrases to indicate how a phrase or sentence should be said (slowly, quickly, with sadness, etc.) Students should be instructed to pay attention to the intent of the writer; in other words, what do they think Private Bolin's emotions were as he wrote his letter home. Use reader's marks to read the letter with expression. Mark the letter with reader's marks, showing pauses, breaks and special emphasis by speaker.
- Assignment: Complete this same procedure for the second letter.
- Ask students to read both letters for historical and social information. Letter 1: *when and where was Bolin writing the letter? What were the physical conditions like? What job did Bolin have? To whom was he writing?* Letter 2: *what mood is created in this letter? Why does Bolin feel this way? What are the main themes expressed in the letter?*

*Social Studies***Group Activities:**

Divide the class into three groups 1) "Surveyors" for map work, 2) "Planners" for timeline development, and 3) "Organizers" for military chart work.

- **Surveyors/Maps:** Using Bolin's letters from pages 11-12, I, Handouts #3 and #4, and a Tennessee map (go to web site: <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/tennessee.html> or atlas), trace the movement of Bolin and his regiment from August 1862 to June of 1864.
- Using a climate map of Tennessee (same website or atlas), speculate on the weather Bolin experienced. *Is it possible to determine the exact weather during specific times of the war (to match the dates of Bolin's letters)? What might have the weather been like along the line of march? How do we know this?* Have the student draw conclusions about the effect of weather on troop movement and battle locations. Verify the conclusion with a web search of Civil War newspapers [see suggested website at end of unit; see also study of weather conditions in Unit 10.]
- **Planners/Timeline:** Refer to an overall map of the Civil War and make an estimate of the miles Bolin's regiment marched from August 1862 to June 1864. What was the farthest distance Bolin's regiment had to march in order to be ready for the next engagement or battle? (Use Handout #3, page 12, I as a guide.) *How many miles approximately did Bolin's unit travel? What types of physical hardships might they have encountered?*
- Refer to an overall map of the Civil War and discuss the Eastern and Western Theaters. Also include colors to show Union (blue) and Confederate (red) troops. Finally, show Bolin's participation in these important battles and mark his location in green.
- **Organizers/Charts:** Referring to the letters, Handout #4 and information about the army organization (<http://www.nps.gov/gett/getttour/armorg.htm>), make a chart of how the Union Army of which Bolin belonged was organized. Place Bolin in the appropriate spot. Answer these questions: *What are the three divisions of an army? What does each part do? To which part did*

Bolin's regiment belong? How many men were supposed to be in a typical infantry regiment? Name and explain the sizes of other groups. Do the dates and locations of these groups agree with Bolin's letters? Make another chart showing the organization of the Confederate Army. Compare and contrast the two armies. [See web site suggestions for organization or "Order of Battle" at the end of this unit.]

Culminating Discussion Activity:

What is the bigger picture? From Bolin's or the average soldier's point of view, what do we know now about life during the Civil War that we did not know before? What issues did Bolin have with African Americans? Was he patriotic?

Final Assignment:

Using the information from your small groups, the class discussion, and your interpretation of Bolin's letters, write one more letter. Assume the role of Bolin and answer the following questions: *Why did Bolin enlist? What was his understanding of the reasons for the fighting between the states? Was his life as a soldier what he expected? What were some of the important factors in winning a battle?*

Optional assignments:

1) Divide students into groups and let them organize a news report. Create a script using the questions listed in the final assignment. Create answers that Bolin might use and act out the interview. 2) Create a recruiting poster for Bolin's regiment and address the questions in the culminating activity. 3) Give the students a list of military unit definitions and numbers. Complete a matching exercise using these terms. *What does Bolin's letter say about numbers in his regiment? How many men should a typical full-strength regiment have in the Western Theater? Is the 31st Indiana at strength or under-strength? To which Union army did the 31st Indiana belong? Locate on the web the 31st Indiana and its order of battle in at least two major engagements.*

GRADES 9-12

Examine two letters written by Private Pleasant M. Bolin on January 18, 1863 and March 23, 1863 from pages 4-6, volume 1. Suggested activities may cover from one to two days and may be implemented in language arts, social studies and drama classes.

Language Arts

- Have students read both letters. Discuss 19th century styles in writing. *What are appropriate types of salutations? What are typical opening lines in letters? Why are letters such an important form of communication? What other forms of communication are there during the Civil War era?*
- Have students identify and define vocabulary words used in both letters. *How sophisticated is Bolin's choice of vocabulary? What does the vocabulary in both letters reveal about the socio-economic status of the letter-writer and the recipient?*

Drama

- Read each of the letters and add appropriate reader's marks. Have some students role-play Bolin's wife, Mary, as she reads and reacts to the news in each letter. Other students can role-play Bolin as he writes each letter. *What might interrupt either the writing or the reading of the letters?*

Reader's Marks instructions:

- Syllables or words may be underlined to indicate emphasis. One slash mark may be used within a sentence to indicate a short pause (the length of a breath) and two slashes may be used within a sentence or at the end of a sentence to indicate a longer pause. Students may write adverbs in the margins beside lines or phrases to indicate how a phrase or sentence should be said (slowly, quickly, with sadness, etc.) Students should be instructed to pay attention to the intent of the writer; in other words, what do they think Private Bolin's emotions were as he wrote his letter home. Use reader's marks to read the letter with expression. Mark the letter with reader's marks, showing pauses, breaks and special emphasis by speaker.

Social Studies

- Have students re-read each letter for content. Letter 1: *What events are mentioned in Bolin's account? Where might one find corroborating contemporary information? How might Bolin be affected by the physical strains of a military campaign?* Letter 2: Have students identify and chart the important themes conveyed by Bolin.
- Discuss the various themes (Revolution, Abolition, Emancipation, prejudice, Secesh, and Copperheads). Provide an opportunity for students to debate the following questions: 1) *Can you support the argument that the Civil War was the Second American Revolution?* 2) *Was or was not Bolin a supporter of abolition? Why might he feel this way? What or who influenced his beliefs?*
- Divide the class into two groups; one group argues in support of Bolin, the other prepares a proposal as to *what else* can be done for African Americans.
- Stepping into the mind of Bolin, *Why did he suggest that African Americans be sent to Cuba? Was this suggestion prompted by other similar proposals in the mid-19th century? If so, what influenced Bolin?* Have students search Civil War era newspapers online or via microfilm. Can they find evidence in Indiana or national newspapers for sending African Americans elsewhere?

Art

- Political cartoons were popular during the Civil War. (Use Handout #4.) Have students draw a cartoon of Bolin at Camp Cripple Creek. Have them think about how they might best portray the physical and mental situation evident for Bolin as described in two letters (January 18th and March 23rd, 1863). Another cartoon could portray the problems inherent on the home front.

Group Activities:

Class may be divided into three groups 1) "Surveyors & Planners": for map work and timeline development, and 2) "Investigators": for sleuthing Civil War era newspapers for articles on abolition, justifying the Second Revolution, or Emancipation. Investigators should also familiarize themselves with the composition of the Western Theater armies and how the 31st Indiana Volunteers fit into the order of battle during 1863.

- Give the Surveyors & Planners a list of the regiment's engagements. (Handout #3) and a copy of a Civil War era map (Handout #4).
- Ask students to track movement of the 31st Indiana Infantry Regiment from the beginning of the war through its conclusion. *How many total miles did Bolin's unit travel? What types of physical hardships might they have encountered? What might the weather have been like along the line of march? How do we know this?*

- Use as a model for students the 1815 French map by Minard [online source: <http://www.edwardtufte.com/tufte/minard>]. Have students create a master map based on information gleaned from different sources (e.g. with layers of information – a physical map, a weather diagram, location of military engagements, plotting of regimental losses if available). [For more Minard-style map work, see: <http://www.math.yorku.ca/SCS/Gallery/re-minard.html>]
- Give the Investigators a list of the regiment's activities (Handout #3.) and a copy of a Civil War era map (Handout #4) and Have this group perform an e-search for historical newspaper accounts of troop movements in Tennessee from January 1, 1863 through March 31, 1863. *Which newspapers provide detailed reports? What information can be found regarding the 31st Indiana and the Army of Ohio? Are there similar reports in Tennessee newspapers? How might these accounts differ in point of view? Give examples.*

Culminating Activity:

Have students create a videotaped newscast based on the following role-playing situation: a reporter from the hometown Terre Haute paper comes to interview Bolin in camp in Tennessee. *What are five significant questions we still want to know about Bolin and his Civil War experience?* To attempt to answer this, students are to write a script to reflect this type of interview. The reporter may also wish to interview Mary Bolin. *How does she cope during her husband's absence? What news does she have to share from him?* (Students may wish to read through all of the Bolin letters to get a more complete grasp of the family situation and wartime events.)

Selected Web Sites:

For one of the best Civil War history web sites (including searchable newspapers), go to: <http://sunsite.utk.edu/civil-war/warweb.html> Newspapers provide military news, social items, weather, etc. Civil War maps from West Point can also be located at this site.

Two additional websites which will help with weather and general Civil War information can be found at: <http://civilwarhome.com/> and <http://civilweek.com/> The latter site provides

For information on the 31st Indiana, go to: <http://www.civilwarindiana.com/> and click on link to search (enter Pleasant Bolin's name in search fields) or go to bottom of page for 31st and pull up list of soldiers in this unit.

For order of battle resources specifically for the 31st Indiana, go to: Battle of Shiloh <http://www.civilwarhome.com/shilohorderofbattleunion.htm> Battle of Chickamauga

<http://www.civilwarhome.com/chickamaugaaoc.htm>

For a site with more information on the 31st Indiana, go to: http://www.psci.net/hutch/31st_lin.html

For an additional collection of letters (written later than Bolin's) see this site for John Christian Seibert:

<http://www.indianainthecivilwar.com/letters/31st/31stletter.htm>

For a post-Civil War histories of the regiment by soldiers who were there, go to the Library of Congress site:

<http://www.loc.gov/rr/main/uscivilwar/E506531.html>

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Mosocco, Ronald A. *The Chronological Tracking of the American Civil War per the Official Records of the War of the Rebellion*. (James River Publications, 1994).

Palka, Eugene J. and Francis A. Galgano. *The Scope of Military Geography: Across the Spectrum from Peacetime to War*. (McGraw-Hill Primis, 2000). See especially "Military Geography of the American Civil War: The Blue Ridge and Valley & Ridge Provinces".

Winters, Harold A. with Gerald E. Galloway, Jr., etc. *Battling the Elements: Weather and Terrain in the Conduct of War*. (Johns Hopkins Press, 1998). See “Too Much and Too Wet: the Civil War Mud March and Flanders’ Fields”.

Journal article: Joseph Hutchinson, “Learning about the Civil War through Soldiers’ Letters,” National Council for the Social Studies, *Social Education* 69(6), pg. 318-322. © 2005 National Council for the Social Studies.

Handout #1 Transcribed Bolin Letter from January 18, 1863
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Private Pleasant M. Bolin

Company B, Thirty-first Indiana Volunteer Regiment

Hospital Steward

Camp on Hickory Creek Ten

Jan 18th 1863

My Dear family I this rainy Evening penned you a breaf line we hav just Moved East 8 miles on the McMinville Pike being now 15 miles from ower division and event support with the Exception of the rest of ower brigaid we are now Engaged in fortifying ower brigaid numbers a bout 850 men and also we hav a battery of 6 heavy cannon we are expecting and attack but we will Show them that it will take at least 4 times ower number to take us in at least we wil try them on — ower camp in on a high point and So Strong we can barly find room to drive a Steak and nothing but cold [gives?] one those nobz but green cedar does not burn well — we hav had a vary bad Spell of weather in the last two weeks — Some Snow with a good deal of cold and snow — it is raining but it cannot Effect us by high waters not muddy camp health is not as good as has bin we hav some Ague and fever with a good [d]eal of Rheumatism we Still hav no Doctor and I am getting tired of being a [tool?] for Such I have to act the Stuard and doctor two so far I can Say I hav had good luck I am gaining all the information possible from studying at night I wrote you a day or two ago that I was vary unwell so I was but now I am all wright with the Exception of a cold I hav learned since I commenced writing that the rebs hav Shown themselves in force to ower pickets we are still fortifying I will close for the night and finish on to morrow...

Handout #2 Original Bolin letter January 18, 1863

Still raining the biggest shower of the last week
 all night in a long rain the excitement this
 morning we found was not to complete our
 but we had the will to ~~do it~~ ~~do it~~
 we can welcome the rebels though in the
 making of any further contest occurred since
 last evening. A word to the boys -
 Henry Chew D. wants to see you and
 Tom and Ed. I would go to see a
 good little girl and go to school and learn
 to ~~be kind to the little~~ ~~be kind to the~~
~~boys~~ ~~and~~ ~~have~~ ~~all~~ ~~to~~ ~~good~~
 to be it is good to go to
 school and mind your teacher
 Mr C will show my paper to all
 my friends except one of them
 I had no letter from you
 for these articles you send
 Be good by for the present
 your well wisher
 E. P. Bolin
 H.P. 31st Dec

till May. Atlanta (Ga.) Campaign May 1-September 8. Tunnel Hill May 6-7. Demonstrations on Rocky Faced Ridge and Dalton, Ga., May 8-13. Buzzard's Roost Gap May 8-9. Battle of Resaca May 14-15. Near Kingston May 18-19. Near Cassville May 19. Advance on Dallas May 22-25. Operations on line of Pumpkin Vine Creek and battles about Dallas, New Hope Church and Allatoona Hills May 25- June 5. Operations about Marietta and against Kenesaw Mountain June 10-July 2. Pine Hill June 11-14. Lost Mountain June 15-17. Assault on Kenesaw June 27. Ruff's Station, Smyrna Camp Ground, July 4. Chattahoochie River July 5-17. Vining Station July 7. Peach Tree Creek July 19-20. Siege of Atlanta July 22-August 25. Flank movement on Jonesboro August 25-30. Battle of Jonesboro August 31-September 1. Lovejoy station September 2-6. Operations against Hood in North Georgia and North Alabama September 29-November 3. Nashville Campaign November-December. Columbia, Duck River, November 24-27. Battle of Franklin November 30. Battle of Nashville December 15-16. Pursuit of Hood to the Tennessee River December 17-28. Moved to Huntsville, Ala., and duty there till March, 1865. Operations in East Tennessee March 15-April 22. Duty at Nashville till June. Moved to New Orleans, La., June 16, thence to Texas, July. Duty at Green Lake and San Antonio till December. Mustered out December 8, 1865. Regiment lost during service 5 Officers and 115 Enlisted men killed and mortally wounded and 5 Officer and 253 Enlisted men by disease. Total 378.

Source: Frederick H. Dyer, *A Compendium of the War of the Rebellion*. (1908).

HANDOUT #4 19th Century Map of Tennessee
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Campaign in Tennessee from section of larger map: "Marches of the United States Forces under the Command of Gen. W. T. Sherman, USA During 1863, 1864, 1865" (from *History of the Civil War 1861-1865* by James Ford Rhodes, (Macmillan, 1917), map insert on page 398.



Handout #5 Designing a Cartoon

After completing the following questions, draw a cartoon on an 8.5x11 piece of paper. Be sure the cartoon reflects as closely as possible the ideas presented in the letters.

1. *Identify words in Letter 1 or 2 that are descriptive of the physical scene*
2. *Identify words in Letter 1 or 2 that reveal emotions and thoughts*
3. *Identify images or personalities that are mentioned in either letter*
4. *What types of action should take place in the cartoon?*
5. *What political themes can be presented in the cartoon based on either letter?*
6. *Are there any groups or individuals who might disagree with the ideas conveyed in the cartoon?*