



Brooklyn *in the* Civil War



Unit: Women

Lesson 3.4: Soldier Emily

Aim: To explore the role of women as soldiers during the Civil War period.

Objective: Students read about a young Brooklyn woman who concealed her identity to join the army and imagine how her family or fellow soldiers responded.

Materials:

1. Shared reading on overhead transparency
2. Telegram (copies or overhead transparency)

Procedure:

1. Begin by asking the questions: Do you think women should be allowed to serve as soldiers in the Army? Why or why not? How has society's view of women changed in the past 150 years?
2. Shared reading (teacher reads aloud, discussing difficult vocabulary, while class reads together).

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.

3. Students read letter and answer the following questions in small groups:
 - Why do you think Emily asks for forgiveness?
 - What does she mean when she says that the soil “drinks” her blood?
 - What do you think a daguerreotype is?
 - What does she mean by the phrase “deliver my country”?

4. Role-playing activity:
 - Explain to the class that Emily's family did not take her seriously when she first told them she intended to join the Union Army. When they realized how determined she was, they hired a well-known doctor to try to bring her to her senses. Still, she ran away to enlist.
 - Ask students to role play a scene between Emily and her family (father and/or mother) in which they try to change her mind about enlisting.

5. Writing assignment — choose one.
 - Imagine you are Emily. You have enlisted, yet no one knows your true identity. Write a diary entry in which you share your thoughts and feelings about your new life and the family you left behind.
 - Imagine you are a soldier in Emily's regiment. You have just learned of her death and concealed identity. Write a conversation between you and another soldier about her.
 - Imagine you are Emily's mother, father, or little Eph. Write her a telegram responding to the one she has just sent on her death bed.

During the Civil War, women were unable to serve, just as they were unable to vote. Yet, there were those who were determined to fight for their cause. One such case involved a 19-year-old woman from Brooklyn who disguised herself as a man and ran away to join the drum corps of a Michigan Regiment in 1863. Her family tried in vain to locate her, but after several weeks, they assumed she had killed herself and mourned her death. Meanwhile, her regiment was sent to Tennessee, where, during the battle for Chattanooga, a minie ball hit her in the side, wounding her fatally. Though she refused to reveal her full name when she was discovered, she did agree to send the following telegram to her family.

Emily's Telegram:

“Mr. _____, No. _____ Willoughby Street, Brooklyn.
Forgive your dying daughter. I have but a few moments to live. My
native soil drinks my blood. I expected to deliver my country, but the
Fates would not have it so. I am content to die. Pray, pa, forgive me. Tell
ma to kiss my daguerreotype. EMILY

P.S. Give my old watch to little Eph.”