



Lesson Plan

Letters Home

Grades

4, 5, 6

Subjects

Language Arts, Social Studies, Writing

Time allotted

60 minutes

Setting

Classroom

Group size

25 to 30 students

Skills

Correcting errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, and writing

Methods

Students will use language arts skills to correct a soldier's letter, then write imagined replies.

Materials

Paper, pencil, and copy of Jacob Early's letters

Keywords

Brigade

Furlow

Objectives

At the end of the activity, students will be able to:

- *Discuss feelings of a soldier during the Civil War, and list some of the hardships of a soldier's life.*
- *Describe the conditions on a battlefield and gain knowledge about the Battle of Stones River.*
- *Correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors, according to current standards of written English.*
- *Write a letter of reply using the correct format.*



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Jacob Early lived in the community of Blue Lick, near Lima, Ohio. He enrolled as a private in the 99th Ohio Volunteer Infantry in August of 1862 for a term of three years. His regiment fought all across the country in battles such as, Stones River, Chickamauga, Chattanooga, Kennesaw Mountain and the Carolinas.

Throughout it all, he kept in touch with his wife Sarah. The letters that he wrote to her describe his everyday life as a soldier. They appear poorly written by today's standards, but are actually typical for their time.

Public education did not become popular until the 1830's. Then it spread rapidly from New England to the south and west. The United States was slowly breaking out of a craft apprenticeship style of learning and education was being supported by church denominations. By the 1850's, four-fifths of the United States, including slaves, were literate. Most children ages five to nineteen attended school for three to six months a year.

Rural children often attended less because they needed to help at home with chores. Many times, they just went long enough to learn a few basic skills and their writing reflects many phonetically spelled words.

Girls in general attended less than boys did because it was not deemed necessary in the early 1800's. Attitudes had changed by the 1850's and girls were admitted to elementary schools but secondary and colleges were still male dominated.

ACTIVITIES

- Teacher may choose to "set the stage" by having students project themselves into the role of Jacob Early.
- Distribute letters for silent reading and ask the students to rewrite Jacob Early's letter, correcting all misspelled words, errors in grammar, and punctuation mistakes.
- Class discussion comparing and contrasting letters. Discuss Jacob's conditions and hardships he writes about in his letters.
- Compare education of children during 19th century to today's education system.
- Students will write a letter of reply from the point of view of Jonathan or Sarah.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

- Skit or Reader's Theater presentations for class.
- Have Students write poems or letters about the Battle of Stones River.
- Have students write a journal entry as a soldier during the Battle of Stones River.

RESOURCES

Early, Jacob. *Letters Home: The Personal Side of the American Civil War*. Robert A. and Gloria S. Driver, Roseburg, OR, 1992.

McPherson, James. *Battle Cry of Freedom*. Oxford University Press, 1988.