



A Prescription for Conscription? Lessons from the Draft in the American Civil War and Compulsory Service in Subsequent Conflicts

Guide for Curriculum Unit 08.01.02

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The purpose of this unit is to examine the concept and historical record of conscription in United States history. In light of current warfare taking place and debate over whether there should be a draft or some form of national service, teachers and students in United States history classes and civics should find information in this unit helpful. The drafts conducted in the Civil War are the first uses of national conscription in United States history. For this reason and because the Civil War is a prominent part of my United States I History curriculum, the Union and Confederate drafts are primary points of study in this unit. However, the employment of the draft in subsequent conflicts in United States history are also included to highlight issues associated with conscription. Because the debate over initiatives to re-institute conscription for the military and/or national service are current issues that may specifically affect students, this unit is an excellent opportunity to apply historical examples and historical thinking to a contemporary issue. This unit contains suggested activities for inquiry into the development of the first national draft during the Civil War and describes a cooperative learning strategy for investigating drafts in subsequent United States conflicts. The unit offers information aimed at sparking discussion and/or debate about the prospect of compulsory national service.

(Recommended for U.S. History, grades 9-12)

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