



Unit: Soldiers

Lesson 1.6: Prisoner of War

Aim: To learn about prison life during the Civil War.

Objective: Students examine primary source documents (war notice, personal letters, and newspaper article) relating to prison life during the Civil War.

Materials:

1. “Reading a Primary Source Document” sheet
2. “War Department Notice”
<http://www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/civilwar/cwdoc077.html>
3. Vanderhoef’s letters from Libby Prison dated February 14, 1864
<http://www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/civilwar/cwdoc062.html> and March 27, 1864
<http://www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/civilwar/cwdoc072.html> (transcriptions attached below)
4. “Life in Libby Prison” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* article dated November 6, 1863
<http://www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/civilwar/cwdoc057.html>

Procedure:

1. Distribute “War Department Notice” to small groups.
2. Students fill in “Reading a Primary Source Document” sheet (share).
3. Shared reading on overhead: Vanderhoef’s letters from Libby Prison dated February 14, 1864 and March 27, 1864.

A note about shared reading: During a shared reading session, the whole class is on the same “page”—everyone’s attention is focused on the same overhead transparency. The teacher models the initial reading in several ways. In addition to simply reading the passage aloud, slowly and clearly, he or she reveals thoughts and reading strategies for the group. Be it visualizing, making connections, or noticing new or interesting vocabulary, these thoughts are shared so that students see and understand what goes on in the mind of a good reader.

4. Brainstorm a list of questions about prison life, then distribute “Life in Libby Prison” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* article dated November 6, 1863. As students read the article, they look for answers or clues about what prison life was like.

“Reading” a Primary Source Document

1. Identify the document type. (Newspaper article, letter, map, advertisement, diary entry, photograph, illustration, cartoon, etc.)
2. Identify the date of the document. (When was the document created? How do you know?)
3. Identify the author or creator. (Who created the document? What do you know about him or her?)
4. Identify the audience? (What is the purpose of the document? Who was it written or created for?)
5. List 2-3 things the document tells you about life in Brooklyn or New York City during this period.
6. List 2-3 questions you have about the document. What would you ask its creator if he or she were alive today?

Libby Prison, Richmond Va

Sunday Feb 14th 1864

By the mail yesterday I received your letter of Jan 26th...we are allowed to write only one letter per week, that is to contain only six lines, so I must make it short. I see by the papers that our Regt is expected home in a few days. Henry will have a fine time. I should like to be with him...

Libby Prison Richmond Va

March 27th 1864

Dear Sister

Your kind and anxiously looked for letter of Feb 28th came to hand yesterday finding me well. I am glad you explain that you have sent these letters although this last one is the only one that I have received since Dec month, I was holey unable to account for your silance and was somewhat angered at it. I hope you will excuse the tenor of my last letter, after you have taken, the way in which I am placed, in consideration. I feel assured you will. I can truly say that you of all tha family are the one who has always held a steady correspondance with me during my several absences from home, therefore I miss your letters most...Well if all goes as well as at present I expect to be home some time in April, for twenty days or so (Happy expectation)...