

The Civil War in Art

TEACHING & LEARNING THROUGH CHICAGO COLLECTIONS



Lesson Plan

The Second American Revolution, Frame by Frame

Winner: 3rd place, 2012 Civil War in Art Lesson Plan Contest

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Grade/Subject: 10th grade, United States History

Schedule: Five, 50-minute class periods (can be adjusted to suit students' reading levels)

Lesson Summary:

During this lesson, students will investigate concepts of patriotism, loss, and revolution through the lens of photography. This lesson will focus on how the war was documented through photography, which was revolutionary in 1861. Students will analyze photographs as a means of understanding the past. They will use photos from the historical record to enhance their reading of and bolster their understanding of other primary sources from the Civil War era. At the end of the lesson, students will understand the prominent role photography played in the way the war was communicated, received, and remembered.

Artworks on Which Lesson is Based:



Object 1

Timothy O'Sullivan

[*A Harvest of Death, Gettysburg*](#), 1863

Albumen print from collodion wet plate negative, 5 13/16 x 8 13/16 in.

The Art Institute of Chicago, Gift of Mrs. Everett Kovler, 1967.330.36



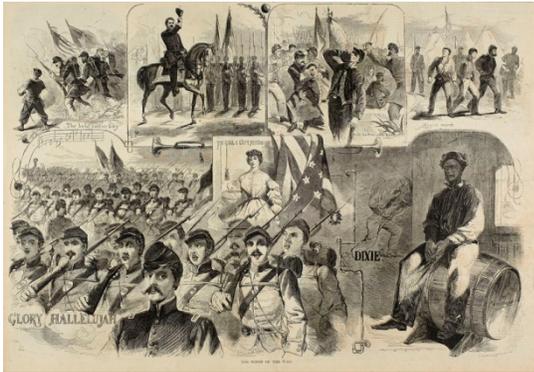
Object 2

Unknown artist

[Portrait of John F.P. Robie](#), c. 1861

Ambrotype in brass mat and paperboard case, 3¼ x 2¾ in., case 3½ x 3 1/8 in.

Chicago History Museum, ICHI-26134



Object 3

Winslow Homer (1836-1910)

[The Songs of the War](#), 1861

Harper's Weekly November 23, 1861

Wood engraving on paper, 13 3/4 x 20 1/16 in. (image); 15 3/4 x 21 3/4 in. (sheet)

The Art Institute of Chicago, Gift of Arthur and Hilda Wenig, 2001.781

Big or Main Ideas Students Will Understand:

1. How did the war, and specifically, its carnage, change America? Over 752,000 Americans died during the war. The world had never seen such carnage, how did death on this magnitude affect the nation?
2. How did the advent of photography change American society? Although the medium was in its infancy during the war, and the act of making a photograph and reproducing it was slow and complex (nothing like the immediacy of digital photography and Instagram today), photography had a profound impact. It brought the Civil War back to the homefront and enabled soldiers to carry pictures of their loved ones into battle. How did the medium change Americans' perceptions of life and death?

National Standards and Lesson-Specific Objectives:

Standards	Objectives—Students will...
<p>Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts, Reading: Literature</p> <p>RL.9-10.7. Analyze the representation of a subject or a key scene in two different artistic mediums, including what is emphasized or absent in each treatment (e.g., Auden’s “Musée des Beaux Arts” and Breughel’s Landscape with the Fall of Icarus).</p> <p>Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts, Literacy in History/Social Studies:</p> <p>R.L. in History 9-10.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.</p> <p>R.L. in History 9-10.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.</p> <p>R.L. in History 9-10.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.</p> <p>R.L. in History 9-10.5 Analyze how a text uses structure to emphasize key points or advance an explanation or analysis.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I can analyze how a subject is represented in certain artistic mediums and, based on my analysis, comment on the art’s relevance to a moment in history. (RL.9-10.7) 2. I can use textual evidence, like dates or origins (context) to dissect a primary or secondary source. (R.L in History. 9-10.1) 3. I can determine the meaning of words and phrases using context clues in a text. (R.L. 9-10.4) 4. I can identify the main idea of a primary or secondary source. (R.L. in History 9-10.2) 5. I can summarize the key events of a source that shows how I arrived at my main idea. (R.L. in History 9-10.2) 6. I can use structure to help explain the key points within a text. (R.L. in History 9-10.5)
<p>National Standards for History in Schools</p> <p>Standard 2 The course and character of the Civil War and its effects on the American people.</p> <p>2B The student understands the social experience of the war on the battlefield and homefront.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Based on their reading of primary source material and their analysis of historical era photography, students will be able to evaluate the war’s effects on American lives, socially, economically, and psychologically.

Vocabulary Students Will Learn:

See Civil War in Art Glossary, <http://www.civilwarinart.org/glossary> for definitions and information.

Art Terms

- Albumen print
- Ambrotype
- Composition
- Daguerreotype
- Exposure Time
- Foreground/Background
- Genre
- Ideal
- Landscape
- Medium
- Photography
- Portrait
- Romanticism
- Symbolism

Historical People and Places

- Abraham Lincoln
- Alexander Gardner
- Battle of Gettysburg
- Mathew Brady
- Samuel Miller
- Timothy O'Sullivan

Other terms:

- **Battle of Antietam:** "also called Battle of Sharpsburg, (September 17, 1862), a decisive engagement in the American Civil War (1861–65) that halted the Confederate advance on Maryland for the purpose of gaining military supplies."¹
- **Causality:** ". . . person lost through death, wounds, injury, sickness, internment, or capture or through being missing in action."²
- **Civilian:** A person who is not part of the military.

Key Information for Understanding the Artworks:

About the Time Period

In various correspondences before and during the war, future President James Garfield referred to the American Civil War as a sort of "Revolution."³ A revolution is a break, a huge and often times traumatic shift. So, one must ask: What did Garfield mean by "revolution?" A revolution of what?

Ideas about life, death, and the afterlife have occupied people, not just Americans, forever; but Americans' ideas—particularly about death, and what that means—changed dramatically in the last century. Dr. Drew Gilpin Faust argues in her book, *Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War*, that the Civil War brought about this change—in a sense it ushered in a much more "modern" philosophy about mortality.

¹ "Battle of Antietam," Encyclopedia Britannica, 2013, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/27957/Battle-of-Antietam>.

² "Casualty," definition 3a, Meriam-Webster Incorporated, 2013, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/casualty>.

³ McPherson, James. *Abraham Lincoln and the Second American Revolution* (Oxford University Press 1991), 3-4.

While Northerners and Southerners disagreed about many things (such as the Constitutionality of slavery or which side was at fault for the war), they shared some attitudes in common about the war and life and death:

- Both Northerners and Southerners believed that the war would end quickly; yet it dragged on for 4 years. At the start, the Union army was made up of ninety-day volunteers! When the two armies engaged at First Bull Run, Washingtonians trekked across the Potomac River to have a picnic and watch the two sides fight.
- Both populaces underestimated the toll the American Civil War would take on the nation. Over 752,000 Americans died in the war.
- Few civilians in the North or South were untouched by loss. Most everyone had a family member, neighbor, or acquaintance that was injured or died in the war.
- Ultimately, the war changed the way the citizenry viewed death. The impact and meaning of war's death toll went beyond the sheer numbers who died. Death's significance for the Civil War generation arose as well from its violation of prevailing assumptions about life's proper end— about who should die, when and where and under what circumstances.⁴
- Before the onset of the conflict, people had this idea of what death meant and how people were supposed to die— the “good death, ” which according to historian Drew Gilpin Faust occurred at home, surrounded by family, with readiness and an acceptance of salvation.⁵ The war changed all of that; it changed the way people saw death, God, and life. The war's totality put into flux people's very idea of existence.

About the Artwork

Object 1: [A Harvest of Death, Gettysburg](#), 1863

The somber mood and stark, lonely scene in this photograph reveal the death and destruction that resulted from the Battle of Gettysburg, fought July 1–3, 1863, in and around the small town of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. It is considered a turning point in the war and was one of its bloodiest battles. This photograph depicts the aftermath of the fighting. The photographer has captured this “harvest of death” as the early morning haze burns off the landscape. In the 1860s photography work was awkward and conditions were difficult. Bulky cameras, glass plates, and chemicals needed to be carried on site. Processing took place in cramped tents or special wagons that served as portable darkrooms. Timothy O'Sullivan played a key role in documenting the conflict.⁶

This photograph was published in a book right after the war ended, [Gardner's Photographic Sketch Book of the War](#) (1865–66). No more than two hundred copies of this book were produced.⁷

⁴ Faust, Drew Gilpin, *This Republic of Suffering*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008), Preface xii. To see local library availability, see www.worldcat.org.

⁵ Faust, Drew Gilpin. “Death and Dying.” *National Park Service*
http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/travel/national_cemeteries/death.html

⁶ Civil War in Art website: <http://www.civilwarinart.org/items/show/84>

⁷ Cornell University website: <http://rmc.library.cornell.edu/7milVol/volume.htm>

Object 2: [Portrait of John F.P. Robie](#), c. 1861

John F. P. Robie, featured wearing his uniform and carrying a snare drum, was only thirteen years old when he joined a New Hampshire Infantry Regiment, and he was not alone. He was one of more than 1,500 boys under the age of fourteen to go to war! In addition to helping soldiers march in rhythm, drummer boys like Robie used various drum calls to send messages and signals to the troops. Some were wounded in the course of these duties. This photograph might have been made right before John Robie left home. Although this photograph is meant to show the dignity of the war, it is also a chilling reminder that even children were caught up in the Civil War effort.⁸

Object 3: [The Songs of the War](#), 1861

This print was published in *Harper's Weekly* in November of 1861, when it was still believed the Union would win a quick victory. Seven songs are depicted in the image, each reflecting different aspects of the war. The drummer boy in the upper left image encourages the troops in battle in "The Bold Soldier Boy," while the rows of soldiers below are shown marching to and singing the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" (Glory Hallelujah). To remind the public of one of the reasons for the war, the elimination of slavery, Homer included "Dixie" on the bottom right. Dixie was the rallying cry of the South, yet remained a popular song in the North as well, and is illustrated by an African American sitting on a barrel marked "contraband" to indicate his status as an ex-slave. Next to the drummer boy, the man on horseback is General George McClellan—appointed General in Chief of the Union Armies in the same month this image was published—and he is linked to the song "Hail to the Chief." Next to McClellan are two scenes that show the rowdier side of camp life: a soldier takes a swig from his canteen as a fistfight breaks out behind him in the spirit of the song, "Well Be Free and Easy Still." The consequences of the drunken behavior are revealed to the right as the offenders are escorted out of camp to the tune of the "Rogue's March." The only woman in the image is "The Girl I Left Behind," reminding *Harper's* readers that every soldier had loved ones they left to fight for their cause.

About the Artists

Winslow Homer: "American painter and artist of the Civil War period. Homer used his art to document contemporary American outdoor life and to explore humankind's spiritual and physical relationship to nature. He had been trained in commercial illustration in Boston before the war. During the conflict he was attached to the Union's Army of the Potomac and made drawings of what he saw. Many of these were published in the popular magazine *Harper's Weekly*. After the war, Homer became more interested in painting, using both watercolors and oils. He painted children, farm life, sports, and the sea."⁹

Timothy O'Sullivan: "He first worked as an apprentice to photographer and businessman Mathew Brady then joined the studio of Alexander Gardner. Forty-four of O'Sullivan's photographs, including this one, were published in 1865–66 in *Gardner's Photographic Sketch Book of the War*, one of the first published collections of Civil War photographs."¹⁰

Civil War Photographers: Photography was only twenty years old when the Civil War began. Because it produced vivid records of camp life and battlegrounds, it forever changed the way people thought about what soldiers were going through. Taking a picture in the field was a difficult project. Photographers, or "operators" as they were called, had to go through an elaborate ritual—the "wet-plate" process—just to get their glass plates ready to put in the

⁸ Civil War in Art website: <http://civilwarinart.org/items/show/111>

⁹ Civil War in Art website: <http://www.civilwarinart.org/glossary#H>

¹⁰ Civil War in Art website: <http://www.civilwarinart.org/glossary#o>

camera. This was done in a wagon that held all of the required chemicals. Because cameras were large and difficult to move, and the necessary exposure time for a photograph was so long, it was impossible for photographers to capture battles as they happened because the images would be blurry. Furthermore, it was simply too dangerous to take pictures during the action of battle. But this new medium powerfully documented the aftermath of battles.¹¹

Resources and Materials Needed for Lesson:

- Printouts of image and accompanying text for *Portrait of John F.P. Robie*: <http://www.civilwarinart.org/items/show/111>
- Printouts of image and accompanying text for Timothy O’Sullivan’s *A Harvest of Death, Gettysburg*: <http://www.civilwarinart.org/items/show/84>
- Printouts of text of the Military Experience essay from *The Civil War in Art*: http://www.civilwarinart.org/exhibits/show/military_experience/introduction
- *New York Times* article, “Brady’s Photographs: The Dead at Antietam,” October 20, 1862, <http://www.nytimes.com/1862/10/20/news/brady-s-photographs-pictures-of-the-dead-at-antietam.html?pagewanted=all>
- Access to the epilogue of Drew Gilpin Faust’s *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War*¹²
- Printouts of *Pittsburgh Post* article, “The War Begun—The Duty of American Citizens,” April 16, 1861, http://www.historians.org/projects/SecessionEditorials/Editorials/PittsburghPost_04_15_61.htm.
- Printouts of essay from the Metropolitan Museum of Art website, “Photography in the Civil War,” http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/phcw/hd_phcw.htm,

Classroom Activities Aligned with Standards and Objectives:

Day 1: *Attitudes towards the war: how did people feel about the war when it began? Did these sentiments change over the course of the war? If so, how did they change and why?*

Students will read a copy of the *Pittsburgh Post* article from April 16, 1861, “The War Begun—The Duty of American Citizens,” available online [here](#).

1. Students will read the two-page editorial and take close-read notes (text annotations). Students will mark particular passages that startled them, surprised them, bemused them, and made them wary—any sort of reaction. Students will also mark any passage, phrase, or word that illustrates patriotism, excitement, optimism, etc. Students will need to bring their notes to class on Day 2 for small-group shared inquiry.
2. Based on reading, students will answer a series of text-directed questions below. Direct students to find the answers in the text.)

Pittsburgh Post Questions...

- a. What event is the author describing in the first five paragraphs? How does he

¹¹ Civil War in Art website: “Photography and the War”: http://www.civilwarinart.org/exhibits/show/military_experience/introduction/nonconflictsglug

¹² Drew Gilpin Faust. *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008), 266-271. To see local library availability, see www.worldcat.org.

- sound? Cite evidence in the text for your answer.
- b. For the author, what has *changed*? Describe the change that has occurred.
- c. According to the author, what is the duty of American citizens? Why?
- d. Throughout the article, the author uses a great deal of patriotic imagery. Cite three examples and explain why he uses this type of imagery.
- e. What's the author's intent?

3. Teacher nominates leaders for each group of five students. These students will lead their groups in literary discussion of the *Pittsburgh Post* article on the next day of class, using text directed questions as basis.

Day 2: Small Group Shared Inquiry of Pittsburgh Dispatch "The Civil War Has Begun—The Duty of American Citizens"

Small groups conduct shared inquiry (in-depth analysis and discussion) of the *Pittsburgh Dispatch* Article.

- a. Leaders will introduce each question and initiate discussion. Students' responses will guide groups. Conversations will be sustained by interpretations of the text.
- b. Groups will have a half hour to conduct inquiry.
- c. Groups will turn in question/reflection sheets

Class will come back together and take out composition books or paper to record the answers to the question below:

Teacher will prompt students with the question: *Why do we take pictures and make sketches?* Students will have five minutes to brainstorm using the following: idea triggers...

- a. Memory
- b. Memorializing
- c. Documenting

Students will share their ideas in small groups.

Groups will then share their ideas with the class.

Students will be presented with two Civil War images: a photograph, *Portrait of John F. P. Robie* and an engraving, *The Songs of the War*, both from c. 1861, the beginning of the war.

Students will think about whether and how these images relate to the *Pittsburgh Dispatch* article, "The Civil War Has Begun—The Duty of American Citizens." Students articulate how these images reflect some of the same sentiments presented in the article.

Students will read background information about the *Portrait of John F. P. Robie* from the website civilwarinart.org and answer picture analysis questions below:

Questions:

1. Though it is hard to imagine sending a thirteen-year old to war today, it was not unheard of during Robie's time. What do you think made Robie and young boys like him want to enlist in the war effort?
2. Describe the expression on this boy's face. How do you think he was feeling? What kind of impression do you think he wanted to make with this photograph?
3. What about the photograph's case suggests that this was a valuable keepsake?"¹³

¹³ Civil War In Art Website: <http://civilwarinart.org/items/show/111>

4. At what point in his war experience might this picture have been taken? How do you know?

Big Questions:

1. What do you think this portrait's owner was trying to remember or memorialize about John F. P. Robie?
2. Does the *Portrait of John F. P. Robie* relate to the sentiments of the *Pittsburgh Dispatch* article? If so, how? What about "What do you think this portrait's owner was trying to remember or memorialize about Robie?"
3. In what ways does the image convey emotion? Provide evidence from the image in your answer.

Homework:

Students will read the essay "Photography in the Civil War," from the Metropolitan Museum of Art website: http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/phcw/hd_phcw.htm, Students will answer questions based on the article.

Day 3: Presentation of Timothy O'Sullivan's *A Harvest of Death, Gettysburg*

1. Quick whole-class debrief of "Photography in the Civil War" Students will share their responses to homework questions.

2. Students will each receive printouts of Timothy O'Sullivan's photograph *A Harvest of Death, Gettysburg* along with secondary source material about the battle and battlefield photography from civilwarinart.org:

http://www.civilwarinart.org/exhibits/show/military_experience/introduction/

Based on the photo, students will complete the following:

- a. Close read of O'Sullivan's photograph, answering the following questions:
 - Look closely at this work of art for a few minutes and then we'll talk about what you see.
 - So what did you see? What's going on in the image/work of art?

Help students analyze the artist's visual strategies. Note to teacher: Help direct students' attention to things you want them to notice.

- What did you notice first and why?
- How does the artist show us what's important?
- How does your eye travel through the picture?
- What vantage point is shown here? Does it seem that you are looking up at or down at the scene or subject? Does the artist provide a close-up or distant view? How does the vantage point affect your ideas about the artwork?
- What's the overall mood of the image?
- What's the message of the image? Support your answer with evidence from the photograph.

- b. Read the text for *A Harvest of Death, Gettysburg*: <http://civilwarinart.org/items/show/84>

- c. Students will read Alexander Gardner's (who published Timothy O'Sullivan's image) commentary on the photograph, *A Harvest of Death, Gettysburg* (provided below), and take close-read notes:

Slowly, over the misty fields of Gettysburg—as all reluctant to expose their ghastly horrors to the light—came the sunless morn, after the retreat by [General Robert E.] Lee's broken army. Through the shadowy vapors, it was, indeed, a "harvest of death" that was presented; hundreds and thousands of torn Union and rebel soldiers—although many of the former were already interred—strewed the now quiet fighting ground, soaked by the rain, which for two days had drenched the country with its fitful showers. (Alexander Gardner, *Gardner's Photographic Sketch Book of the War*)

d. Discuss answers to the questions below in small inquiry groups:

O'Sullivan A Harvest of Death, Gettysburg Questions:

1. How is O'Sullivan's *A Harvest of Death, Gettysburg* different from the images that we saw yesterday? Does his work reflect the sentiments from the *Pittsburgh Dispatch*? If so, in what ways? If not, why?
2. If a goal for photography was to remember or to create a memory, why would O'Sullivan take a picture like this?

e. To help students understand the impact of photographs showing the Civil War dead, students will read a *New York Times* review of an exhibition of images that document an earlier battle (the war's bloodiest), at Antietam. Alexander Gardner was hired to take these photographs by Mathew Brady, who published and exhibited them under his own name in October 1862.

Students will do the following:

- a. Read the article and conduct close-read notes (text annotation)
- b. Answer analysis questions below for homework (due next day for shared inquiry)

NYT: Brady's Photographs: "The Dead at Antietam" Questions for students:

1. According to the author of the review, how did New Yorkers respond to the photographs of Antietam?
2. How did the photographs change the North's perception of the war in 1862?
3. For the author, why is Brady's exhibition so important for the public to see?
4. For the author, why are the photographs life-changing?
5. Does the article help you understand anything about Timothy O'Sullivan's photograph, *A Harvest of Death, Gettysburg* taken at the Battle of Gettysburg in July 1863 (nine months after the battle of Antietam)? Please explain.

Day 4: Shared Inquiry, of The New York Times article "Brady's Photographs: The Dead at Antietam"

Based on the previous night's homework, students, in groups of three, will conduct a shared inquiry of the *New York Times* review of Brady's work as it compares to their ideas from their analysis of O'Sullivan's photograph of the Gettysburg dead. (See O'Sullivan analysis questions and Brady reading analysis questions)

Homework:

Students will read the epilogue of Dr. Drew Gilpin Faust's *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War*. Students will take close read notes and will focus on "change." Students will receive five guided questions, which will help in their understanding of the epilogue.

Faust's *This Republic of Suffering* Reading Questions:

1. How did the war change Americans' attitudes towards death? (paragraphs 1-5)
2. Why did the war put into question life's meaning?
3. What changed about the country's national identity? (paragraph 7). Why? In particular, why was the war's carnage, a "sacred sacrifice," as Frederick Douglass believed the war to be?
4. What was the meaning of the war? (paragraph 9)
5. Why does the author capitalize "Dead" in paragraph 10? What did the Dead come to symbolize?
6. How did remembrance of the war change at the turn of the century? Why is this shift significant?
7. Based on Faust's epilogue, why did so many people call the Civil War, the "Second American Revolution"? Were they right to do so? Why?

Day 5: Socratic Dialogue: Impact of war: Excerpts from Gilpin Faust's epilogue, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* and New York Times review of Brady's photographs, and Winslow Homer's *The Songs of the War*

Using the O'Sullivan photograph, the *New York Times* review, the Gilpin epilogue, and the Homer print *The Songs of the War*, students will discuss what they have learned in a Socratic dialogue. They will discuss the impact that death, and images of the dead, made on the nation during the course of the war. The teacher can craft a question or series of questions for the students to discuss.

Dialogue directions for leader (you can find more detailed instructions here:

<http://www.ion.uillinois.edu/resources/otai/Socratic.asp>)

- Begin with a question that is concrete and based on concrete experience that the students can all relate to. The teacher can craft this question or a series of questions for the students to discuss.
- Through their responses, students show their understanding of the question.
- Students provide possible answers or resolutions to the question.
- Guide the students in crafting subsidiary questions based upon their responses.
- Each subsidiary question is explored until there is a general consensus on its meaning and resolution.
- A final resolution based upon subsidiary responses is reached concerning the initial guiding question.

Assessment:**Writing Assessment:**

Using the photographs, reviews, and documents from the unit, analyze how and why attitudes about the war changed over the course of the conflict.

Extension Projects:

- a) Based on their analysis of the Civil War and the importance of photographic documentation, students will select a contemporary topic, which politicians have failed to resolve, e.g. poverty, social stratification, environmental degradation, suburban sprawl, drug abuse, or urban renewal.
 - Students will take pictures that correspond to the issue that they've selected. Their photographs will be presented in an exhibit along with descriptors of each piece and how they reflect the topic that the students selected.

- Students will write a photo mission statement, addressing their subject matter, why they chose that topic for documentation, and how they hope that their photos will bring greater awareness to their topic (Students are hoping for the Brady reviewer's *New York Times* reaction to Brady photo's importance).

b) Comparing wartime photography:

- Students will answer the following question: has wartime photography's purpose changed since O'Sullivan's *A Harvest of Death, Gettysburg*? If so, how and why? If not, why not? Students should examine at least three different eras (Civil War, World War II, Vietnam). How has the medium changed? What has stayed the same throughout? Based on their comparison, students will examine wartime photography of the twenty-first century, particularly, how the public gets access to images of war. Have the consequences of war become more or less accessible in today's digital age? Case studies to use include, but are not limited to: Abu Ghraib, Afghanistan, the Iraq War, conflicts in Africa, the drug wars on the Mexican border.