



Preparing for the Field Trip

This lesson prepares students for a field trip to the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area by assessing what they know, what they are curious about and what they can find out in advance. Information gathered will make the field trip experience more meaningful and personal. This lesson may take one class session.

STANDARDS

- United States History National Standards: Era 5, Civil War and Reconstruction (1850 – 1877); Standards 1, 2, and 3
- Common Core State Standards: English Language Arts, grade 8: Speaking and Listening 1, 4; Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies 2, 9; Writing Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies 7
- College, Career and Civic Life Framework: Dimension 2. History 3. 6-8 and 2.6-8

Note to teachers: If you are studying the Civil War, be sure to take advantage of any pre-existing knowledge your students may have about this region. If you are not studying the Civil War, use this lesson as a general way to prepare for a visit to the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area.

PROCEDURE

1. Explain that you will be visiting a site within the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area. Are students familiar with the site? Does the site relate to anything you are exploring in class?
2. Create three lists on the board: What I know, what I want to know, and what I have learned.
3. Discuss what students know about this region, the site you'll be visiting specifically, and the historical context – think of this as a pre-visit inventory. Brainstorm and record until students cannot think of any more points. Consider organizing data into different categories.
4. Discuss what students want to know generally and also specifically related to the site. Write all of these points in the form of questions and consider organizing into different categories.
5. Assign small groups to research answers to what they'd like to know. Students might explore the Heritage Area website, *Maryland's Heart of the Civil War* film (<http://video.mpt.tv/video/2281227012/>) and www.crossroadsofwar.org website. They can also search online for the historic site(s) they will be visiting. And of course, they can go to the school or local library, use their textbooks or other source books in the classroom. What can they gather in their research? Can they answer any of their questions?
6. Come back together and share. Did their research raise any additional questions? Did it answer any questions? If there is new information, note it in the columns. What remains in terms of the kinds of information they want to learn? Consider ranking the top five questions students have and sending this list (along with a brief introduction of your group) to the site you will be visiting. This information will help them understand your expectations, what you are curious about and what you may know about the historic site.

EXTENSIONS

Create a worksheet to guide students' experience at the site that might contain the questions they developed. Then, when you return from the field trip, revisit this process. Did students discover any new information, did they get the answers they were looking for? Did going to the site itself offer any additional insight to what they were able to research in advance?

CONTENT RESOURCES

- Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area website: <http://www.heartofthecivilwar.org/>
- *Maryland's Heart of the Civil War* film: <http://video.mpt.tv/video/2281227012/>
- *A Collection of Commentaries* companion flipbook: <http://bit.ly/cwflipbook>
- Crossroads of War website: www.crossroadsofwar.org