Tuscaloosa during the Civil War Newspaper Project

Lesson Plan Grade Levels: 4th, 5th, and/or 10th grades

Introduction: Students will work in pairs to create a “newspaper” about Tuscaloosa, Alabama during the Civil War. The newspaper should focus on one day (i.e. April 3, 1865). This activity will serve as a supplement to a fieldtrip to the Gorgas House. The Gorgas House is located on the University of Alabama campus, and was the first original structure to be built. After being used for various reasons, it was turned into a faculty residence. The Gorgas House was one of four original campus buildings to survive the burning of the University during the Civil War in 1865. Even if students are unable to visit the Gorgas House, there are a number of resources that can be found on their website-- http://gorgashouse.ua.edu/

Guiding Questions:

- What was the role of Tuscaloosa during the Civil War?
- What political, social, and economic changes occurred in Tuscaloosa after the Civil War ended?

Learning Objectives:

- Students will be able to analyze primary sources.
- Students will be able to identify the role of Tuscaloosa during the Civil War.
- Students will be able to examine events of the Civil War and then determine how our society today is affected.

Content Standards:

SS(4) Alabama Studies #8. Explain Alabama's role in and economic support of the Civil War.

SS(5) United States Studies: Beginnings to 1877 #12. Identify causes of the Civil War from the northern and southern viewpoints.

SS(10) United States History to 1877 #10. Describe how the course, character, and effects of the Civil War influenced the United States.

Background: Students should be familiar with the causes and battles of the Civil War. They also need experience with typing and reading/analyzing primary sources.

Here are helpful websites for teachers and students to use:

http://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/saxon/saxon.html


http://acumen.lib.ua.edu/u0001_2007001_0000437#item%3Du0001_2007001_0000437%3B
Lesson Preparation Instructions: Teacher should familiarize students with how a current newspaper is constructed. By using examples, the teacher should display captions, what articles look like, how photographs are used, and how other types of columns differ from articles. Students should have learned about the causes and the battles of the Civil War prior to this lesson.

Lesson Activities: This activity would occur at the end of the unit. It could be a culminating activity or another type of formal assessment (instead of taking a test). Students will work in pairs according to ability and creativity levels. Both students will have to fill the following roles: researcher, recorder, and designer for the newspaper. As students work on their newspaper, their articles should be informative, but also creative and original. They should not be plagiarized and should be easy to read. The format for the newspaper should include the following below:

Student Instructions
You and a partner are to first thoroughly investigate, read, and study various materials including primary sources and your textbook. You will then create a minimum of FOUR pages of newspaper articles/photos about Tuscaloosa during the Civil War.
- Advertisements (At least TWO)
- Letters to the Editor (At least THREE)
- Obituaries (At least TWO)
- Advice column (At least TWO)
- Photos of Tuscaloosa with captions (At least FOUR)
- Weather (for a week)
- Local News (At least THREE)
- Comic strip (At least ONE)
- Articles about the University of Alabama (At least TWO)
Articles about the Civil War (at a national level) (At least **FOUR**)

- Spotlight on a general (either Union or Confederate)
- Interview with a Confederate soldier (Give background, his reasons for fighting, his experiences during the Civil War)

- **The front page of your paper should have the title of the paper.**

**Other Reminders for the Newspaper:**

- All articles must have correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

- Articles must be typed or neatly printed. You may paste articles on construction paper or use index cards, or typing paper. The newspaper must have COLOR.

- Each article/writing needs to have at least **FIVE to SEVEN** sentences.

- **Extra Credit:** You will receive extra points if the photos used in the newspaper are actual ones (not drawn)

**Extending the lesson:** For an outside class assignment, students will create a decorative scrapbook that embraces the significance/importance of Tuscaloosa during the Civil War. It will feature pages that display buildings and political/historical events that showcase pivotal moments related to the Civil War. One each page, a summary of the item’s role should be given including an explanation of what it is and why is it important. Also, at least ONE picture (an actual one) should be included of the building or political/historical event.

**Time Required:** Each Day listed below includes a 50-75 minute class period.
Day 1- Engage students, assign groups, and begin research.
Day 2- Continue research and record information.
Day 3- Continue research, record information, and begin compiling information.
Day 4- Finish compiling information and finalize the product.
Day 5- Finalize presentation, script, and practice within group.
Day 6- Presentations and reflection.

**Subject Areas:** Alabama History, Social Studies (4th, 5th, and/or 10th grades)

**Skills:**
- Students will analyze primary sources including documents and photographs.
- Students will learn how to research using a variety of resources.
- Students will be able to construct their own edition of a newspaper based on the research that they collected.

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