



Teaching Guide

SEGMENT 3, WEBISODE 6

Please note: Each segment in this Webisode has its own Teaching Guide

While the South benefited from the exceptional military leadership of Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson, President Abraham Lincoln struggled to find good generals. General Winfield Scott, who had joined the army in 1809 and distinguished himself in both the War of 1812 and the Mexican War in 1846, was too old for a field command. Although his body could not bear the rigors of a military campaign, his mind remained strong; in spite of initial ridicule, his Anaconda plan to split the south and squeeze the Confederacy like a snake was ultimately adopted. Lincoln's next commander, General George McClellan, was an excellent organizer, but resisted throwing the army he had trained against an enemy. Although McClellan finally managed to get his army within a few miles of Richmond, after a week of fierce fighting he ordered a retreat. McClellan's reluctance to fight finally cost him his job.



Segment Overview



Let's Discuss

Teacher Directions

- Students, in small teams, discuss the following questions.
 - What were General Scott's strengths and weaknesses in 1861 when the Civil War began?
 - What was Scott's plan for a Union victory? How was it received?
 - What were McClellan's strengths and weaknesses as a general?
 - Why did McClellan's plan to take Richmond fail?
- Make sure students understand the following points in discussing the questions.

General Winfield Scott was an experienced military leader who had served his country for over fifty years. He realized the war would be long, costly, and bloody—unlike many of his contemporaries. However, he was too old and sickly to command field armies. He wanted to blockade the South, control the Mississippi, split the Confederacy, and squeeze it like a snake to force the South to surrender. Most people did not believe the war would last as long as Scott predicted, or that such drastic military measures would be needed. General McClellan was skilled at organizing and training the army, but he didn't like to fight. McClellan's plan to take Richmond failed because he retreated after fighting his way to the outskirts of Richmond.



Teacher Directions

1. Remind students of the military importance of superb Southern generals such as Lee and Jackson, who won many battles even though they had fewer men and supplies than the Union armies. Explain Lincoln's lack of comparable leadership for the Northern armies, especially in the early years of the war. Ask the students to imagine that they are President Lincoln. They need to find a good general to lead their nations' army.
2. Working with teammates, students consider the excellent military leadership of Lee and Jackson. Students identify and list the traits and qualities of a good general. The following questions, which can be written on the board or displayed on a transparency, may help stimulate student thinking.
 - Is the knowledge of military tactics the most important quality in a general? Why or why not?
 - Is it important to have a general who inspires men? Why or why not?
 - Is it important to have a general who is well organized? Why or why not?
 - Is it important to have a general who is fearless or brave? Why or why not?
 - What do you think is the most important trait in a general? Why?
 - What military experience and skills should a general have?
 - What personality traits would you want in a general?
3. Teams then write a help wanted ad to find the ideal general to lead the Union army.
4. Teams share their advertisements with the class.
5. Distribute the Student Sheets: *General Winfield Scott* and *General George B. McClellan*. Students read about these generals and discuss the following questions with teammates.
 - Based on the requirements in your help wanted ad, which general would you hire?
 - Why?
6. Review with students the strengths and weaknesses of each man.



What do you
Think?



Moving Toward
Freedom

Teacher Directions

Students respond to the following writing prompt.

- Would you have enlisted to serve in the Union army under General Scott? Under General McClellan? Why or why not?

Teacher Directions

1. Share the following background information with students about Union soldier life.

When the Civil War erupted, men on both sides harbored a “fancy idea,” as artilleryman Carlton McCarthy put it, “that the principal occupation of a soldier should be actual conflict with the enemy.” Answering the romantic call of flag and country, the new soldiers expected to rush into battle, fight hard for a few days, and triumphantly march home. Instead, the war dragged on for years, and for every day spent in battle, the soldiers passed weeks, and even months, fighting such mundane enemies as heat, cold, mud, dust, loneliness, and, worst of all, tedium. “War,” observed Captain Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. of the 20th Massachusetts Infantry, “is an organized bore.”

These new recruits were no better prepared for the everyday realities of war than they were for the shock of combat. The majority of the soldiers were white, native-born, Protestant, unmarried, and young — most were between the ages of eighteen and twenty-nine. Because nearly half the boys in blue came from rural communities and isolated farms, living in crowded camps with thousands of men was a strange, foreign experience. Most had never lived elbow to elbow with others, slept under the stars, marched in step, followed military orders, or lived under strict army discipline. The mysteries of army food; the raging, unchecked epidemics of sickness; and the crowded, filthy, vermin-infested army camps rudely awakened more than one starry-eyed volunteer.

The experience of many soldiers was very like that of Felix Voltz, who ran away from home to sign up with the 187th Regiment, New York Volunteers. Felix soon learned his mistake: “... the place that I am in Fort Porter in Berigs [barracks] one the best name is to call it Pig Pen and we are locked Just like Prisoners.” Felix begged his brother and sister to bring him something to eat: he could “not eat this slopp....”

Yet, amid it all, for four long and terrible years, Federal and Confederate alike would set an example of sacrifice that would rarely be surpassed.

These recruits never considered themselves professional soldiers. Instead they thought of themselves as civilians temporarily in service to their country. Their deeply ingrained traits of independence, humor, and honor could not be quenched, even by the stultifying routine of army life.

In later years when the veterans thought back on the greatest adventure of their lives, many found treasured memories in the mundane army life. In the words of Carlton McCarthy: "Let us together recall with pleasure the past! Once more be hungry, and eat; once more tired, and rest; once more thirsty, and drink; once more cold and wet, let us sit by the roaring fire and let comfort creep over us."

These citizen-soldiers recorded their triumphs and their adversities in letters, diaries, histories, sketches, and paintings, thus creating a rich and varied record of the common soldier's life between battles. The words of the volunteers themselves ensure the remembrance of the common soldiers' experiences: a strong and true voice that cannot be obscured by the boastful memoirs of generals or the florid narratives of battles.

2. With their team partners, students discuss the following questions.
 - What do you think Union camp life was like?
 - How was it similar to Confederate camp life?
 - What differences might there have been?
 - Why might those differences have occurred?
3. Teams share their predictions with the class. Accept all predictions that the students clarify or explain.
4. Briefly introduce the Student Sheet: *Union Soldier Life*. (If necessary, acquaint students with the use of primary sources, period photographs, quotations, and documents.) Teams use the resources to gather and record information on the Union soldier on the Student Sheet: *Civil War Camp Life Chart*.

Note to the Teacher: If time permits, you may direct students to consult additional resource material, including Chapter 15, "Choosing Sides," Chapter 16, "The Soldiers," and Chapter 22, "Marching Soldiers" in *A History of US* volume 6, *War, Terrible War* to investigate the camp life of the Union soldier. Students examined primary source documents about Confederate soldier life in Webisode 6, Segment 3.

5. After students record information on their student sheets, discuss the following questions with the class.
 - In your opinion, what was the greatest hardship of Union camp life? (Hardtack, lack of fresh vegetables, unhealthy conditions in camp, inadequate tents and blankets, no leave to visit families)
 - If you could talk to a Union soldier, what questions would you ask him?
 - How did Union soldiers move America toward freedom?



Connections

Teacher Directions

Use the following activities with your students.

Music – Students listen to “Tenting on the Old Campground,” one of the most popular songs on both sides of the Civil War. The song speaks of the camaraderie of the soldier camp and the universal longing for home and peace.

Science/Library – Students read about the anaconda, a snake that squeezes its prey.

Geography – Students look at a United States map (or the map on page 67 of Joy Hakim’s *War, Terrible War*) to understand the Anaconda Plan of General Winfield Scott. Students discuss with their teammates this plan’s chances of success, and why the plan was not accepted at the beginning of the war.

Cooking – Make hardtack, the staple of the Union soldier’s diet. Mix six parts flour to one part water. Add the water gradually to make a stiff dough. Knead on a floured board until dough is no longer sticky. Roll 1/2 inch thick, and cut into four-inch squares. Using a large nail, punch thirteen (for the original colonies) holes in the dough. Bake in 350 degree oven for twenty to twenty-five minutes until the squares begin to dry but before they brown. Cool and store in cans.

Science – Soldiers lived in tents, enduring weather extremes. Look in almanacs or encyclopedias for average monthly temperatures in Virginia, Tennessee, or other states where battles were fought.

Music – Students listen to the song “We are Coming, Father Abraham.” Because of the heavy Union losses during the Peninsular campaign, Lincoln issued a call for three hundred thousand more soldiers on July 2, 1862. In response to Lincoln’s appeal, James Sloan Gibbon, a Quaker, wrote the words to this song. Patrick Gilmore, bandmaster of the Union Army who also penned “When Johnny Comes Marching Home,” wrote the music.

Music – Students listen to the song “Tramp, Tramp, Tramp.” George F. Root, one of the most popular Civil War composers, wrote this song. It expresses the hope for liberation felt by many thousands of Union soldiers who languished in Confederate prisons.

General Winfield Scott

Winfield Scott (1786-1866) entered the United States Army in 1808 and fought in the War of 1812. Captured by the British, he became a war hero. He commanded United States forces in the Mexican War. There he gloriously led the army to victory.

Scott was known as “Old Fuss and Feathers” because he wore a fancy uniform and strictly followed military detail. Scott was a strong supporter of the temperance movement and was experienced in social as well as military affairs.

The Whig party nominated Scott for president in 1852, but he lost the election.

When the Civil War began in April 1861, Scott was seventy-five years old and in poor health. He developed a plan to defeat the Confederacy. Unlike many of his contemporaries, he realized that winning a civil war for the Union would be long, expensive, and bloody. His Anaconda Plan called for a complete blockade to close the Southern ports, taking control of the Mississippi River to divide the South, and coordinating an eastern and western army to squeeze the Confederacy. People made fun of his plan at first, but much of it eventually became Union strategy.

Scott retired in October 1861 but lived to see the end of the war and to write his memoirs. He died at West Point in 1866, two weeks before his eightieth birthday.



U.S. Military Historical Institute, Carlisle, PA

General George B. McClellan

George B. McClellan (1826-1885) graduated second in his class at West Point, joined the prestigious army engineers, and served notably in the Mexican War. Leaving the military in 1857, he became a highly successful president of a railroad company.



National Archives

When Civil War broke out in 1861, McClellan reentered the military. His victory at Rich Mountain made him one of the few early Union heroes. McClellan, an ambitious man whom some people called “the Young Napoleon” behind his back, worked behind the scenes to force the elderly General Scott to retire. Lincoln

turned to McClellan to repair the damaged and demoralized Union army after First Bull Run (Manassas). A brilliant organizer and administrator, McClellan quickly transformed the beaten army, but seemed reluctant to send it into battle.

After many delays, McClellan marched his army overland to within a few miles of the Confederate capital at Richmond. But after a week of bloody fighting, he ordered a retreat. He fought Lee at Antietam, but he lost many men and squandered a chance to crush the Confederate army. Finally, a frustrated Lincoln removed him from command. McClellan blamed the War Department, Lincoln, and the Secretary of Defense for his defeats.

Popular with his men and officers, McClellan is now considered a brilliant failure who never scored a significant battlefield success. He always wanted more men, more equipment, and more time to plan. McClellan accepted the Democratic nomination for president in 1864 but was soundly defeated by Lincoln, who even carried the soldier vote.

Union Soldier Life



Winter camp for federal cavalry at Brandy Station, Virginia

Library of Congress

"We are not very particular how we cook our pork. Sometimes we fry it in a tin spider, which we make by cutting in two a canteen; other times we punch our ramrods through a slice and let it fry over the camp fire, and, in order not to lose any of the grease, we hold a hardtack under and let the gravy drop on it, which answers well for butter.

Sergeant Crotty
Michigan

Soldiers usually cooked their meals over the campfire.

"It came to be the rule to eat in daylight for the protection against the "squirmers" in the hardtack. If we had to eat in the dark, after a long march, we would break our cracker into a cup of boiling coffee, stir it well, and then flow enough of the coffee over to carry off most of the strangers."

Frederick Hitchcock
Pennsylvania Officer

Squirmers and strangers are worms or weevils.
The hardtack was often wormy and moldy.

Union Soldier Life



Library of Congress

Many soldiers lost their pay when gambling on card games

"Our campfire is lit, and though beauty is absent, song and wit are there, flavored with the cracking of jokes and the crackling of hickory make one feel as if he was enjoying a clam bake or evening frolic at home instead of being here in the wilderness."

Major Peter Vredenburg
14th New Jersey

Many of the soldiers enjoyed the fellowship
and outdoor life of camp.

"Yesterday was Thanksgiving at home, but a dismal day for us. Never since I have been in the army have I seen supplies so short. Now we see soldiers going round begging hard bread."

Herman C. Newhall
Massachusetts

Hard bread and hard crackers are two other names for hardtack.

Union Soldier Life



Hayes Presidential Center, Freemont, Ohio
Billy Crump returns from a foraging expedition

Although officers set guards to stop the soldiers from taking food from civilian farmers, there was much foraging of animals and crops to supplement the army rations. Sometimes the soldiers paid the farmers for what they took, but often they did not.

The soldiers took smoked hams, chickens, ducks, geese, turkeys, sweet potatoes, fruit, and corn as well as grain for horses. Some of the soldiers made great sport of this, calling the farm animals, "wild animals." The hogs were "possoms" or "slow deer."

A common campfire story was of the soldier coming back to camp with a hen and a goose hanging from his rifle. When

approached by an officer for stealing from a farmer, the soldier replied, *"Oh, Sir, this goose came out as I was minding my own business and hissed at the American flag. I had to shoot him on the spot. And this chicken was laying eggs for the Rebel army. I had to stop these acts of treason against the Union."*

Union Soldier Life



Library of Congress
George Armstrong Custer (at right with the dog)
enjoys the company of his friends

"When not engaged in camp duty, we set around our fires, talk and gossip, and discuss the various fights, and the prospects of an early ending of the war, reading the daily papers and writing letters home."

John Stevens

The daily cook fires were gathering places for the soldiers to come together for companionship, conversation, comfort, and meals.

"Three hardtack crackers made a meal and nine were a ration, and this is what fought the battles for the Union."

Private William Bircher
2D Minnesota Infantry

Union Soldier Life



Library of Congress
Union soldiers prepare to cook "mess" at the cookhouse

The boys say that our 'grub' is enough to make a mule desert, and a hog wish he had never been born. Hard bread, bacon, and coffee is all we draw."

Levi A. Ross
Illinois Corporal

Soldiers commonly called their food, "grub" or "vittles."
"Draw" means to get a daily ration.

We generally draw five days' rations at one time and generally eat them up in three days and starve the other two. I was nearer starved here than ever, lived on parched corn... You surely have heard the song entitled Hard Times, well we have seen 'em"

Private Willis D. Maier
Ohio

Parched corn is corn that has been dried.

Union Soldier Life



Library of Congress

Union soldiers relaxing in the field read newspapers and letters, chat, smoke pipes, and play cards and checkers

In 1863, a Yankee soldier sent this poem to the editor of a Nashville, Tennessee newspaper:

*The soldiers' fare is very rough,
The bread is hard, the beef is tough.*

"We have been living on the contents of those boxes you and George sent to us. Nothing was spoiled except the biscuits. Those were molded some, but we used over half of them this morning in a soup we made of potatoes and onions and a little flour to thicken it and then put the biscuits in and it made a nice dish for a soldier."

Calvin B. Crandell
New York

The folks back home sent boxes of food to the soldiers.

Union Soldier Life



Library of Congress
Union soldiers waiting to enter the battle of Petersburg, Virginia

"The feeling of intense disgust aroused by the first contact with these creepers soon gave way to hardened indifference. A soldier realized the utter impossibility of keeping free from them."

John D. Billings
Massachusetts

Soldiers could not keep clean and were
Bothered by body lice or "creepers"

The uniforms were issued in three sizes. The soldiers called the three sizes "too big," "too small," and "doesn't fit." The men traded around with each other until they got a uniform that fit. Very tall or very short men never got a good fit. One short Yankee wrote, "I could never find a pair of trousers small enough. I had to cut off the bottom of my sack coat and roll up the sleeves on all my coats."

Union Soldier Life



Library of Congress

New recruits learn drill procedure in a camp near Washington, D.C.

The Sibley tent was designed for twelve men, but often twenty men crowded into it. The soldiers slept like the spokes of a wheel with their feet in the center and their heads near the edges of the tent flaps.

In good weather, the sides of the tent were raised for fresh air. During rainy or cold weather, the sides were closed tight and the air was stuffy and foul. One soldier said that to step inside a Sibley tent on a rainy morning and smell twelve unwashed men who had slept there all night was not an experience to be recalled with enthusiasm!

The wedge or "A" tent was a piece of canvas stretched over a roof pole and staked to the ground on either side. The tent was designed to house four soldiers, but usually six men crowded in. Soldiers had to sleep "spoon fashion" and when one soldier turned, all had to turn. The tent was not high enough to stand up in, and there was no room for furnishings.

Union Soldier Life



National Archives

Fife and drum corps played music on the march, in battle, and in the camps

Hard Crackers Come Again No More

Sung to the tune of *Hard Times Come Again No More*

1. Let us close our game of poker, Take our tin cups in hand,
While we gather round the cook's tent door
Where dry mummies of hard crackers are given to each man
Oh, hard crackers come again no more! --*Chorus*

Chorus

'Tis the song and the sigh of the hungry,
"Hard crackers, hard crackers, come again no more!
Many days have you lingered upon our stomachs sore,
Oh, hard crackers, come again no more"

2. 'Tis the song that is uttered In camp by night and day,
'Tis the wail that is mingled with each snore:
'Tis the sighing of the soul for spring chickens far away,
"Oh, hard crackers come again no more." --*Chorus*