

National Museum of Health and Medicine

To Bind the Nation's Wounds: Civil War Medicine Tour Teachers Guide Grades 9-12

This guide will help you prepare for your visit and tour of the Civil War medicine exhibit at the National Museum of Health and Medicine. It outlines the major ideas and objects that will be presented during the visit and suggests activities to help extend your museum experience into your classroom.

Content Standards for Social Studies: Will use primary and secondary sources that include photographs and documents, explain how hardships affected soldiers on the field and in prison camps, discuss notable people including Abraham Lincoln and Clara Barton, and learn of technological advancements during the Civil War.

About Your Tour

Explore the history and science behind Civil War medicine, including advancements and people who helped to improve military medicine during the Civil War.

At the conclusion of this tour, the students should be able to:

1. Explain what caused the majority of deaths during the Civil War and why.
2. Describe a medical advancement that developed during the Civil War.
3. Describe the living conditions in camp life for the soldiers
4. Name two diseases that were common for soldiers living in the camps.
5. Name two famous doctor from the civil war and his/her role.
6. Name two surgical method used during the Civil War.
7. List two medicines or medicinal therapies that are still used today.
8. Explain the story of Abraham Lincoln's death.
9. Explain how transportation systems for the wounded changed during War.

Hands-on materials that may be used for this guided tour include:

- Replica Civil War surgical kit
- Minie ball and musket ball

- Chisholm inhaler
- Hardtack
- Cast of bone with osteomyelitis
- Photos of camps, prisons, and wounds from the Museum's Otis Historical Archives

Pre-visit Classroom Activities

- Review *Visiting Our Museum* and what the students will see on the tour.
- Review major events and points about the Civil War, this should include causes (Union vs. Confederate and what states were involved).
- Visit one of the Museum's flickr sites available at <http://www.flickr.com/search/?q=otisarchives1&m=text> and in the search box type "civil war" -- choose a Civil War-era photograph(s) for the students to analyze — ask them to make a list of observations about the photograph (for example, clothing, housing, food, etc.) and have them write a story about the photograph, including their observations. Photos also are available on the Museum's website: www.nmhm.washingtondc.museum/collections/archives/agalleries/agalleries.html.
- Divide the class into small groups and have each research one disease that was prevalent during the Civil War—ask them to present their research to the class.
- Read "The Wound Dresser" by Walt Whitman (http://www.princeton.edu/~batke/logr/log_159.html) and discuss the imagery described in the poem. Engage the students in a discussion about whether they think the poem was based on real experiences and why?

Vocabulary

Ambulance: An emergency vehicle used to transport the injured to a hospital.

Amputation: The removal of an injured limb through surgery.

Anesthesia: A method used to block the perception of pain, often used during surgery.

Confederate: A member of the Confederate States of America (southern states)

Facial reconstruction: A method of plastic surgery to reconstruct the face to a nearly normal and functioning condition--often required due to injury or trauma of the face.

Flux: A Civil War medical term for diarrhea, often not related to a specific disease.

Germ theory: The theory that disease and illness is caused by microscopic organisms called germs.

Hardtack: A type of cracker or biscuit made with flour, water, and salt. This was a common food of soldiers during the Civil War.

Littermen: Soldiers that carry the injured on a stretcher from the battlefield to the field hospital or ambulance wagon.

Minie ball: A type of aerodynamic muzzle loading rifle bullet named after co-developer Claude Etienne Minie.

Osteomyelitis: infection of the bone

Prosthesis: A substitute and artificial limb for the body.

Trephination: The surgical procedure in which a hole is drilled in the skull and a circular piece of bone is removed in order to relieve pressure on the brain after a head injury.

Triage: A process of sorting the injured into groups by a combination of priority and resource efficiency; used especially when casualties are many and resources are few.

Union: a member of the United States of America (Northern states).

U.S. Sanitary Commission: A government agency that allowed women to raise money and supplies for Union soldiers during the Civil War.

Notable People

- Surgeon General William Hammond
- General Daniel E. Sickles
- Dr. Julian John Chisholm
- Dr. Jonathan Letterman
- President Abraham Lincoln
- John Wilkes Booth
- Clara Barton
- Dorothea Dix
- Mary Walker
- Dr. Alexander Augustus
- Walt Whitman
- Matthew Brady
- General Henry Barnum
- Hermann Faber

Post-Visit Activities

- Have the students research a notable person discussed during the tour and make a presentation to the class (this could be a first-person interpretation).
- Have the students write a fictional letter to a family from the perspective of a Civil War soldier in a camp. Students should include what type of food they eat, what food they miss, what supplies they need, and what life is like in the camp.
- Discuss Walt Whitman's real-life patient stories discussed at the museum and compare them with his poem read before visiting the museum. Discuss Walt Whitman's role as a nurse during the Civil War.
- Discuss the role of women during the Civil War, including their involvement with the Sanitation Commission.

Resources:

Websites:

- The National Museum of Health and Medicine, www.nmhm.washingtondc.museum
- The National Museum of Civil War Medicine, www.civilwarmed.org
- Civil War History, www.civilwarhome.com
- Civil War Academy, www.civilwaracademy.com
- Son of the South, www.sonofthesouth.net
- Library of Congress (Primary Sources), www.loc.gov
- National Archives and Record Administration, www.nara.gov

Publications:

- *Civil War Medicine: Challenges and Triumphs* by Alfred Jay Bollet, 2002.
- *Gangrene and Glory: Medical Care During the American Civil War* by Frank R. Freeman, 2001.
- *Civil War Medicine (Illustrated Living History Series)* by Keither Wilbur, 1998.
- *Memoranda During the War: Portrait of the Civil War* by Walt Whitman