

Voices of Bull Run

Description of the Minilesson:

Using the image of a Civil War artifact, students will be guided to draw conclusions about the nature and use of the object and what people might have been connected to the story that object tells.

Purpose of the Minilesson:

Students will draw conclusions from information they have found through deciphering a primary source.

Time Allotment: 45 minutes

Materials Needed:

- Computer with Internet access
- Projection device or printed copies of the image (one per student) from <http://www.smithsonianlegacies.si.edu/objectdescription.cfm?ID=34>

TEACHER NOTE: *Right click on the image and click “View Image” to open a new window showing the image without text or save the image. This can be displayed on a projection device or printed.*

Background for Teachers:

Primary sources are the pieces of evidence that historians use to learn about people, events, and everyday life in the past. Just like detectives, historians look at clues, sift through evidence, and reach conclusions. Students can use primary sources, too. By focusing on the evidence itself, students can get a glimpse into the past beyond what a textbook can provide. Introducing your classes to primary sources and making them a regular part of classroom lessons help student develop and refine cognitive, investigative, deductive reasoning, and problem-solving skills.

Introduction for Students:

Historians study objects in order to understand history. Because many objects are the products of human workmanship, objects tell something about the people who designed, made, and used them. Objects alone will not tell us the whole story, but they help us to understand parts of the story that other sources cannot. Like other primary sources, objects must be studied carefully and critically.



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Procedure:

1. Explain to students that there are multiple answers when observing and analyzing objects.
TEACHER NOTE: During the discussion accept all ideas from students, but encourage them to provide evidence for their answers.
2. Use only the object image to guide students to answer as many questions as possible based on what they see.
 - a. **What are your first impressions of this object?**
 - i. Does it remind you of anything else?
 - b. **Physical Features:**
 - i. What do you think it is made of? Why do you think this material was chosen? What is the texture and color?
 - ii. If you held it, do you think it would be heavy or light? Is it intact, or does it look like parts are missing? Is it clean or dirty? Does it look old or new?
 - c. **Construction:**
 - i. Is it handmade or made by machine? What makes you think that?
 - d. **Function:**
 - i. What are some possible uses for this kind of object?
 - e. **Who may be connected with the object?**
 - i. What type of person might have used this object?
3. After the students have answered as many of the questions as possible and offered ideas of what the object might be, read from *Bull Run* pages 33–34 about Judah Jenkins.
4. Share the Object Background Information sheet, either by reading aloud or distributing copies for students to read. Then lead students in a discussion focusing on:
 - a. How did our predictions of the object’s identity match up to reality? Did any of your predictions come close?
 - b. Do we know who made it?
 - c. Do we know who used it?
 - d. What did it mean to others?
 - e. Where might this object have been obtained?
 - f. Why is it important to collect and preserve objects?

TEACHER NOTE: If you would like additional information about teaching with primary sources, please review “Engaging Students with Primary Sources,” a resource guide for teachers at (<http://historyexplorer.si.edu/PrimarySources.pdf>).





Object Background Information

Fragment of Confederate flag cut down by Colonel Elmer Ephraim Ellsworth, 1861

The day after Virginia voted to secede from the Union, eight regiments of Union infantry were sent across the Potomac River to seize Arlington Heights and Alexandria. Colonel Ellsworth, the leader of the Eleventh New York Volunteer Regiment, saw a Confederate flag flying over the Marshall House hotel. Ellsworth charged up the stairs and cut down the flag, only to be shot by James Jackson, the hotel proprietor, who was then killed by Francis Brownell, one of Ellsworth's soldiers. The incident electrified Washington, D.C. Ellsworth lay in state at the White House, Brownell received the Medal of Honor, and everyone wanted relics of the Marshall House incident. Over the years the Smithsonian acquired Jackson's shotgun and Brownell's rifle and Medal of Honor as well as this piece of the flag in 1961.

