

Title of Lesson Plan: A Limited War: Why do we fight?

Author: Joe Foster

Grade Level: 9th – 12th Grade American History

Number of Class Periods: Two 45-minute class periods

Lesson Objectives:

State of Ohio Standards

Grade 8 - 12. Disputes over the nature of federalism, complicated by economic developments in the United States, resulted in sectional issues, including slavery, which led to the American Civil War.

Materials:

- Copy of Sullivan Ballou Letter

<https://www.pbs.org/kenburns/civil-war/war/historical-documents/sullivan-ballou-letter/>

- Computers & Internet

- Library of Congress Civil War Glass Negatives and Related Prints

<https://www.loc.gov/collections/civil-war-glass-negatives/about-this-collection/>

- Sullivan Ballou Letter Video Recording

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fY1lmeL22jg>

Episode 3 Forever Free of the Ken Burns' The Civil War DVD/Blu-ray set

- Valley of the Shadow website

<http://valley.lib.virginia.edu>

- Civil War Letters Collection

<https://content.lib.washington.edu/civilwarweb/index/html>

- Soldier Letters Home

https://www.americancivilwar.com/kids_zone/soldiers_letters_civil_war.html

Essential Questions:

- Analyze primary source material written by Civil War veterans.
- Understand the meaning of the Civil War to those who fought in it.
- Use primary source material to create original superheroes with their own background stories based upon primary sources.

Introduction/Bell Ringer/Hook:

Have students gather in groups of 2-3.

Ask each to pick one superhero and write their name at the top of the paper. Have them divide the rest of their paper into two columns: On the left should be a bulleted list of the superhero's background details; on the right should be a bulleted list of their characteristics and special powers.

Procedure:

Set-Up:

1. Distribute copies of Sullivan Ballou's letter to each student. Play the video containing the reading of Sullivan Ballou's letter from one of the suggested sources as student read along.

Do Now:

2. Ask each group to answer the following questions and discuss them as a group. Allow 15-25 minutes.

Who was Sullivan Ballou?

Who was he writing to?

Why did Sullivan Ballou join the war?

What promises did Sullivan Ballou make to his wife?

How did you feel while reading his letter?

How do you think his wife and children would have reacted to reading it?

What is the debt that Sullivan Ballou talks about in his letter?

3. Direct the student groups to visit the websites listed under materials for the picture collection at the Library of Congress and the Digital Letter Collections.
4. Tell students that they are going to examine the primary sources at these locations for the purpose of creating their own fictional Civil War soldier and explain why he fought in the Civil War.
5. Rather than simply report or summarize what they find, they will have to combine real life documentations with their own imagination. Using the information on these websites, each group is going to be asked to select: 1 picture of a Civil War soldier along with 1 or 2 letters that give some insight into why that soldier fought or what the Civil War meant to him.

Exit Ticket/Demonstration of Understanding:

6. As homework, each group should create their own Civil War superhero packet that includes:
 - A comic book cover featuring their superhero
 - A 1-2 page character biography explaining their story of origin that identifies why they went to war and why they fight. You should also identify any of their superpowers or super-weaknesses based upon their biography.
7. Remind them that their characters and accompanying descriptions should reflect the actual writings and sentiments of the letter they analyzed.

Share & Wrap-Up (Day 2): Will take most of the class period depending on

8. Have each group share their pictures and superhero identities they have created including their motivations, powers, and weaknesses with the class.
9. Conclude the lesson by explaining how it is relatively easy it is to determine the causes of a war – their history book probably starts the Civil War chapter with a list. But it is much more difficult to identify and understand what motivated each person – over 2 million individual stories – one for each soldier who fought in the Civil War. While they may share certain motivations, each individual life represents its own unique story.