

Lesson provided by: DeWitt Creveling, Pathway Christian School,
Smyrna, GA

Studying Eyewitness Accounts of the Atlanta Campaign and Sherman's March

Objective: *Students will demonstrate an understanding of the social experience of the Civil War in Georgia on both the battlefield and the homefront after studying eyewitness accounts of the events.*

Grade Level: 8-12

Anticipated Time: 3 50-minute class periods

Suggested Primary Sources with Recommended Pages:

1. Berry, Carrie. Diary of Carrie Berry, 1864-1866. MSS#29F. Kenan Research Center, Atlanta History Center Archives. (selections from pages 1-19)
2. Bull, Rice C. Soldiering: The Civil War Diary of Rice C. Bull. New York: Berkeley Books, 1988. (selections from pages 180-189)
3. Ferguson, John Hill. On To Atlanta. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001. (50-57, 80-87)
4. Sherman, William T. Memoirs of General William T. Sherman. New York: Literary Classics of the United States, Inc., 1990. (selections from pages 655-662)
5. Watkins, Sam R. Co. Aytch: A Confederate Memoir of the Civil War. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997. (selections from pages 172-185)
6. Wheeler, Richard. Sherman's March. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Publishers, 1978. (112-119)

Procedure:

1. The teacher will provide students with historical background on the Atlanta Campaign and Sherman's March to the Sea in 1864, using the textbook, class discussion, films, or other supplemental materials.
2. The teacher will choose short selections of about 5-10 pages from the sources above or similar materials and assign each one to an individual student or small group. Students should silently read these in class while taking notes. Group members may share their notes in order to prepare for a brief oral report.
3. Each individual student or group will then make an oral presentation of about 5-10 minutes, summarizing what they have learned from their readings. They may read brief direct quotations from their reading to the class when appropriate.
4. After each presentation the teacher will encourage the class to ask the group relevant questions. The teacher will then ask additional questions, especially if important points in the reading were omitted. Below are a few suggested questions for each reading:

DOCUMENT 1: Fighting at Kennesaw Mountain (Diary of John Hill Ferguson, Union Soldier)

1. Why was the Union artillery both a blessing and a curse to Ferguson and his fellow soldiers?
2. What was Ferguson's impression of General Sherman?
3. Describe some of the friendly contact between the Union and Confederate soldiers.
4. Why was the fighting on June 27, 1864, "much to be lamented"?
5. How did some Union generals use the temporary truce to their advantage?
6. How did General Sherman "celebrate" the Fourth of July?

DOCUMENT 2: Defending Atlanta (Memoirs of Sam R. Watkins, Confederate Soldier)

1. How did some Confederate soldiers react when General Johnston was replaced by General Hood?
2. How does the incident of the Yankee scout show several dangers faced by Civil War soldiers?
3. Describe the incident with Private Galbreath.
4. How does Watkins describe the fierce battle on July 22, 1864, and its results?
5. Describe how Watkins was wounded in this battle. How did the wound probably save his life?
6. Why did Watkins say he was promoted to corporal after this battle? How is he showing sarcasm?

DOCUMENT 3: The Fall of Atlanta (Diary of John Hill Ferguson, Union Soldier)

1. Give an example of why the continual Union supply of food and ammunition was so important.
2. How do we know that Ferguson was one of the leaders in his company?
3. Why did Ferguson want four more hours of daylight?
4. What caused the great explosions they heard all night long?
5. How did Ferguson get separated from his unit?
6. How did he plan to get his diary to his family back home?

DOCUMENT 4: Atlanta Occupied (Diary of Carrie Berry, Atlanta Resident)

1. What was the greatest danger faced by Carrie and her family during the siege of Atlanta?
2. What experience did they share one night with John Hill Ferguson? (It kept them all awake that night.)
3. Why did Carrie think she might "like the Yankees very well" after they arrived?
4. How was her family able to get around General Sherman's evacuation order?
5. What was their greatest fear during the last days of the Union occupation in November?
6. How were the various family members affected by the war? (How did Carrie celebrate her birthday?)

DOCUMENT 5: Marching Through Georgia (Memoirs of William T. Sherman, Union Commander)

1. Why couldn't Sherman fully share the high spirits of his men as they marched out of Atlanta?
2. Describe the method used by his men to destroy the railroads in Georgia.
3. How did the slaves react to Sherman? Why did he not want them following his soldiers?
4. How did he react when one looting soldier bragged about "foraging liberally on the country"?
5. How did Sherman justify his policy of foraging as he marched through Georgia?
6. Why did he order his men to spare nothing on Howell Cobb's plantation?

DOCUMENT 6: A Soldier on the March (Diary of Rice C. Bull, Union Soldier)

1. How did Bull defend his conduct on the “March to the Sea”?
2. Describe how the foragers were organized and how they did their work each day.
3. What was the main objective of Bull’s unit during the march?
4. Why did the slaves believe at first that Bull and the other men in his unit were black soldiers?
5. How were Bull and his friends able to have a wonderful home-cooked Thanksgiving dinner?
6. Why did they have to move more quickly after entering Georgia’s “Piney-Savannah” region?

DOCUMENT 7: In Sherman’s Path (Account of Judge and Mrs. H.)

1. Why did Union soldiers storm into Judge H.’s plantation home and begin a thorough search?
 2. Describe the rudeness and cruelty some of the soldiers showed to Mrs. H.
 3. Describe the way some soldiers tried to force the Judge to reveal where he had buried his valuables.
 4. Describe how some of the soldiers showed them kindness and tried to help them.
 5. How were their slaves treated by these Union soldiers?
 6. How were they saved from starvation after their plantation was sacked?
5. After the class questions and discussion are completed, each student will write their own diary account “role-playing” a fictitious contemporary of one of the eyewitnesses, such as a fellow soldier in Sam Watkins’ Company H, Carrie Berry’s next-door neighbor, or an officer on Sherman’s staff, etc. These diary entries should contain at least 350 words and should be consistent with the events in the actual diaries and demonstrate an understanding of the feelings of the actual participants in these events. Students may complete this assignment as homework, if they can’t finish it in class.

Optional Activities:

1. Read portions of the creative diary entries in class to encourage class discussion.
2. Revise, edit, and type the diary entries for a more formal writing project.
3. Write a short play about a Southern family in Sherman’s path, etc.

Evaluation:

Grading of the Oral Presentations and Notes

Grading of the Diary Accounts