



Unit 2 Project Civil War Letters

Assignment Instructions

The Unit 2 Project involves two steps. In Step 1, you will read background material and watch some video clips about the Civil War. Use the buttons on the web site for each letter to find links to the material you need to read and the videos you need to watch. You should plan to spend approximately two hours reading and viewing the materials for each letter. You can do this at anytime during Unit 2 of the course.

In Step 2, you will log on to Blackboard and write your letters. Blackboard will assign you a character to play. You will be either a Northerner or a Southerner. You can imagine whatever background you want for your character. Type your letters into the space provided. All three letters are due on Friday, October 9 by 11:59pm. There is no time limit for writing the letters and you may check in and out of Blackboard as many times as you like in order to complete the project.

You might find it helpful to first log on to Blackboard and find out what character you have been assigned. Then log out and spend some time thinking about the letters your character would write. Type a draft of the letters on your computer and then when they are done, log back into Blackboard. You can just cut and paste the draft on your computer into the assignment.

The letters you write should react to events at the specific time during the war identified.

Letter # 1

March 1861: On the Brink of War.

Imagine how your character would react to the crisis facing the nation as President Abraham Lincoln takes office in March of 1861. The differences between the northern and southern regions of the country are about to erupt into war. In his inaugural address, the new President has pleaded with the nation to remain united, but several southern states have declared themselves an independent nation.

Preparation. Before you begin writing Letter #1, gather some background information by reading, viewing, and listening to the following materials:

* Watch a clip about Abraham Lincoln's inaugural from the documentary film, *A House Divided*.

* Read the text of Lincoln's First Inaugural Address. Give special attention to the highlighted areas.

* Visit the Gilder Lerhman Institute of American History's online exhibit, "Battle Lines: Letters from America's Wars." Listen to the letters by Braxton Bragg and Henry Hunt.

* Watch a clip from the documentary film, *The Civil War*, about the letter written by Sullivan Bellew to his wife on the eve of the first battle of the war.

Letter # 2

July 1863: The Transforming Experience of War. A great battle has just taken place at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Thousands have died, thousands more wounded. What many people hoped would be a short war has turned out to be much longer and much more destructive than anyone could have anticipated. Imagine how your character would react to the prolonged warfare and the terrible carnage of battle.

Preparation. Before you begin writing Letter # 2, gather some background information by reading, viewing, and listening to the following materials:

* Watch a clip about the Battle of Gettysburg from the documentary film, *The Civil War*.

* Read an essay about what life was like for the soldiers who fought in the Civil War.

* Read an essay about life on the home front during the war.

* Visit the Gilder Lerhman Institute of American History's online exhibit, "Battle Lines: Letters from America's Wars." Listen to the letters by Gustave Cook and David V. Smith.

* Visit the Gettysburg National Military Park's online exhibit on "Camp Life."

Letter # 3

April 1865: War's End. The South has surrendered. You have just heard news that President Lincoln has been assassinated. Imagine how your character would react to the end of a long, horrible war and the challenges of reuniting the nation in peace. How would you look back on all that you and the nation have been through? What

hopes and fears do you have for the future?

Preparation. Before you begin writing Letter #3, gather some background information by reading, viewing, and listening to the following materials:

* Watch a clip about the end of the war from the documentary film, *The Civil War*.

* Visit the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History's online exhibit, "Battle Lines: Letters from America's Wars." Listen to the letters by Robert E. Lee and Lysander Wheeler.

* Watch a mini-lecture on the Gettysburg Address.

* Watch a clip about the reaction to Lincoln's death from the documentary film, *The Lincoln Assassination*.

* Watch a mini-lecture by historian Drew Gilpin Faust about the impact of the Civil War on Lincoln and the nation.