

## **Applying Historical Background to American Literature: A Comparison of Historical and Literary Accounts of the American Civil War**

*Jane Upton Hall*  
Westside High School

War is for the participants a test of character; it makes bad men worse and good men better.

- Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain

### **INTRODUCTION**

“What caused the American Civil War is an enormously complex and sometimes controversial subject. Slavery, although not the sole divisive issue, nor even the primary motivating factor for a great many of the war’s participants, was nevertheless the ultimate essential cause of the war” (Hattaway 121). In the years immediately preceding the war, the pressing issue was not slavery itself, but whether the institution of slavery should be allowed to expand into new territory. Southerners, for the most part, believed the right of expansion was inherent, while Northerners opposed the expansion of slavery into new territories. “Abraham Lincoln was not an abolitionist, but he was dedicated to the ultimate destruction of slavery because he adamantly opposed its further spread, and he believed that stopping it from spreading would eventually bring about its demise” (Hattaway 125). The final course of action that brought about the Civil War occurred in three stages:

1. Seven southern states – South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas – seceded from the Union in late 1860 and early 1861 to form the Confederate States of America and to structure their own government; in April 1861 they seized Fort Sumter in South Carolina.
2. President Abraham Lincoln was determined to fight a war to force the renegade states to return to the Union, partially for the tax revenues the Union would lose due to the secession of southern states, and (although he was not a staunch abolitionist) because he was adamantly opposed to the spread and perpetuation of the institution of slavery.
3. Under the leadership of the President of the Confederacy, Jefferson Davis, the seven states that had seceded from the Union were joined by the Upper Tier of the south – Virginia, Arkansas, Tennessee, and Missouri – and elected to fight to try to maintain their new allegiance.

Combatants on both sides believed that it was crucial to defend their stance on the issue of the expansion of slavery to preserve their existing social and economic systems (Hattaway 147). “Secession may have been wrong in the abstract . . . but I am as firm in my convictions today of the right of secession as I was in 1861. The South is our country, the North is the country of those who live there. We are an agricultural people; they are a

manufacturing people. They are the descendants of the good old Puritan Plymouth Rock stock, and we of the South from the proud and aristocratic stock of Cavaliers. We believe in the doctrine of State rights, they in the doctrine of centralization” (Watkins 72). Troops to build armies on both the Union and Confederate sides were recruited from the masses, and recruits included young boys who were enamored with idealized glory allegedly achieved by fighting a war as well as men who felt honor-bound to defend their beliefs. The glorified beginning dissolved into disillusionment, which ultimately led to complete despair. These troops – green recruits – were often not adequately trained and were not prepared to be confronted with the brutality and realities of war.

We were all afraid it would be over and we not be in the fight . . . but we soon found out that the glory of war was at home among the ladies and not upon the field of blood and carnage of death, where our comrades were mutilated and torn by shot and shell. . . . Ah, how we envied those that were wounded. We thought at that time that we would have given a thousand dollars to have been in the battle, and to have had our arm shot off, so we could have returned home with an empty sleeve. (Watkins 112)

Armies of green recruits – young, middle-aged, and old – poor, middle-class, and wealthy – reacted in many different ways to the horrors of warfare and the bloody battlefields of the Civil War.

One such man, Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, who became a Civil War hero, was a scholar who taught rhetoric at Bowdoin College in Maine. In 1851 he listened to Harriet Beecher Stowe, whose husband Calvin was a colleague of his at Bowdoin, read a portion of her first draft of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Although he had no particular knowledge or interest in “soldiering”, he felt compelled to join the Union forces because of his great-grandfathers’ leadership in the American Revolution, his grandfather’s involvement in the War of 1812, and his father’s participation in the Aroostook War of 1839 (an undeclared war and bloodless dispute between the United States and Canada over the border between Maine and New Brunswick) (Calhoun).

Chamberlain volunteered his services to Maine’s governor and became Lieutenant Colonel of the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine Volunteer Infantry Regiment. He was sympathetic to the plight of the slaves in the South, but he was not an abolitionist, and he showed little interest in the freedmen after the war. Chamberlain is known as a chivalrous man who ordered the troops under his command to salute the defeated Confederate troops when they were captured in recognition of their valor on the battlefields. He was involved in twenty-four battles, several skirmishes, and had six horses shot out from under him. He is remembered for his bravery and leadership during the second day of the battle of Gettysburg. Chamberlain was chosen by Grant to receive the weapons and colors of the Confederacy during the surrender of Lee’s army at Appomattox. After the war, he was elected governor of Maine for four terms. After his political term ended, he returned to Bowdoin to serve briefly as President of the university. However, his acquired military

strictness did not interconnect with the ideals set forth by the Board of Governors of the university, so his tenure was brief. He was ultimately awarded the Medal of Honor in 1893 for his gallantry during the four-day battle at Gettysburg.

Chamberlain viewed the Civil War as an idealized struggle where a man's honor and courage were tested, and his fate was in the hands of Providence (Calhoun). When all was said and done, the realization was that the "United States has no North, no South, no East, no West. *We are all one and undivided*" (Watkins 197). Although men took sides and fought against their friends and families, many found it difficult to pursue a war in which they could find no definitive cause. In April, 1861 after he resigned his commission in the U. S. Army, Robert E. Lee wrote in a letter to his cousin in which he said, "With all my devotion to the Union and the feeling of loyalty and duty of an American citizen, I have not been able to raise my hand against my relatives, my children, my home. I have therefore resigned my commission in the Army" (Jaffe 467). E. M. Forster once said, "I hate the idea of causes, and if I had to choose between betraying my country and betraying my friend, I hope I should have the guts to betray my country" (Jaffe 643). From Generals to Privates, soldiers had varying opinions on not only the causes of the war but the strategies for fighting the war and its ultimate outcome. Students will explore all aspects of the war as it is presented in literature and will be able to draw analogies to actual events in the American Civil War.

A brief introduction to the basic causes of the Civil War and Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain's life, including his academic pursuits, his gallant exploits in battle during the Civil War, and the difficulties he encountered during his assimilation back into a civilian environment after the war will assist students in understanding the impact of actual people and historical events as they are fictionalized in the literature to be studied in this unit. Students will learn that works of fiction have greater impact when they are founded with some basis in truth. They will come to understand that an author does not just sit down at the typewriter – or word processor – and start typing to create great literature but that there is a research process that must occur before they can begin to address a specific topic.

Although some fictional characters are created, others are based on actual historical figures. Excerpts from *The Last Full Measure* by Jeff Shaara and *The Killer Angels* by Michael Shaara will compare fictional characters with facts about Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain and other Civil War participants and events during the four-day battle at Gettysburg and other significant, historical, recorded events that occurred during the war. The main focus of this unit will be to align fact with fiction in literature, to give students historical perspective about the literature they study in class, and to have them make inferences and reach conclusions about the actual as well as the symbolic causes and outcomes of the war.

## OVERVIEW

Providing students with a historical background to literary works before they begin the literature study will enable them to understand the historical context or setting of the literary selections they will be reading in English class. Students often have a difficult time relating to classic literature because the material described, the dialects, and the colloquialisms are obsolete and therefore unrealistic to them. They are often unfamiliar with the historical era or setting, the political environment, and the socio-economic conditions that existed during the period in which the work is set or written. By introducing students to the historical perspectives of the works, they will begin to align their studies vertically and integrate work they study in history, government, social studies, economics, and geography classes with literature they read in English class. They will learn strategies for writing about literature that will enable them to knowledgeably research and write about works they study in other classes across the curriculum.

This unit is specifically designed for ninth grade high school students, although it can be modified for other grade levels. The materials in this unit are intended to be covered during a six-week grading period. The ninth grade population is divided into Prep (traditional/college preparatory) and Pre-Advanced Placement (Pre-AP) classes. The Prep classes are fully integrated to include Special Ed and 504 students. The Prep curriculum has to be adjusted accordingly for the Special Ed and 504 students, depending on each student's modifications; this is done by distributing to students handouts of notes that are either written on the board or shown on overheads, giving them shortened exams and shortened reading and writing assignments, and/or allowing them additional time to complete assignments, quizzes, projects, and exams.

All students will read and study excerpts from novels as well as historical and autobiographical accounts about the Civil War; both Prep and Pre-AP classes will read a complete novel, several short stories, and non-fiction selections that will relate and parallel historical events and people with fictional accounts and bring the historical perspective of the Civil War and its aftermath in the United States to the forefront in literature. I will differentiate between the works to be included in Prep classes and those that will be studied in Pre-AP classes. Combined with short stories and excerpts from historical materials, the major works students will study are:

- 1) **All students:** In excerpts from *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe students will learn about events that led to public indignation over the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 and launched the United States into a bitter and catastrophic war; we will follow Uncle Tom's journey from his life with a benevolent master, Shelby, through his transition with the St. Clares, and finally his experience with Simon Legree and his ultimate demise.

- 2) **PreAP:** In *Sartoris* by William Faulkner students will study aspects of the Civil War and, with the introduction of historical materials, learn how actual people and events compare to fictional characters and events depicted in the book.

**Prep** – In *Red Badge of Courage* by Stephen Crane students will study the horrors and psychological aspects of a war fought with no recognizable glory but with a plethora of heroics and courage on the part of a young Union soldier. Students will identify flashbacks as Henry Fleming remembers his exploits during the war. Henry’s journey of discovery/coming-of-age/hero’s journey will be a major part of this study and something with which the students can identify. Aspects of the “Hero’s Journey” (Hall) will be applied to the study of Henry Fleming.

- 3) **All Students:** Excerpts from *Black Boy* by Richard Wright introduces students to factual biographical information about the “Jim Crow South”, the “black codes”, and the Jim Crow laws enacted during Reconstruction that prevailed through the 1950’s in the southern United States, as well as the indignations suffered by blacks in the South in the mid-twentieth century.

## IMPLEMENTATION

In the examination of the American Civil War, both fictional and non-fictional literary studies, all students will identify and analyze how literary devices (i.e., symbol, metaphor, colloquialism, diction, flashback, simile, epiphany, hyperbole, imagery, sarcasm, satire, allusion, anecdote, irony, and allegory) employed by different authors are used to portray actual events and historical figures in fictional settings. These devices often serve to add entertainment value to historical events and to make the study more enjoyable and more understandable for students.

Pre-AP students will identify and interpret examples of alliteration, anadiplosis, anaphora, ellipsis, epistrophe, invective, litotes, polysyndeton, asyndeton, and synecdoche that contribute significantly to the works’ meanings. These students will keep dialectical journals with entries that include theme, characterization, tone/mood, and symbolism/allusion. The dialectical journal entries will be compared and contrasted for each work we read to determine differences and similarities in works of fiction and how they parallel with actual historical figures and events.

All students will learn to identify the aforementioned literary devices when they see them written in literature, and they will learn to employ these devices to improve and enhance their own writing skills. One focus for the unit is to observe, analyze, and interpret the writing skills of well-known authors and to learn to employ some of those qualities to improve student writing. Written communication skills, both critical and analytical, are very important in order for students to master the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) standardized examination, which has to be passed before a student can graduate from high school, and the Texas Academic Skills Program (TASP)

standardized examination that students have to pass before entrance into college. The curriculum will align with the Texas Education Agency's TEKS and the Houston Independent School District's Project CLEAR.

Students will learn that historical events can be witnessed, or observed, from the eyes of fictional characters and that literature can and does respond indelibly to historical events. The poignant, human story of Uncle Tom succeeded in fanning the flames of the anti-slavery movement into an inferno of resistance to the institution of slavery. The plot and characters of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, from which students in both Prep and Pre-AP classes will study excerpts, have become a permanent part of our American heritage, and very emotionally introduce us to the atrocities of slavery and the violent behaviors and attitudes leading up to the Civil War. Students will specifically read the following excerpts from *Uncle Tom's Cabin*:

- **“Introduction to the 1881 Edition”** – an overview of Harriet Beecher Stowe's background and how she came to write the book
- **“Preface”** – explains the setting and tone of the story
- **Chapter 1** “In which the Reader is Introduced to a Man of Humanity” – describes the situation on the Shelby farm and negotiations with a slave buyer; insight into Tom's character, his honesty, and his strong Christian faith
- **Chapter 4** “An Evening in Uncle Tom's Cabin” – depiction of the end of Tom's secure life on Shelby Farm as Mr. Shelby sells him to Haley, the slave buyer, with the stipulation that Tom only be re-sold to a kind, benevolent master
- **Chapter 10** “The Property is Carried off” – Tom's departure in shackles with the slave buyer; Shelby promises to redeem Tom soon
- **Chapter 24** “Foreshadowings” – Eva St. Clare makes her father promise to free all his slaves, especially Tom, if she dies; Eva is inherently good, but her wishes are ultimately denied, and the slaves are delivered to the slave warehouse
- **Chapter 30** “The Slave Warehouse” – Tom is sold to Simon Legree after the death of Mr. St. Clare
- **Chapter 32** “Dark Places” – Tom's journey to Simon Legree's farm; Legree is determined to break Tom and to relieve him of his fairness and goodness; he beats Tom for trying to help Lucy in the fields and because Tom refused to beat Lucy
- **Chapter 34** “The Quadroon's Story” – Tom reaffirms his faith as Cassy treats his wounds and believes fervently that God will deliver him from the brutality of Legree – “sufferin' ain't no reason to make us think the Lord's turned agin us; but jes to the contrary, if only we hold on to him, and doesn't give up to sin” (Stowe) – affirmation of Tom's inherent goodness and the strength of his faith
- **Chapter 37** “Liberty” – Tom relates the story of George and Eliza's escape and their safe arrival to live with missionaries in Canada
- **Chapter 38** “The Victory” – Legree continues to taunt Tom; Tom has a vision of Christ

- **Chapter 40** “The Martyr” – Cassy drugs Legree one night and asks Tom to kill him with an axe; Tom refuses – he believes God has a higher purpose for him and that he is there to help and comfort the other poor souls under Legree’s reign
- **Chapter 41** “The Young Master” – Tom helps Cassy and Emmeline hide from Legree; Legree beats Tom unconscious; George Shelby arrives to redeem Tom just as he is dying; George takes Tom’s body and after the funeral he vows to “do what one man can to drive the curse of slavery from my land!” (Stowe)
- **Chapter 42** “An Authentic Ghost Story” – Cassy and Emmeline, from their hiding place in the attic, make everyone think Legree’s house is haunted; they manage to escape, and George Shelby helps them
- **Chapter 45** “Concluding Remarks” – not a part of Uncle Tom’s story; commentary by Harriet Beecher Stowe in which she speaks directly to the reader about her shock and dismay over the “Fugitive Slave Act of 1850”; she remarks that she has presented “a faint shadow, a dim picture of the anguish and despair that are at this very moment riving thousands of hearts, shattering thousands of families, and driving a helpless and sensitive race to frenzy and despair.” (Stowe) In this final chapter Stowe pleads with her readers to take positive, decisive action to end the institution of slavery.

These particular excerpts introduce Uncle Tom and describe his life with a master who is considered “a man of humanity”, through a transitional situation with the St. Clare family, until such time as he enters the brutal world of Simon Legree and mercifully meets his demise.

In concert with *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* I will introduce excerpts from Barnes’s *The Anti-Slavery Impulse*, Cash’s *The Mind of the South*, Foner’s *Politics and Ideology in the Age of the Civil War*, Jenkins’s *Pro-Slavery Thought in the Old South*, and Buckmaster’s *Let My People Go* so that students have factual background information and a basic understanding of the impact and the circumstances surrounding slavery as it existed in the southern states of the United States and the Underground Railroad and Abolitionist movements organized to eradicate slavery. We will also read excerpts of Wilson’s *Crusader in Crinoline*, the life story of Harriet Beecher Stowe and her very pro-active involvement in the abolitionist movement – giving students a basis in fact for Stowe’s portrayal of Uncle Tom and the events depicted in her book.

All students will read the very brief book, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself*, to parallel events that occurred in the life of Frederick Douglass with similar experiences suffered by the fictional Uncle Tom. Just as Uncle Tom served several masters, so did Frederick Douglass:

I had two masters. The first master’s name was Anthony. He was not considered a rich slaveholder. [The second master] was the overseer, Plummer. Mr. Plummer was a miserable drunkard, a profane swearer, and a savage monster. He always went armed with a cowskin and a heavy cudgel. I have known him to cut and slash the women’s heads so harshly. No words, no tears, no prayers, from his gory

victim seemed to move his iron heart from its bloody purpose. Not until overcome by fatigue, would he cease to swing the blood-clotted cowskin. (Blasingame 13)

This account parallels the harsh treatment Tom suffered at the hands of Simon Legree. Douglass is very poignant in expressing his feelings about the extreme cruelty he observed when his master punished his Aunt Hester by stripping her to the waist, tying her hands over her head to a joist in the ceiling of the kitchen, and beating her mercilessly because she had disobeyed him: “I was quite a child, but I well remember it. It was the blood-stained gate, the entrance to the hell of slavery, through which I was about to pass. It was a most terrible spectacle. I was so terrified and horror-stricken at the sight, that I hid myself in a closet, and dared not to venture out” (Blasingame 57). As students are comparing the fictional and actual lives of Uncle Tom and Frederick Douglass, they will learn to celebrate the great courage and strength of character shared by both of these men. Uncle Tom stood by his principles and suffered grave consequences at the hand of Simon Legree. Frederick Douglass overcame great obstacles to become a renowned and respected author. Both men suffered and triumphed.

Faulkner’s *Sartoris* will be read and analyzed by Pre-AP students. The book depicts the story of the heirs to an aristocratic “Old South” family, the dissection of the decaying social class, and introduces key themes, places, and tenets of the well-known Faulkner canon. This is a good book to use as a first read of a Faulkner work for high school freshmen because it is a cut version of the author’s *Flags in the Dust* where the language has been revised to make it more easily understood. The story evokes what Faulkner called “the problems of the human heart in conflict with itself” (Faulkner 17), which recognizes the inseparability of human weaknesses and strengths, of positives and negatives within the moral fiber of mankind, and of good and evil within the human spirit. Excerpts from *The Unvanquished*, by the same author, will present a view of the Sartoris family’s transformation through Reconstruction. The richness of language in Faulkner’s works will encourage students to explore imagery, symbols, and allusions in literature while connecting fiction to historical events. Along with *Sartoris*, we will read excerpts of Mary Chestnut’s *A Diary from Dixie*; students will have actual facts recorded by Mrs. Chestnut, whose husband served as aid to Confederate President Jefferson Davis during the Civil War, about the progression of daily life in the South and the change in socio-economic conditions during the Civil War to compare with the exploits of the fictional Sartoris family.

*The Red Badge of Courage*, by Stephen Crane, will be read and analyzed by students in Prep classes who will learn that the heroics and courage involved in a war may have no recognizable glory. In his memoir Sam Watkins states, “I must confess that I never realized the ‘pomp and circumstance’ of the thing called glorious war until I saw [the battlefield at Shiloh]. Men were lying in every conceivable position; the dead lying with their eyes wide open, the wounded begging piteously for help, and some waving their hats and shouting to us to go forward” (Watkins 205). Students will learn the effects of “flashback” as Henry Fleming reflects on his war experiences, including his initial reason



for joining the war effort for the glory of military conflict, his disillusionment, questioning his own courage to go into battle, and his immense heroics and courage when he returns out of honor to his regiment. This is an excellent book for ninth grade Prep students to learn the use of metaphors, imagery, and allusion. The work is a maturation story, with which every high school freshman can identify because they are lacking maturity. Henry Fleming goes on a journey of discovery by joining the army and realizes after he deserts his regiment that heroism and courage do not come naturally but are acquired through a sense of duty and honor, which are gained during the maturation, or coming-of-age, process. He learns (as high school freshmen must) that heroism, courage, respect, and honor are not inherent, but they are qualities that must be earned. "When men take up arms to set other men free, there is something sacred and holy in the warfare" (Jaffe 788). As an introduction to *Red Badge of Courage*, we will study excerpts from Stamp, et al's *The Causes of the Civil War* to give students background information about the roots that caused the eruption of the Civil War in America. *All for the Union*, the diary of Elisha Rhodes who fought for the Union Army during the entire war, will present a factual account to parallel Henry Fleming's fictional exploits in the war.

We will also read excerpts of Jeff Shaara's *Gods and Generals*, another novel that charts the course of the war and the movements of combatants on both sides and their motivations for following the course of action they chose. R. Randolph Stevenson, a surgeon in the Army of the Confederate States of America, stated, "The future historian who shall undertake to write an unbiased story of the War between the States, will be compelled to weigh in the scales of justice all its parts and features; and if the revolting crimes . . . have indeed been committed, the perpetrators must be held accountable. Be they of the South or of the North, they cannot escape history" (Shaara 288).

After the Civil War was over, the South was embroiled in another long-term struggle caused by the Civil War – Reconstruction. This was a period after the Civil War when the South was in economic, political, and social upheaval, and the Union attempted to restore order and control. During Reconstruction, blacks were able to participate in the political process. During the conventions held in 1867 and 1868, blacks helped write new laws and repeal black codes enacted in the South after the war. Some blacks were also elected into political office and held such positions as U.S. Senators, U.S. Representatives, and lieutenant governors. Despite gains made during Reconstruction, they soon ended when federal troops were withdrawn from the South in 1877, and whites again began voting. White Southern Democrats soon took control from black and white Republican officeholders. By the end of 1877, all of the gains of Reconstruction had disappeared, and blacks were again relegated to being second-class citizens. With the end of the rights blacks gained during Reconstruction, Jim Crow laws were enacted that imposed racial segregation. The Supreme Court set the stage for Jim Crow laws by several decisions, such as stating that the Civil Rights Act of 1875 was unconstitutional and therefore ruled that the Fourteenth Amendment did not prohibit individuals and private organizations from discriminating on the basis of race. By 1890, whites in the North and South became

less supportive of civil rights and racial tensions began to flare. Several Supreme Court decisions overturned Reconstruction legislation by promoting racial segregation. Southern states passed laws that restricted African Americans' access to schools, restaurants, hospitals, and public places. Signs that said "Whites Only" or "Colored" were posted at entrances and exits to public buildings, water fountains, waiting rooms, and restrooms. Laws were enacted that restricted all aspects of life and varied from state to state. It was not until the civil rights movement in the 1960s that these laws and situations changed (Woodward 236).

Richard Wright was a prolific black writer and was widely published at an early age. He published the short stories "The Ethics of Living Jim Crow" in *American Stuff: WPA Writer's Anthology* and "Uncle Tom's Children" in *Story Magazine* between 1935 and 1937. He received a Guggenheim grant and completed his novel *Native Son* in which he poignantly describes the life of a black man in a white man's world in Chicago in the 1930s (Gaster). By studying excerpts from Richard Wright's autobiographical work, *Black Boy*, we will examine the aftereffects of the Civil War's Reconstruction period and how cruelty still pervaded black Americans' lives due to the Jim Crow laws. Was the war so ruthlessly fought to end slavery really over, or had it merely taken a different tact? Did black people gain much sought after freedom, or did their slave-masters just have different faces? Richard Wright's eloquent account of growing up in the "Jim Crow South" explains the poverty, hunger, fear, and hatred that was still present in the United States long after the Civil War had ended. We will examine excerpts from Joseph Furnas's *Goodbye to Uncle Tom*, Jerrold Hirsch's *Lay My Burden Down*, and *The Strange Case of Jim Crow* by C. Vaughn Woodward to understand more about the concept of slavery and the Jim Crow laws passed in the South after the Civil War.

This unit will integrate the following short stories into the literary and historical studies to support the texts of the novels:

- Ambrose Bierce's *Civil War Stories*, including "Four Days in Dixie," "Chickamauga," "The Coup de Grace," "The Mocking-bird," and "The Story of Conscience"
- Stephen Crane's *"The Little Regiment" and other Civil War Stories*, including "A Mystery of Heroism," "The Veteran," and "An Episode of War"
- Mark Twain's "The Private History of a Campaign that Failed"

We will also review some of the speeches in Grafton's *Great Speeches by Abraham Lincoln* that pertain to slavery and the Civil War, including:

- "A House Divided: Speech Delivered at Springfield, Illinois, at the Close of the Republican State Convention, June 16, 1858"
- "Address at Cooper Institute, New York, February 27, 1860"
- "Final Emancipation Proclamation, January 1, 1863"

- “Address Delivered at the Dedication of the Cemetery at Gettysburg, November 19, 1863”

Students will be introduced to and learn to understand the dialects, colloquialisms, and cultures of black, northern, and southern people who became involved in the Civil War in mid-nineteenth century America. They will learn to understand the evolution of written and spoken language over the past 135+ years within different cultures in the United States and to appreciate the beauty of the English language as it continues to evolve. Pre-AP students will be expected to emulate the writing styles of some of the authors we study in their creative writing exercises about the Civil War.

Freshman Prep students will be familiarized with the concept of studying classical works of literature and will be able to parallel those works with the historical events and figures we study in connection with the adventures of fictional characters and historical figures to activities in their daily lives. Written assignments will include an essay in which students are able to integrate an historical event with a fictional event, and connect both of those to an event that has occurred in their lives.

## LESSON PLANS AND ASSESSMENTS

### Weekly Schedule for Reading Materials

- Week 1:        All Students  
 Excerpts from *Shades of Blue and Gray: An Introductory History to the Civil War*  
 Excerpt from *Lay My Burden Down*  
 Excerpts from *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*  
 Book: *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*  
 Excerpts from: *The Anti-Slavery Impulse, The Mind of the South, Politics and Ideology in the Age of the Civil War, Pro-Slavery Thought in the Old South, Crusader in Crinoline, Let My People Go, and The American Abolitionists*
- Week 2:        Prep: Excerpts from *The Causes of the Civil War* and *All for the Union*  
                   Begin *The Red Badge of Courage*  
Pre-AP: Excerpts from *The Unvanquished, Flags in the Dust, A Diary from Dixie, and Company Atych*  
                   Begin *Sartoris*  
All Students: Excerpts from *Gods and Generals*
- Week 3:        Prep: Complete *The Red Badge of Courage*  
Pre-AP: Complete *Sartoris*

- Week 4: All Students  
 Short stories by Ambrose Bierce and Stephen Crane  
 Essay by Mark Twain  
 Abraham Lincoln's speeches
- Week 5: All Students  
 Excerpts from *Goodbye to Uncle Tom*  
 Excerpts from *Black Boy*  
 Excerpt from *The Strange Case of Jim Crow*
- Week 6: All Students  
 Excerpts from *The Killer Angels*, *The Last Full Measure*, and  
*Andersonville*  
 Essay from *Language in Culture and Society*

Lesson plans include reading assignments as outlined above for both Prep and PreAP students. Assignments to be assessed will include the following:

### Prep Assignments

- Keep a **personal journal/diary** as though the student is a character in one of the works we are studying (i.e., a Union soldier, a Confederate soldier, a Southern belle, a Northern woman, a male or female abolitionist). Become the character and keep a very descriptive record of your war experience; stay in character and write from the perspective of the character; research and compare the fictional character with an historical figure who went through similar experiences.
- Create an ongoing **timeline** of major battles and events of the Civil War, including major characters involved in each event as we study the war in literature. This activity will align with American history lessons about the Civil War, and students will identify actual historical figures and events with those depicted in the literature they will study.
- Students will be given excerpts from both literary works and non-fictional historical reading selections in which they will **identify slang and obsolete language, dialogue, and colloquialisms and research their meanings**. Once they determine the meanings of the obsolete words and phrases, they will paraphrase the excerpts, thereby comparing and contrasting historical contexts and changes in word meanings as the language has evolved during the last 140 years. An example from *The Red Badge of Courage* is when Henry is leaving home, and his mother is giving him advice:

An' allus be careful an' choose yer comp'ny. There's lots of bad men in the army, Henry. The army makes 'em wild, and they like nothing better than the job of leading off a young feller like you, as ain't never been away from home much and

has allus had a mother, an' a-learning 'em to drink and swear. Keep clear of them folks, Henry. I don't want yeh to ever do any thing, Henry that yeh would be 'shamed to let me know about. Jes' think as if I was a watchin' yeh. If yeh keep that in yer mind allus, I guess yeh'll come out about right. . . . I don't know what else to tell yeh, Henry, excepting that yeh must never do no shirking, child, on my account. (Crane 56)

- Students will first “translate” the selection into contemporary language and respond to the effectiveness of the language used in the selection. Would the passage have the same impact if the author had used language familiar to us rather than use language appropriate to the time period in which the work is set?
- Create a *scrapbook* to commemorate the events and exploits of a character who is a soldier on either the Union or the Confederate side of the war. Students may be a spouse, sibling, or child of the soldier who is fighting in the war and include drawings, photos (from magazines or websites), a depiction of the flag, and particular mementos and memories relevant to the character's role in the war.

### Pre-AP Assignments

- Students will keep *dialectical journals* which will contain entries describing mood/tone, characterization, theme, and symbolism/allusion. Entries for each work studied will be compared and contrasted to see how depictions in different literary selections are the same as or different from each other and how authors' styles in presenting the material may vary.
- Students will *write a short story* in which they create original characters, settings, and symbols and use various literary devices (i.e., alliteration, anadiplosis, anaphora, ellipsis, epistrophe, invective, litotes, polysyndeton, asyndeton, and synecdoche) to emulate the writing styles of authors we study – Stowe, Shaara, Faulkner, and Wright. Stories will include a fully developed plot sequence and have a central theme.
- Students will *research* the symbolism of both the Union and the Confederate flags. What do the stars represent? What do the stripes represent? What do the colors represent? Students will *create a new flag for the Union or the Confederacy* and explain the symbolism in the elements they use on their flags and of the colors they choose.
- Students will work in small cooperative groups to research a specific character or event in history that parallels with a character or event we study in the literature we read. They will create a *miniature museum display* for the character or event in which they include biographical and demographic information, political posture, socio-economic conditions, clothing and costuming, create “artifacts” of the era,

explain living conditions during the war, create a timeline, and explain the character's role or significance of the event depicted in the Civil War.

- Students will *paraphrase* excerpts from literary selections and research colloquialisms that are now obsolete. They will research the evolution of the English language as it has occurred during the last 140 years.
- We will review the eloquence of Abraham Lincoln's speeches and interpret a section of one of his speeches as it might be spoken by a leader today, for example:

“A nation may be said to consist of its territory, its people, and its laws. The territory is the only part which is of certain durability. ‘One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh, but the earth abideth forever’ It is of the first importance to duly consider and estimate, this ever-enduring part. That portion of the earth's surface which is owned and inhabited by the people of the United States, is well adapted to be the home of one national family, and it is not well adapted for two, or more. Its vast extent and its variety of climate and productions are of advantage, in this age, for one people, whatever they might have been in former ages. In the inaugural address I briefly pointed out the total inadequacy of disunion, as a remedy for the differences between the people of the two sections. I did so in language which I cannot improve, and which, therefore, I beg to repeat. One section of our country believes slavery is right, and ought to be extended, while the other believes it is wrong, and ought not to be extended. This is the only substantial dispute” (Grafton 33).

How might this excerpt from Lincoln's annual speech to Congress on December 1, 1862 be re-written to give credence to conditions in the United States during the Civil War? Students will re-write the speech using contemporary language to explain what Lincoln meant in this speech.

### **Assignments for ALL Students**

- **Debate:** Students in all classes will be divided into three groups; students will number off “1-2-3 . . .” down the rows to determine the group in which they will participate: 1 - Blue (Union); 2 - Gray (Confederate); and 3 - Neutral (objective point of view)
  - Members of Groups #1 and #2 will choose: a *Facilitator* (to keep the group focused and on-task), a *Recorder* (to record all decisions made by the group and to type the final report), two *Researchers* (to research the appropriate material they will need for the debate); an *Assimilator* (to assimilate all the information gathered by the Researchers); a *Debate Coach* (to run “mock” debates and coach the participants prior to the final debate); four *Debaters* (to participate in the final debate exercise).

- Members of Group #3 will research the rules of formal debate and be prepared to objectively judge the final debate between Groups #1 and #2.
- Each cooperative group will work together to research the “side” on which they are participating and to prepare a debate defending their stance; the neutral/objective group will listen to both sides of the debate and will determine which group is the most convincing and therefore the “winner” in the conflict.
- When beginning the study of Reconstruction in the South after the Civil War, all students will participate in a very basic *sentence/paragraph construction (or reconstruction) exercise*. Each student will write a very brief (3-5 sentence) analysis of a paragraph in the short story “The Mocking-bird” by Ambrose Bierce in which they examine the rationale behind the exploits of Private Graystock in the story and the significance of the story’s title. They will then cut the sentences apart and exchange work with another student. Students will then “reconstruct” the paragraph to reflect the writer’s original order. This brief exercise will assist students with sentence and paragraph construction as well as the concept of “reconstruction.”

Students will be assessed individually on writing assignments and research assignments completed on their own and on exams given during the course of the unit. Examinations will include multiple choice and essay questions. When students work in cooperative groups, they will be assessed on their ability to work with others in a collegial manner as well as on the quality of the end product produced. All work is graded on its content and creativity, including detail, evidence of original work, comprehensiveness, and complexity. Appropriate verifiable references should be properly cited within the work and listed on a “Works Cited” page, including pictures, photographs, tables, graphs, and other materials copied from websites, magazines, and newspapers.

Formatting for all written work will be predetermined and consistent throughout all assignments (i.e., typed, 12-pt. font, 1” margins, number of pages required, number of references required – if appropriate, and ability to appropriately use language). Below is an example of how final papers should be formatted:

## TITLE

Submitted by:

Name  
Class Period

Date

## Title of Paper

The introduction will include your thesis statement (cite reference) and sentences introducing the topics for each paragraph of the paper. The final sentence of each paragraph will transition easily into the next.

The first paragraph will describe background information about what you already know about your subject and how you learned this information (cite reference). **DO NOT** use first person pronouns (I, me, my, etc.)

The second through fourth paragraphs include research about your topic (cite references). Any time you quote directly from a source, be sure to use "quotation marks" and to cite the reference (reference). If you paraphrase or include information from a source, cite the reference.

The conclusion will restate your thesis and reinforce why your research is important, making the paper into one cohesive understandable document.

**NOTE:** The paper should be double-spaced, 12-pt font (Times or Arial) – **NO bold font, and have 1" margins.**

## Outline

- I. Introduction
  - A. Thesis Statement
  - B. Sentence on background
  - C. Sentence on projected research
  - D. Transition sentence
- II. Background Information
  - A. Background on what you already know about the subject
    1. How you learned this information
    2. Why you are interested in the topic
  - B. Transition sentence
- III. Research
  - A. Explanation of research you did on the subject; be sure to cite references
  - B. Transition sentence
- IV. What you learned
  - A. Detail on what you learned from your research and how you will benefit from your new knowledge
  - B. Transition sentence
- V. Conclusion
  - A. Restatement of thesis statement in different form
  - B. Tie all parts of the paper together and conclude *smoothly*.

## REFERENCES

(list alphabetically)

LastName, FirstName, ***Title of Book***, Publisher, Location, Date of publication, Page number(s)

Example:

Wright, Richard, *Black Boy*, Harper & Row, New York NY, 1966, 288 p.

LastName, FirstName, ***Title of Magazine, Newspaper, Periodical***, "Title of Article", Publisher, Location, Volume:Issue #, Date, Page number(s)

Example:

Martin, Joseph, "Significant Facts about Research", *Time*, New York NY, 72:11, January 12, 1999, p. 116.

*Title of Website*, "Title of Article", Author (if given), **exact** website address

Example:

*Houston Teachers Institute*, Cooke, Paul, "Convocation Address, 2003, <http://www.uh.edu/hti>

LastName, FirstName, ***Personal Interview***, Person's position relevant to research, Place of interview, Date of interview

I have devised a detailed "project" rubric (see Appendix) that will be distributed to students so that they know where every point of their grade is derived. Oral presentations should be concise, succinct, and professional and are judged on eye contact with the audience, a clear voice and speech, and confidence and knowledge of the subject matter presented.



**APPENDIX**

**SAMPLE RUBRIC**

STUDENT NAME \_\_\_\_\_

**PROJECT RUBRIC**

TITLE/SUBJECT:

	<b>U</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b><u>CONTENT</u></b>					
Complete; presents a good depiction of the subject matter in very good detail; note cards/ explanation attached	1-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	
Completely answers the following questions: 1) What is visually interesting about the scene constructed? 2) Can the audience tell what the scene is about without an explanation?	1-4 1-4	5-6 5-6	7-8 7-8	9-10 9-10	
<b><u>CREATIVITY</u></b>					
Evidence of original work; not copied or duplicated from an outside source; comprehensive-evidence of the use of resources	1-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	
Excellent sequence of events depicted in the display—easy to understand visually	1-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	
Excellent use of materials; well constructed; creative-complex; uses several different materials	1-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	
<b><u>ORAL PRESENTATION</u></b>					
Excellent eye contact with audience during presentation	1-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	
Clear voice and speech; everyone can hear and understand	1-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	
Between 2-3 minutes; concise/succinct/professional; explains how the scene is relevant to the story of “Romeo and Juliet”	1-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	
Expresses confidence and knowledge of the subject matter presented	1-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	

U=Unsatisfactory; S=Satisfactory; G=Good; E=Excellent      90-100 =A   80-89=B   70-79=C   60-69=D   0-60=F

**This rubric is a rubric I designed for use in my classes and may be used as is or changed as required.**

## ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Works Cited

Blasingame, John, J. McKivigan, P. Hinks, and Gerald Fulkerson, eds. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself*. Yale UP, 2001.

A chronology of the life of Frederick Douglass while he suffered in bondage and his triumph over oppression.

Calhoun, Charles. *Chamberlain Biography*. 1997. Pejepscot Historical Society.  
<<http://www.curtislibrary.com/pejepscot/joshbiog.htm>>.

A biographical account of the life of Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain.

Crane, Stephen. *The Red Badge of Courage*. New York: Dover Publications, 1990.

The definitive work that set the pattern for the treatment of war in modern fiction; will be used as the major novel study for Prep classes)

Gaster, Snally, *Richard Wright: A Wright Native Son*. 1999. University at Buffalo.  
<<http://www.math.buffalo.edu/~sww/wright>>.

A comprehensive site with biographical information about Wright and his works.

Grafton, John , ed. *Great Speeches by Abraham Lincoln*. New York: Dover Publications, 1991.

A collection of Lincoln's speeches, some of which pertaining to the war and slavery will be used in the curriculum unit.

Hattaway, Herman. *Shades of Blue and Gray: An Introductory History of the Civil War*. Orlando: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1997.

A very concise military history, overview, and analysis of the Civil War that explores the composition of both the Confederate and Union armies, the use of technological innovations like mines, automatic weapons, and submarines that changed the face of the battlefield, and military professionalism recognized in both armies.

Jaffe, Marc, ed. *Three Great Novels of the Civil War*. Avenel NJ: Wings Books, Inc., 1994.

Includes: *The Killer Angels* (Shaara), *Andersonville* (Kantor), *The Red Badge of Courage* (Crane).

Shaara, Jeff. *Gods and Generals*. New York: Random House, Inc., 1996.

A novel that charts the war and the exploits of the combatants and their motivations; excerpts will be extracted.

Stowe, Harriet Beecher. *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1974.

Definitive novel that influenced American slavery issues and invoked public indignation over the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850.

Watkins, Sam R. *Co. Aytch: A Confederate Memoir of the Civil War*. New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1962.

A memoir written by Sam Watkins twenty years after the war; gives anecdotal insight to the war from a young soldier's point of view – told in retrospect.

Woodward, C. Vann. *The Strange Case of Jim Crow*. Oxford UP, 2001.

The story of the Jim Crow laws passed in the southern states after the Civil War.

## **Supplemental Resources**

### ***Resources for Teachers***

Barnes, Gilbert H. *The Anti-Slavery Impulse 1830-1844*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1964.

A scholarly study on moral commitment and the anti-slavery movement in America.

Bierce, Ambrose. *Civil War Stories*. New York: Dover Publications, 1994.

A collection of fifteen realistic short stories about the Civil War, excerpts will be used for the unit.

Buckmaster, Henrietta. *Let My People Go: The Story of the Underground Railroad and the Growth of the Abolition Movement*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1959.

A history of the anti-slavery movement in the United States, including the beginning, heroes and functions of the Underground Railroad.

Cash, Wilbur. *The Mind of the South*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1941.

Critical/analytical work about the philosophy, temperament, and social customs of the South before and during the Civil War.

Chestnut, Mary Boykin. *A Diary from Dixie*. Ed. Isabella Martin. New York: Gramercy Press, 1997.

The published diary of Mary Chestnut, whose husband was an aid to President Jefferson Davis during the Civil War; a record of daily life, social life, and economic conditions in the South during the war.

Foner, Eric. *Politics and Ideology in the Age of the Civil War*. Oxford UP, 1981.

- Integrates the social and political history of 19<sup>th</sup> Century America with the study of the sectional conflicts over race, class, and labor discipline before and after the war.
- Furnas, Joseph. *Goodbye to Uncle Tom*. New York: William Sloane Associates, 1956.  
An analysis of the myths pertaining to Black Americans, from their origins to the misconceptions of today.
- Harrold, Stanley. *The American Abolitionists*, New York: Pearson Education Publishers, 2001.  
Part of the “Seminar Studies in History” series about the abolitionist movement from the time of its origins in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century to its role in the Civil War, both violent and non-violent approaches.
- Hirsch, Jerrold. *Lay My Burden Down*, Ed. B. A. Botkin. Delta Publishers, 1945.  
A folk history of slavery in the United States before and during the Civil War.
- Hymes, Dell, ed. 1964. *Language in Culture and Society*. Harper and Row Publishers, New York: Harper and Row, 1964.  
See pp. 534-546 for a collection of monographs on the development and evolution of language in different cultures and societies.
- Jenkins, Williams S. *Pro-Slavery Thought in the Old South*. Gloucester MA: Beacon Press, 1959.  
Theories about the institution of slavery and its relationship to government.
- Kantor, MacKinlay. *Andersonville*. New York, Random House, 1955.  
The story of the notorious Georgia prison where 50,000 Northern soldiers suffered and 14,000 died; decries the guilt and greatness of both the Union and the Confederacy, all joined in a single struggle to survive the Civil War; excerpts will be introduced to students.
- Lowenthal, Leo. *Literature, Popular Culture, and Society*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1961.  
The study of literature as it applies to popular culture and society.
- Rhodes, Robert Hunt. *All for the Union*. New York: Random House, Inc., 1992.  
The diary of Elisha Hunt Rhodes of the Union Army who fought in the Civil War from Bull Run to Appomattox.
- Shaara, Jeff. *The Last Full Measure*. New York: Ballantine Publishing Company, 1998.  
Sequel to *The Killer Angels*, very compelling, rich characters, presents both Lee and Grant points of view; excerpts will be extracted to enhance the curriculum.
- Shaara, Michael. *The Killer Angels*. New York: Random House, Inc., 1974.

A very poignant depiction of the battle of Gettysburg; excerpts will be used to preempt *The Last Full Measure*.

Stamp, Kenneth M., et al, eds. *The Causes of the Civil War*. Englewood Cliffs NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1974.

A collection of monographs by noted historians regarding the causes of the Civil War.

Wilson, Forrest. *Crusader in Crinoline: The Life of Harriet Beecher Stowe*. Greenwood Publishing Group, 1972.

The life story of Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

### ***Texts for Students***

Blasingame, John W., John R. McKivigan, and Peter P. Hinks, eds. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself*, Yale UP, 1999.

An account of Frederick Douglass' life in bondage and his triumph over oppression to become a respected writer.

Crane, Stephen. *"The Little Regiment" and Other Civil War Stories*. New York: Dover Publications, 1997.

A collection of seven short stories involving the Civil War; some of the stories will be read and studied in the unit)

Faulkner, William. *Flags in the Dust*. Ed. Douglas Day. New York: Random House, 1973.

A cut version of *Flags in the Dust*, depicts a dissection of a decaying social class and an evocation of the physical landscape and psychological climate of the South during and after the Civil War; will be used as the major novel study for Pre-AP classes.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Sartoris*. New York: The New American Library of American Literature, Inc., 1929.

Complete text of *Sartoris*, published posthumously; excerpts will be used with the study of *Sartoris* in Pre-AP classes.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Unvanquished*. New York: Random House, Inc., 1938.

A novel about the Sartoris family, who fictionally embody the ideal of Southern honor and its transformation through the Civil War, the Confederates' defeat, and Reconstruction.

Twain, Mark. "The Private History of a Campaign that Failed." In *Humorous Stories and Sketches by Mark Twain*. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 1996.

A very moving essay about a group of young Confederate troops who panic and run when they are first confronted with the horrors of warfare.

Wright, Richard. *Black Boy*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1945.  
Autobiography of Richard Wright and his life growing up in the Jim Crow South.

***Internet Sources***

*US Army Center of Military History*. United States Army. 27 April 2001.  
<<http://www.army.mil/cmh>>.

A comprehensive American history website maintained by the U.S. Army; very detailed historical/military account of the Civil War years in the United States.