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Whitman, Lincoln, and Brady; Three Perspectives on a Nation Divided

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Why do we study war? What is it that intrigues or fascinates us about conflict and battle that keeps us coming back to the events that have shaped our history and our democracy? Over and over scholars, artists, politicians, and students return to the wars that have followed mankind like a dark shadow as he struggles to find his way through time, trying to make sense of the great mystery of life. The American Civil War generated thousands of publications, movies, illustrations and photographs that still fascinate us nearly one hundred and fifty years after the bloody conflict's conclusion. Lincoln's Gettysburg Address is deciphered and recited throughout our schools as Walt Whitman's Civil War poetry is still considered among the classic examples of excellence in American poetry. Thousands of Civil War photos fill books and web pages, libraries and universities, silent monuments to a conflict that reshaped our history and nearly destroyed our fledgling democracy.

And so too this unit will join the plethora of literature, artwork and prose that comprise the study of the Civil War. This unit does not explore the Civil War through the battles and blood spilled on the fields of Gettysburg, Fredericksburg and Atlanta. It does not attempt to decipher the political turmoil that surrounded our nation at the time of this great war. Instead it focuses on this conflict, that took 600,000 lives, touched millions of others, and continues to shape who we are as a nation, through the perspectives of three men; Lincoln, Whitman and Brady.

Although my research has not revealed a close personal tie between these three players, the three men did at least know of each other. Whitman admired Lincoln greatly and writes of catching a glimpse of him during his time in Washington DC. Whitman also attended Lincoln's second inaugural address. There is evidence that Whitman admired Brady's work and wrote about it in his early years as a journalist. Both Lincoln and Brady certainly would have heard of Whitman and there is some evidence that Lincoln may have read at least part of one of the early editions of *Leaves of Grass*. Finally Brady was one of the premier photographers in Washington DC during the Civil War and regularly did portraits of politicians and generals in his local studio. Although these connections may seem inconsequential, the passion the three shared in regards to their troubled times is monumental. These three men tried to make some sense of the epic war for the rest of us, and each in his own way, tried to make some good come out of the conflict. With heroic dedication and undying focus on their beliefs, these three men dedicated a large part of their lives to fighting the Civil War without ever picking up a weapon.

My three-week unit will begin with a brief assessment of the background knowledge of my eighth grade students regarding the Civil War. Using the PBS Ken Burns Civil War series, computers, and American History textbooks, I will attempt to “fill in the blanks” and make sure students have a general understanding of the Civil War at the start.

I will then focus on three different perspectives of the war beginning with Whitman’s Civil War poetry including *Beat! Beat! Drums!*, *A Sight in Camp in the Daybreak Gray and Dim*, *O Captain, My Captain*, *Hush’d Be the Camps To-day* and others. After examining Whitman we will continue with Lincoln’s Gettysburg address and his first and second inaugural addresses, and finally end by using Brady’s photography to add visual images to our discussion on the war. Selections from the three will allow us to mix visual imagery, literary imagery, and prose.

Using graphic organizers, free writes, journal entries, drama, and artwork, students will be encouraged to compare interpretations of a nation divided as portrayed by our three main subjects of study, and will also be asked to draw comparisons between the issues of mid-nineteenth century America and those of modern, 21st century America. Among the assessment pieces of the unit will be a compare/contrast essay, group interpretations of poetry and a power point presentation. Since my school is an Arts Magnet school, students will be asked to prepare artistic presentations throughout the unit.

My hopes are that the unit will allow students to use the literature and photos of the Civil War, not only to understand that era and gain insights into a nation divided, but to make connections and draw conclusions as to how those lessons apply to their lives and their world.

Purpose

The purpose of this unit is really threefold; I would like to prepare a unit that I can use in coordination with the Social Studies and art teachers on my eighth grade team; I would like to help students appreciate different perspectives in a unit that will use literature and documents that may be hard for eighth grade students to understand; finally I would like my unit to help students to make connections between the conflict that took place in the middle of the Nineteenth Century and the conflict that is going on in their world today.

Middle school teachers strive to work together on units that will allow students to appreciate the links that make studying things such as the Civil War and other topics that take place in an interdisciplinary setting. I believe my unit will serve as a link not only for students studying this very complicated time period in American history, but also serve as a link for colleagues in the middle school to work together, overlap lessons, and work in coordination on a subject that can be very overwhelming.

Secondly, I would like to make this literature more accessible to my students. Technology in this fast-paced internet driven world has put the written word at a disadvantage that it has never been up against before. Most of my eighth grade students would rather pick up an ipod, play a computer game, or look at how many things they can do on their telephones rather than read the poetry of Whitman or look closely at the speeches and words of Abraham Lincoln. We need to find new ways to introduce classic American literature to today’s students. I believe that this unit will give teachers the chance to introduce literature to students in a way that is engaging and interesting. Using the web sites given in the unit will allow students and teachers to examine

primary source documents on line, making the study of texts and images quicker and more rewarding.

Finally, and most importantly, by looking at the perspectives and representations of these three figures from the Civil War, I believe that students can make some real connections with what was going on at that time and what is currently going on in their lives now. I want students to gain some more knowledge of what great literature does for us. How powerful the written word can be when applied to one's own world and current situation.

Connecticut Writing Project

The Connecticut Writing Project is a University of Connecticut writing program that is a part of the larger National Writing Project. The program is designed to help students and teachers explore writing through various creative writing strategies. Teachers in New Haven have been fortunate enough to be introduced to the program as a part of the English curriculum. Due to our inclusion in the Connecticut Writing Project, teachers in New Haven have been introduced to various ways to help our students become more comfortable with their writing as they discover new ways to express themselves. Journal writing in which content is the focus, I-search research papers, dialogical notebooks and writer conferences are all techniques that New Haven teachers have been invited to explore as they lead students through writing that emphasizes connecting literature and self, taking critical stances and focusing on higher order thinking skills in their writing.

Splatter!

Splatter! Magazine is a Yale University student run literary magazine for middle school and elementary school children. Several times a year, students from Yale University come to my classroom and run writer workshops in which students submit work to a literary magazine that is published both on line and in hard copy. This organization allows students to submit prose, poetry and artwork to the publication and helps students get their first try at publishing their work. I mention this resource as an additional idea for teachers across the country to explore. Check your local universities for resources that you can utilize in your classroom. My students have always enjoyed the exciting *Splatter!* workshops and there is nothing like seeing your work published to help a writer get motivated. Check out *Splatter!* at www.splatter.com.

Journal Writing

Journal writing is a big part of my teaching because I find it to be one of the most exciting and creative types of writing that my students regularly take part in. I emphasize creativity in the journals that I require my eighth graders to keep. They are never penalized for spelling or grammar in their journals because the entries

are all about their ideas. I want students to feel free to express themselves in their writing. I want them to enjoy their ideas and allow themselves the freedom to not worry about form, structure, grammar and the elements that we regularly examine during other types of writing such as essay and research writing.

Having journals in the classroom also provides students with an easy access, low maintenance record of the writing they do. Journals are diaries for the students. They are encouraged to write in them often and keep them throughout the year. Entries that are too personal for my eyes are folded as a signal for me to avoid them as I go through their journals to make comments on students' writing.

Teachers should participate in all writing activities. After assignments are explained, sit down and write with the students. If you have a chance to share your writing, do it. It gives students' work added value if they see you participating with them.

Some possible journal topics that may be included in this unit are:

- Write a quick write on everything you know about the Civil War
- Write a letter to Lincoln or Bush explaining your views on the war
- Write a speech for Lincoln or Bush on war
- Write a song
- Write a poem about conflict
- Write a poem about issues faced by teens today
- Compare two of Whitman's poems
- Analyze an aspect of a poem (mood, form, rhythm, etc.)
- Describe the feelings of a soldier in a poem
- Describe the aftermath of a battle in a poem
- Write a patriotic poem
- Illustrate a poem
- Describe a photo by Matthew Brady
- Compare a Brady Photo with a modern war poem
- Discuss censorship during war time

Art

As our school is an arts magnet school, whenever I do an extensive unit I try to incorporate art into the unit wherever possible. In an arts magnet school the arts and academics are linked in a way that promotes learning that is often overlooked in a regular school setting. In our school, students study math, social studies, science, and languages, but are also invited to explore the arts for half of their day. The students study drawing and painting, photography, video, dance, pottery, drama, sculpture, and music. It is through this vehicle, this arts magnet atmosphere, that students are allowed to explore and find their strengths and weaknesses. Virtually every student in the school finds his or her niche, his or her interest, and his or her means to succeed in an arts magnet school. In an arts magnet school students use the arts as a way to further explore and understand the academics.

I find that infusing art into my academic classroom is one way to help students succeed while tapping into their interests and finding routes to higher order thinking. In this unit I will often ask students to match lines of poetry with images and student-created artwork that will be displayed in the classroom as part of their final project.

The Unit

The Civil War

Before getting started on this unit I think it is important that teachers establish where the students are in regards to background knowledge on the Civil War. How much do they know/remember about the Civil War? A good way to do this is just have students begin with a “quick write” in their journals. Ask students to write non-stop for about two or three minutes on everything they know about the Civil War. Next have a student come up to the front of the room and jot down the ideas that students have provided in their journal entries. By the time your class has shared their ideas, you’ll see where you are regarding background knowledge. Have students jot down some of the ideas that have appeared on the board and help them make some sense of what they do and do not know.

Neither teacher nor students need to be experts on the Civil War in order to complete this unit. I think a general understanding of the era and the war should suffice before we move onto Whitman, Lincoln and Brady. Before moving on, make sure students know the years of the war, some reasons for the war, who was fighting, how slavery and slave labor became a political issue at the time, what some of the major battles were, which states were involved and some of the terminology involved with the war. They should understand that it was an incredibly bloody war and who the players were on both sides of the conflict. There are a number of electronic and printed resources that teachers can use to fill in students’ background knowledge.

It would also be good to talk with students about the term “civil war” and what civil war really means for a nation. Many students do not fully grasp that a civil war takes place inside a country and is among its people. Share examples of other civil wars past and present. Was the American Revolution a civil war? Was WWII? Is Iraq or Afghanistan involved in civil war? Try to help students grasp this important concept that brings another aspect to their understanding of war.

Why Walt Whitman?

The mid-nineteenth century was a turbulent and difficult era of American History. Within the first twenty years of the second half of the nineteenth century, the expanding nation would go through a Civil War that divided families within the nation, and lose a president who had spent the past five years determined to mend the country.

Among the leading voices of the Civil War, Walt Whitman stands as one of the most significant representatives of the nation divided. Whitman would become a new voice in American Literature, one that Ralph Waldo Emerson, the most recognized and respected literary figures of the day, would recognize as a genius after his first publication of the Whitman's most famous collection of poems, *Leaves of Grass* . On the other hand, Whitman's poetry was considered scandalous by many in the nation from the time of its first publication into the twentieth century. But despite Whitman's controversial entry into the literary world, due mostly to sexual content and departure from more traditional rhyming of English poetry, despite his being both welcomed and unwelcomed by a nation on the verge of war, he did come to embody the nature and mood of the nation at the time. Perhaps due to his own humble beginnings, the second child of nine in a Long Island family whose problems covered everything from mental retardation to depression and epilepsy, Whitman came to represent the "Everyman" in America. In his life Whitman would wear many hats, the farmer, the teacher, the journalist, the lover, the nurse, the poet. Similarly, in his poetry Whitman would come to represent all Americans in a style of poetry that somehow seemed fit for this nation as it struggled to find its way through turbulent times. In *American Poetry; The Puritans through Walt Whitman* , Alan Shucard comments;

Whitman's commonplace family and working class friends and his training as a journalist and a Democratic party operative were excellent preparation for his self-assertion as the poet of the egalitarianism." ¹

Whitman also came to embody many of the characteristics and ideals that Emerson and the Transcendentalists represented. Poetry came to represent all things divine and the poet became the representative of not only mankind, but of a union with all that transcended common thought.

Throughout *Leaves of Grass* , a work first published in 1855 as a collection of twelve poems, followed by nearly a dozen revised editions and a final posthumous edition published in 1892 which included over 300 poems, Whitman sings to us through poetry that does transcend the concept of self and gives the author an authority that serves as a guide, a friend and a consciousness that enters the readers' soul and touches all of us; "And what I assume you shall assume,/For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you." (1,3) From the first section of the poem, we, the readers are asked to understand that we too are the poets, we too are the divine. Whitman will take us on a journey through poetry that will give us, as it has given him, a sort of immortality. Whitman speaks to us throughout the poem, challenging our beliefs and trying to teach us from beyond the grave. "What do you think has become of the young and old men?/And what do you think has become of the women and children?/They are alive and well somewhere,/The smallest sprout shows there is really no death (123-125).

Drum Taps

When the Civil War broke out in 1861 Whitman found himself very literally in the middle of the war. When George Whitman, the poet's brother, was wounded during the war, Walt went to visit him in a Fredericksburg hospital. The visit initiated a period of volunteer nursing in which Whitman became a staple in a Washington hospital. Whitman developed many relationships with wounded soldiers and took his place on the front lines as the gruesome reality of the war became a part of his daily life. Again, Whitman became America's "Everyman" embodying a nation at war, and embracing all of her pains. Roger Ochse comments in *The Civic Literature of Walt Whitman* ;

Walt Whitman's service as a volunteer "visitor" in the hospital tents of the Civil War became his personal mission of healing these wounds. His personal devotion to wounded soldiers was an integral part of his holistic approach to life and the American experience. For Whitman, dedication and service to ordinary people-who made up the real America-was his reason for being. ²

The literary fruits of Whitman's experience in the war were the poems that made up the *Drum Taps* collection. Briefly published towards the end of the war as one volume and later incorporated into *Leaves of Grass* , the *Drum Taps* poems trace Whitman's experience in the war, through the hardship and suffering he shared with the soldiers and finally to the closing days of the war.

For my unit I will use several of the poems from this collection. *Beat! Beat! Drums!* Is a recruitment poem that shows the optimism and vitality of the early years of the war. *A sight in Camp in the Daybreak Gray and Dim* serves as a moment in time in the hospital camp and *Reconciliation* will allow students to examine the changing mood in Whitman's poetry. I will also utilize two poems that are not a part of the *Drum-Taps* collection, but are valuable in this study nonetheless. They are two elegies to Abraham Lincoln; *O'Captain, My Captain* and *Hush'd Be the Camps Today* .

There are dozens of poems to choose from. They are interchangeable in this unit. For example *When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd* would be a good replacement for either of the Lincoln poems if you have an advanced class. The unit I am designing is for eighth-grade students and so my choices are shorter and a little easier to interpret than others.

The Poems in the Classroom

After giving students a brief introduction to Walt Whitman and helping them to connect the poet with the Civil War, I will split students into groups to work on the poetry. Each group will be assigned one poem or section of a poem. Students will be asked to read through their poems in their groups and then come up with a way to present the poem to the class. The students must present a reading of the poem to the class, create a visual representation of the poem to share with the class, and prepare a set of five discussion questions for the class as well as their own interpretation of those questions.

Give the students a class period to work together and complete the assignment. Tell them they will receive a

group grade for the assignment and depending on your class, give them whatever time is needed to complete the assignment. After students have presented their projects to the class, ask them to arrange themselves in what order they think the poems would have occurred in Whitman's manuscript. They will probably be able to figure closely which poems were early in the war, at the middle and, of course, with Lincoln's assassination occurring after the surrender, at the end.

Group work in the classroom is a wonderful tool that forces students to take more responsibilities for their own actions. I find it very helpful with eighth grade students who really need to learn to cooperate and put aside their differences in order to complete the group projects. Finally, have a discussion with the class about what the poems tell us about Whitman and his feelings about the war. Again, have a student jot down the class findings on the board and discuss what you discover as a class. Before moving on to the next section of the unit, ask students to respond to what they have explored so far in their journals. For more detailed instructions on this section of the unit look at the lesson plans section at the end.

Lincoln the Writer

After having spent some time with Whitman and his perspective on the Civil War, teachers will move on to examine another perspective through Lincoln. Lincoln is one of the nation's most revered and legendary presidents. All Americans learn the legends of Lincoln early in life; his being raised in a log cabin; his teaching himself to read by candlelight; his honesty. Lincoln has come to represent the American dream, the Mr. Smith who went to Washington, the underdog who makes it all the way to the top in this country through hard work, determination and belief in himself and his country.

Have that conversation with your students. What do they know about Lincoln, what is fact and what is legend? Many students will know the legends as well as the facts. Some will know of his assassination, many will associate him with the freeing of slaves and some might recognize some of his written accomplishments including the *Emancipation Proclamation* or the *Gettysburg Address*. This is where you want your students to be for this section of the unit. Get students to think of Lincoln as a writer. Unlike today's politicians who utilize speech writers with computers armed with spell and grammar checks, unlike today's politicians whose every word and speech is checked through by armies of paid experts and mock audiences, Lincoln did his own writing, his own editing and his own revision of his speeches. In his book *Lincoln the Writer*, Harold Holzer asserts that, "Lincoln simplified political writing. He eliminated unnecessary words. He replaced emotion with logic. He made complicated issues clear." ³ Ask students who writes the President's speeches today? Ask students what Lincoln doing his own writing says about him and about what he says in his speeches. Take a day and invite students to look over some of Lincoln's original manuscript pages by going on the Gilder Lehrman website (www.gilderlehrman.org) where they will find a wide variety of original documents including copies of the speeches we will focus on for this unit.

Lincoln's First Inaugural Address, March 4, 1861

When Lincoln delivered his first inaugural address on March 4, 1861 the nation was on the brink of civil war. The stage was set and many thought that the war was inevitable. Clearly the struggle was forefront in Lincoln's mind and he was struggling with the issue as he wrote his speech. Lois J. Einhorn points out the difficulty in writing to an audience as divided as the nation was at that point;

No one questions the especially difficult rhetorical situation Lincoln faced. He was a minority president speaking in especially volatile times, and he needed to address several different audiences. At the very least, his audiences included strong Abolitionists, moderate Northerners, South Carolinians, citizens of the other six states that had already seceded, citizens of the other Southern states that were considering succession, southerners who were against seceding, and citizens of the border states. ⁴

The speech was published in newspapers throughout the nation and as the citizens examined it, the interpretations of the speech highlighted the extent which the nation was divided. Generally speaking, northerners interpreted the speech as conciliatory and fair while southerners read Lincoln's words as a threat or an ultimatum. A month later, on April 12, the first shots of the Civil War would be fired at Fort Sumter.

Read through Lincoln's speech and choose a section for your students to examine. The second to the last paragraph is especially poignant as the president seems to speak directly to the southern secessionists as he asserts,

In your hands, my dissatisfied fellow countrymen, and not in mine, is the momentous issue of civil war. The government will not assail you. You can have no conflict without being yourselves the aggressors. You have no oath registered in Heaven to destroy the government, while I shall have the most solemn one to "preserve, protect, and defend it."

Clearly Lincoln is aware of the predicament he and the country are in and, clearly the president is trying to spell out the inevitability of war if the preservation of the union was at risk.

Was the speech conciliatory or was it a veiled threat? Ask students to role-play the northerners' and southerners' positions in response to your reading. Once again ask students to use their journals in order to clarify their point of views after the speech. Assign a leader to each group and give the northerners and southerners some time to discuss their points of view. Have the representatives from each group voice the groups' views in a debate format where points are made and countered in the classroom. A more detailed plan for this section is included in the lesson plans section of this unit.

Finally, challenge your students to think of a situation where they might be required to speak to such a diverse audience in such a desperate situation as the 16th president found himself in 1861. Brainstorm situations that students might be involved with where they would have to address a very diverse audience on a touchy issue. Write down the situation that the class comes up with on the board and ask students to write a persuasive speech in response to the prompt.

The Gettysburg Address, November 19, 1863

The battle of Gettysburg, PA was a turning point in the Civil War. Over forty thousand died in a brutal conflict that lasted three days. Lincoln was invited to speak at the dedication of a cemetery there three months after the July battle had ended.

Although the Gettysburg Address only lasted three minutes, it is considered by many to be a masterpiece of oratorical work. Lincoln's words are carefully chosen to include Biblical references, connections to the founding fathers and reoccurring images of death and rebirth. Harold Holzer comments, "It might even be said that if the Emancipation Proclamation was the 'prose' of liberty-legally important but not beautiful-The Gettysburg Address was the 'poetry'." ⁵

To help students appreciate the language of the *Gettysburg Address*, cut up the speech into sections. For example write down, "Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal." Give this piece of the address to a pair of students and go on to find a section for each pair of students to work on. Have students read their sections and discuss the significance. Ask pairs to illustrate their section with an explanation on the back of their illustrations. Finally ask students to memorize their section. This may take a day or two to complete, but when they are finished students can present their findings to the class. Ask the students to come up in pairs in the sequence of their lines and deliver the lines to the class with their explanations. After you have gone through the presentations, go back and simply have students recite the address. Post the pieces in your classroom so that you can refer to them throughout the unit.

The Second Inaugural Address, March 4, 1865

The final piece in the Lincoln section of the unit, *Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address* is another briefly written (just over seven hundred words) masterpiece delivered by one of our nation's most poetic presidents. With the war nearly over, the president takes a moment to reflect on what the nation has been through and looks forward to a nation healing "with malice toward none; with charity for all."

Point out to students that this speech serves as a sort of bookend to the war. In the next few months the war will end and Lincoln will be dead. Among the onlookers at the second inaugural were one of Lincoln's greatest admirers, Walt Whitman, and one that would prove to be his most hated enemy, John Wilkes Booth. Ask students to think back to the *First Inaugural Address*. How are the two speeches similar or different? What do the speeches tell us about how far Lincoln and the country have come in coping with this tragic war? What does Lincoln's writing show us about him and his perspective on the war? How are Lincoln's views similar or different from those of Walt Whitman in his poetry? What was it that prompted the "spiritual kinship" ⁶ that the two seemed to share.

This is the perfect point for students to choose a topic for a compare/contrast essay. The topics are numerous, as you probably saw during your discussion of how far we have come in the unit thus far. Encourage students to come up with their own topics and spend a day or two allowing them to write and revise their ideas. Finally

ask students to share their ideas in an open reading session.

Matthew Brady and the Civil War Photographers

The final section of this unit focuses on the visual representation of the Civil War. With the development of photography in the nineteenth Century, the nation, its heroes and enemies were brought into the homes of many much as coverage of Vietnam brought the nation's civilians into the war in Southeast Asia. And much like the Dan Rathers that would emerge from the Vietnam War as heroic correspondents, so too Matthew Brady would emerge as one of the leading correspondences from the Civil War. While Brady is given much credit for the photography surrounding the battles of the Civil War, it is interesting to note that Brady himself was often in Washington D.C. at his studio while others in his photography crew were out taking the actual pictures. Brady's associates, including Alexander Gardner, James Gardner, Timothy O'Sullivan, William Pywell, Thomas Roach and more than a dozen other photographers were out in the field taking the nearly 10,000 plates that would make Brady the nation's first famous photojournalist. ⁷

The Photos

This section of the unit will utilize technology more than the other sections. Hundreds of Civil War photos are available on a number of web sites that are student-friendly and easy to access. While I began the unit thinking I would rely strictly on photos produced by Brady and his associates, I quickly realized that there is much to offer on line that I would be denying my students by strictly focusing on Brady.

This is also a point in the unit where teachers may decide to examine how cameras and photography worked during the Civil War years. Photography at this point in our history is a new invention, and will go through many changes and adaptations before coming to what it is today. There is an entire unit here that would be fascinating for students. For this unit you might just take a day and look at what photography was in the 1860s. What did cameras look like? What did photographers have to go through to snap a picture? There is much to explore here.

Power Point Presentations

The cumulating project of this unit is the power point presentation. I find that about ninety percent of my students are fairly capable of creating power point presentations by the time they reach eighth grade. The presentations allow students to mix visual, written and auditory material in an artistic manner that is often very impressive. For this particular project I would like the students to use their favorite poetry or prose from the unit, match it up with some Civil War photography and make some attempt at relating it all to modern times as well.

Begin by asking your students to recall one of their favorite poems or paragraphs from Whitman's or Lincoln's writings. Now, as they explore the Civil War photos on line, ask students to make note of photos that will match or compliment their favorite lines. Allow students to work in pairs if they like. Utilizing the images they find on line and the lines of the poetry that they have selected, ask students to map out a power point presentation on paper and show it to you before they begin. I use a paper with several empty "slides" on it. They fill in the slides with the words that will be on the slide and a rough picture or reference to the image and sound they will use. I will remind students that at least two of the slides must make some kind of modern day connection as well. This could be a visual of modern veterans put beside a Brady photo, or it could be a modern sound bite accompanying a Civil War image and lines of Whitman's *Beat! Beat! Drum* .

Although this project may sound complicated, I do find that if instructions to students are clear (give them the scoring checklist located in Appendix B first) they are able to create wonderful projects that can be shared with the entire class or even the entire school.

Reflection

Finally, after all the projects have been shared and students have shown their understanding of the connections between the poetry, the prose and the images, it is time for reflection. I believe it is necessary for teachers to set aside one day at the end of the unit for discussion and reflection on how much students have learned. Ask students to write two or three pages in their journals on what they have learned through the unit. How many students will go back to read more Whitman? How many will remember Lincoln differently and what have they learned about the Civil War?

Go back to the initial question which I asked at the beginning of this unit; *Why do we study war?* What did the students get out of the unit? What did you, the teacher, get out of the unit? And what do all of us get out of going back and studying the words and deeds of those that shaped our country over one hundred years ago? If the unit is a success, I believe we will get some answers that will reaffirm our love and dedication for this “glorious profession.”

Lesson Plans

The following lesson plans are designed for an eighth grade classroom. The period for each class is 52 minutes. The lesson may need to be adapted in certain ways for your classroom, but this will give you the basic format of the course. I have taken one sample lesson from each of the main sections of my unit, giving the user a section on Whitman, a section on Lincoln, and a section on using Civil War Photography in the classroom.

Sample Lesson One-Whitman’s poetry

Objectives

- Students will work cooperatively on interpretations of a variety of Whitman’s poetry
- Students will read/hear Whitman poems out loud
- Students will interpret Whitman’s Civil War poetry
- Students will decide on chronological order of poems
- Students will identify changes in mood in poetry

Materials

- Copies of Whitman poems; *Beat! Beat! Drums, A Sight in Camp in the Daybreak Gray and Dim, Reconciliation, O'Captain! My Captain!, Hushed Be the Camps To-day, This Dust was Once the Man.*
- Assignments for Students; Leader/Orator, Illustrator, Vocabulary Enricher, Clarifier, Questioner.

Initiation

- Discussion with class; what kind of poems might a poet write about a war?

Procedure

Once students have had the initial discussion on poetry and war, break the class up into groups of five. Explain to the class that each member of each group will have a role in the discussion of each group's assigned poem. Choose a leader or have students choose a leader. The leader will be responsible for leading the group and for reading the poetry to the rest of the class. Explain the other roles to the class. (The Illustrator will draw a picture to go with the poem, Vocabulary Enricher will find difficult vocabulary from the poem to share with the group/class, the Clarifier will explain the group's interpretation of the poem to the class and the Questioner will come up with three questions to stimulate class discussion on the poetry.)

Next hand out the poems and let the students get to work! It will probably take at least one full class period for the students to finish with their individual jobs and an additional one to share with the class, so be prepared to spend about three days on this lesson. After students have had time to work on their responses, let them present to the class. After each group finishes, put their work up on the board until all are finished.

Closure

Have a discussion with the students about the order of the poems. In what order does the class think the poems were written? Use the visuals created by the students to shuffle around the order. Ask the students if they see any changes in mood/attitude over the years.

Sample Lesson Plan-Two- Lincoln's First Inaugural Address

Objectives

- Students will read/role play a section of Lincoln's First Inaugural Address
- Students will empathize with differing viewpoints at time of address
- Students will debate the message of Lincoln's First Inaugural Address
- Students will write journal entries on tone of address

Materials

- Students' journals
- Copy of portion of Lincoln's First Inaugural Address

Initiation

Ask students who knows what an inaugural address is. Review with students the situation in 1860 when Lincoln was giving his address. Discuss what students think was on Lincoln's mind at that time.

Procedure

After the initial discussion, ask students to count off by twos and split the class in half. The "ones" will be represent the South, while the North will be represented by the "twos." Have students sit on opposite sides of the room facing each other.

Ask for a volunteer to role-play Abraham Lincoln. Give the rest of the class the portion of the address Lincoln will read. Ask students to jot down their reactions to the speech, keeping in mind what part of the country that they come from. Have Lincoln sit in the center of the room as students come up to voice their opinions on the speech.

Discuss persuasion with students. How important is knowing your audience in writing a persuasive essay or speech? How difficult might this speech have been for Lincoln to write, given his audience? Try to get students to think of a time when persuasion is especially difficult as you try to appeal to one side without insulting the other. Brainstorm a situation when a student might have to be persuasive and keep a diverse audience in mind. (For example, a student class president appealing to students to get to class on time in front of an administrative panel)

Closure

Ask students to write a persuasive speech on the topic you come up with as a class

Sample Lesson Three- Exploring Civil War Photos

Sample lesson three begins the cumulating art project for the unit, the Civil War Power Point Presentation. As I mentioned in the unit, students will create their own power points utilizing the text and photography from the Civil War.

Objectives

- Students will explore primary source documents
- Students will match Civil War photographs with favorite lines from poetry/text
- Students will share findings with class

Materials

- Computers
- List of Web Sites:
 - Library of Congress; <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/cwphtml/cwphome.html>
 - National Archives; <http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/brady-photos/>
 - The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History; www.gilderlehrman.org
 - The National Portrait Gallery; <http://www.npg.si.edu/exh/brady/intro/conthtm>
- Text from previous discussions

Initiation

Have students spend ten to fifteen minutes walking around the classroom jotting down ideas from the artwork that they have created during this unit. All of the Whitman poems, and lines from the Gettysburg Address should be illustrated from previous lessons making the text easy to access. Ask student to write down some lines that jump out at them. Share the lines as a class.

Procedure

Once students have decided on their lines allow them to go on the given web sites and find photography that matches or illustrates the line in the poetry or prose. As always monitor the students when they are on the computers.

Remember, this section of the unit is a sort of warm-up for students in preparation for their larger power point projects where they will be doing the same thing on a larger scale and in a different format. Make sure students are making valid connections and working in a manner that will be beneficial when you lead them through the bigger power point project.

Closure

Share the students' findings. Project some of the images that the students have matched up with their favorite lines and ask students to explain why they chose those images. This discussion will help students better understand what you will be looking for in the power point presentations.

Bibliography

Children's resources

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Mintz, Steven, general editor. *Abraham Lincoln; People, Places, Politics: History in a Box Resource Book* . New York: The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, 2007. A wonderful resource for teachers, this book and a collection of others, was among the

2007 "We the People bookshelf" books awarded to libraries across the nation. The collection cites primary source documents in a fascinating study of Lincoln and the Civil War.

Morris, Roy. *The Better Angel; Walt Whitman in the Civil War*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. A biographical look at how the Civil War shaped the life and poetry of Walt Whitman.

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Shucard, Alan. *American Poetry; The Puritans through Walt Whitman*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1988. An interesting study that includes Whitman's role in the evolution of American poetry.

Swanson, James L. *Manhunt: The 12-Day Chase for Lincoln's Killer*. New York: Harper, 2007. This fascinating study of the hunt for John Wilkes Booth begins with Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address.

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Wilson, Douglas L. *Lincoln's Sword; The Presidency and the Power of Words*. New York: Vintage, 2007. A look at Lincoln and his writing with detailed textual analysis of his major speeches.

Film

The Civil War; A Ken Burns Film. PBS Home Video, 1990.

This award winning documentary took six years to make and gives teachers and students more than enough information on the Civil War. Utilizing primary source documents, photos and music this documentary is an exhaustive look at the American Civil War.

Web Sites:

Library of Congress; <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/cwphtml/cwphome.html>

National Archives; <http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/brady-photos/>

Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History; www.gilderlehrman.org

Appendix A: Standards

Connecticut's Common Core of Learning Program Goals

Having completed this unit, students will have achieved the following Connecticut's Common Core of Learning program goals for language arts:

- Create works using the language arts in visual, oral and written texts;
- Read, write, speak, listen and view to construct meaning of written, visual and oral texts;
- Choose and apply strategies that enhance the fluent and proficient use of the language arts; (brainstorming, use of graphic organizers)
- Read with understanding and respond thoughtfully to a variety of texts

When done with this unit, students will have achieved the following Connecticut's Common Core of Learning program goals for the arts;

- Create (imagine, experiment, plan, make, evaluate, refine and present/exhibit) art works that express concepts, ideas and feelings in each art form
- Respond (select, experience, describe, analyze, interpret and evaluate) with understanding to diverse art works and performances in each art form
- Understand the connections among the arts, other disciplines and daily life.

New Haven Public Schools Academic Performance Standards

Students will also achieve the following goals from the New Haven Public Schools Academic Performance standards for eighth grade Language Arts;

- Students will demonstrate strategic reading skills before, during and after reading
- Students will demonstrate strategic writing behaviors
- Students will participate in a wide variety of writing experiences

Appendix B: Power Point Checklist

Check off the following items when completed:

1. Student has shown power point slide map to teacher for approval _____
2. Student's project has title page and clear indication of text used _____
3. Student has utilized at least three Civil War photos in project _____
4. Student has made connection between Civil War and modern times _____
5. Presentation is creative _____
6. Presentation is free of Grammatical/Spelling errors _____
7. Presentation has concluding slide _____
8. Images used are appropriate for chosen text _____
9. Student's name/class is on project _____
10. Student presents project to class _____

Notes

1. Allen Shucard, *American Poetry; The Puritans through Walt Whitman* , 166.
2. Roger Ochse, *The Civic Literature of Walt Whitman* , 40.
3. Harold Holzer, *Lincoln the Writer* , 18.
4. Lois J. Einhorn, *Abraham Lincoln the Orator: Penetrating the Lincoln Legend* , 60.
5. Holzer, 76.
6. William W. Betts, *Lincoln and the Poets* , 35.
7. Wikipedia entry on Matthew Brady.

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