



Unit: Soldiers

Lesson 1.9: *Red Legs: A Drummer Boy of the Civil War* by Ted Lewin (HarperCollins, 2001)

Aim: To learn about the life of a drummer boy during the Civil War as well as about reenactment

Objective: Students hear the fictionalized story of a Civil War reenactor from Brooklyn and compare it with the life of the drummer boy the story is based upon.

Materials:

1. *Red Legs: A Drummer Boy of the Civil War* by Ted Lewin (HarperCollins, 2001)
2. Stephen Benjamin Bartow's obituary
<http://www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/civilwar/cwdoc104.html>
3. Optional: Photograph of Civil War reenactors
<http://www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/civilwar/cwdoc108.html>
4. Optional: Drawing of Clarence Mackenzie, drummer boy
<http://www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/civilwar/cwdoc026.html>
5. Optional: Photograph of African-American drummer boy
<http://www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/civilwar/cwdoc060.html>

Procedure:

1. Show students the cover of the book. Ask them to predict what the story will be about. What do they notice about the picture on the cover? Explain that you are about to read a fictional story based on actual people and events of the Civil War. Discuss and define historical fiction, explaining how it differs from nonfiction or biography.
2. Read *Red Legs* aloud to class.
Discussion questions:
 - What does the title refer to?
 - What is Stephen's job in the regiment?
 - How does the actual battle differ from battles fought today? (Venn diagram)
 - What is surprising about the ending?
3. Distribute the end page for students to read independently.
 - What is a reenactment? Why do people become reenactors?
 - Would you like to be one? Why or why not?
 - How many child soldiers died in the Civil War? How many lives were lost in all?
 - How long did the war last?

- Who gave the 14th their nickname and why?
 - How does Lewin's story differ from Stephen's actual life?
4. Ask students to read Stephen Benjamin Bartow's obituary from the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 10/11/1911, either in small groups or for homework.
- How old was Bartow when he enlisted?
 - How many battles did he fight?
 - How is Lewin's Stephen different from the real Bartow?
 - Why do you think the author made these changes?