

Lesson 6.4

PROFILES OF MAINE CIVIL WAR SOLDIERS

Objective: Students will closely read letters from Civil War soldiers, and based on their observations, they will create a Soldier Profile and sketch to share with the class.

Materials:

- **Sheet 6.4:** Soldier Profile Student Worksheet
- **Docs 6.4A – 6.4D:** Soldier letters. Letters 6.4C and 6.4D are from the same writer, Will Lamson. The first is addressed to his father, the second to his sister.
- Blank paper and pencils

Timing: Two class periods

Background Reading:

- Chapter Six, Sections Three-Four

Procedure:

1. Review the conditions the 20th Maine regiment faced in camp and at battle: long marches, poor food, drill sessions, sickness, etc.
2. Tell students they will be reading a letter from a Mainer who fought in the Civil War written to a family member or friend. They should read the letter not only for information, but also for tone of voice and attitude about the war. They should consider the relationship the soldier had with the person he was writing to: how might that relationship have influenced what the soldier wrote about?
3. Break students up into pairs. Give one letter to each pair. Have each pair read their letter together, and discuss it, using the questions on their Soldier Profile worksheet. Each pair should then sketch the soldier as they see him, and prepare a short, informal presentation to give the class on their soldier and his letter home.
*Note: In order to accommodate students of lower reading abilities, you may wish to read each of these letters out loud as a class before breaking into pairs and having students re-read them.
4. When students are finished reading and discussing their soldiers' letters, come back together as a class. Have each pair present their profile to the class. Debrief with students, asking questions like the following:
 - What did you notice about reading these letters? Was there anything new you learned about the war? About the soldiers fighting the war?
 - Did you and your partner disagree on your interpretation of the letter? How? Did you disagree with another pair who read the same letter as you?
 - How do you think your own point of view or opinions affected the way you read the letter?

- Could historians disagree on their interpretations of these letters?
- Can history be more than one interpretation of a document? Is there one right way to interpret these documents?

Evaluation: Grade students according to the thoughtfulness and thoroughness of their profiles and their presentations.

Follow-up Activities:

- War letters: read letters home from soldiers in other wars and compare them to these Civil War letters. How do they compare?
- Have students answer the letter they read in class. What would they ask this soldier if they could ask him anything about the war?
- Ask students to compare Will Lamson's description of the Battle of Little Round Top to the description in the textbook. Are there any differences? What are they? How might one soldier's point of view of the event differ from the "official" point of view written by Colonel Chamberlain? How might the point of view differ from a Confederate soldier's account of the battle?

Alignment with Learning Results:

Grade Level: **MIDDLE GRADES**

Content Area: **HISTORY**

Standard: **HISTORICAL INQUIRY, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION.**

Students will learn to evaluate resource material such as documents, artifacts, maps, artworks, and literature, and to make judgments about the perspectives of the authors and their credibility when interpreting current historical events.

Performance Indicator: Formulate historical questions based on examination of primary and secondary sources including documents, eyewitness accounts, letters and diaries, artifacts, real or simulated historical sites, charts, graphs, diagrams, and written texts.

Name: _____

Date: _____

**PROFILE OF A CIVIL WAR SOLDIER
STUDENT WORKSHEET**

You will be given a letter written by a soldier from Maine during the war. Read your letter carefully and answer the questions below about the letter, using complete sentences. Be prepared to share your observations about your Civil War soldier with the class.

1. Soldier's Name: _____

2. Regiment and Company (if known): _____

3. Who is the letter addressed to? Is it a friend or family member? _____

4. Briefly summarize the contents of the letter. What is your soldier writing about? _____

5. How do you think your soldier feels about the war? What words give you that idea?

6. How might the letter have been different if the soldier were writing to another person?

7. Describe the personality of your soldier based on this letter. _____

8. Sketch your soldier as you imagine him to look as he was writing this letter.

Camp near Petersburg July 2nd 1864

Friend Mary,

I received your kind & welcome letter this morning. I was glad to hear from you again. Your letter came in a good time. I did not feel very well this morning and I tell you it was quite cheering to me to get a letter. Many of the boys are sick. The weather is so warm that we almost swelter. It is much warmer here than it is in Maine. I am sitting in my tent which is open at both ends, but it is so warm that the sweat rolls off my face quite brisk. We are in camp in the first line of Breastworks to the left of Petersburg. The army seems to be laying still at present. It is so warm that the men could not stand it to fight much, but each side fire an occasional shot. . . .

You say you are at Farmington learning the Milliners¹ trade. That is a very good trade and you have chosen a pleasant place to learn it in. I think Farmington Village is the prettiest Village there is, any where in that part of Maine. You say you have been to a Circus since you have been there and you saw a battle field represented. I should think that part of the show would have been very interesting, but I have got awful sick of such scenes. Oh, I wish I never was obliged to see any more of them, but a soldier will get used to such scenes and after a while he will not mind them at all. The Hospital is where we see horrid sights at the 2nd Division Hospital of this corps. We are sent the musicians to take care of the wounded, and at one Hospital that they have established since we crossed the James River they had over 1000 brought to their Hospital and a great many of them were mortally wounded. I saw 13 in one room and they all had a limb missing. I have seen at the Hospital since this campaign commenced nearly a cart load of arms, legs, hands & feet in one pile. I have stood by the amputating table and seen the Surgeons cut & saw off limbs, but I do not like to see them if I can help it.

I have made lots of blunders since I began this letter. I do not believe you can find out half of it but I am in something of a hurry, so you must excuse poor writing and mistakes. My Brother is here with me. He has been in all the fights since we left camp at Brandy Station and he is still spared. He has not been hit one single time yet in all the hard fighting he has been in. You say Uncle Daniel Vaughan & family are at Farmington. I wish I could see some of them, yes all of them, but it is no use to wish, is it?

The Jonnies are too strong for us here, that is we cannot advance any further unless we charge on their works which are very strong. That never would do, for we should lose an awful many men & not accomplish any thing either. But we can hold them where they are now. . . . You asked me if I remembered the 4th we spent at Farmington a long time ago. Yes, I remember it very well. Did'en't we have a good time? I wish I could be there this year. I think I could not help enjoying myself well. . . . But you see I have got through with my sheet so I shall have to stop. You must write often.

Your Friend Augustus Vaughan

¹milliner: hatmaker

[at top of first page] PS This writing looks so I am ashamed to send it, but excuse me this time & I will try to do better next time. I want you to write and tell me all about the celebration the 4th. Is there many copperheads² there in the Village & do they say much about the war? . . . I hope you will continue to write as often as you can

Your Friend A. Vaughan

²Copperhead: someone in the North who sympathized with the South during the war

22d Regiment Maine Volunteers, Col. Jerrard, Company E

Tuesday PM 2 oclock
Alexandria Va Nov 4th 1862

Dear Father:

Here we are just left the Steamers that have brought us down from Washington. I have looked in vain for a letter for 2 or 3 days and as we are to leave for "parts unknown" to night or to morrow, I improve this last chance for I dont know how long to write again. The 22^d, or 25th, 26th, 27th Me Regts were camped to gether, or near each other on Arlington Heights Va. and have been under marching orders for a number of days past. Our Regt struck tents and commenced leaving the grounds for Washington last night, with 5 Cos. of the 26th Regt, for Washington. I was one who stayed on the grounds all night and came down with the baggage this morning. it is expected that the 27th with the other 5 cos. of the 26th is going with us. You will ask where are we going? Nobody knows, not even the Colnel. But all suppose that we are "going down South" whether to Texas, S. Carolina, Georgia or where, we dont know. It is said that we are to have 30 days rations aboard of the vessel. Also that we cannot write (after we get there) and get an answer in 2 months. But these are flying reports. I hear that we are to camp here to night as it is impossible to get the vessel ready for us to day.

Charlie mentioned my being lame in his letter and for fear that you will be worried about me, I will explain. When we moved into Virginia from Washington Sat I had rather a bad cold, and Sunday it rained like blazes and we had not a rag of a tent in the Regt. The Boys took their Blankets and made some tents, open on the front and the back sides runing to the ground and built fires in front, which was quite a shelter, but the men and all of the officers got completly soaked. The tents came just at night Sunday, the mud was "kinder deep" and only a few of the squads put up their tents. We put ours up [and] got through the night nicely, altho it rained and Blowed all night. My cold settled in my legs above my knees. They swelled some and made me quite lame. A great many of the men in the regt took an awful cold which made some sickness, altho it was only temporary. The doctors took charge of them and they are all getting along very well. I have not been on duty yet, but my legs are about as limber as ever. I consider myself better off than a great many of the men, am in tip top Spirrit about our trip down South only I feel like all of the rest--awful curious to know where we are going! . . .

Wed morn 5th

We camped here last night. Expect to leave to day. I am as smart as ever this morn. I want you to send me the Tribune and Courier (weekly if you can get it) regularly as we cant get a bit of war news in the Army. You can write to me and direct to Washington and I shall be likly to get it. It will do no hurt if I dont, but write. I may get a letter to day from you if we dont leave too early. I will write as soon as we land at our Stopping place. Shall send for some stamps then. would write more but have no time

From Frank

Good By for the Present

Doc. 6.4C
Hanover, Penn.
July 1st, 1863

Dear Father:

I received your letter of June 13th Sunday night, the first I rec'd since the 12th. I was glad to receive it, *you bet*. . . .

Thursday, 2nd. I was interrupted last night by the bugle sounding "Fall in." I had an opportunity to look around the city some [on] Sunday. It is quite a pretty place. Lieut. Col. Chamberlain was promoted to Col. while sick, and took command of the Regt. again Monday. We marched 25 and some say 30 miles Tuesday and yesterday we came only 10 but last night we came 9 more by 12 o'clock. This morning we came 3 miles and then ran around from one position to another till about noon. We've now been resting about 3 hours about a mile from Gettysburg. The Rebs are in the town and seem inclined to make us shell it to get them out. We came into Penn. about 2 P.M. yesterday. . . .

Sat. 4th. We had a lively time of it Thursday P.M.³. Our Division went into the fight about 4 o'clock. Our Regt. lost 30 killed and 114 wounded and missing. In our Co. Ed Morrill was wounded through the calf of his leg (not bad) and we have 3 missing. . . . Our Regt. took a good many prisoners. A Brigade of Al. and Texas troops got on the left of them and opened fire within a few rods before they were prepared to receive them in *style*, but our Regt. charged bayonets and broke them all up. Prisoners say that they never broke before. Our skirmishers fired on them as they retreated, when one held up a white flag and 15 came in and surrendered. After dark we went onto a mountain on picket and took 25 prisoners that came to our line thinking it was theirs and we soon found ourselves within a few rods of the same Brigade we fought in the P.M. We were relieved for a time by a brigade of the Penn Reserves, but as soon as we left they followed suit and we had to go back again and stay all night. In the evening while we were resting, I was lying "with my back to the field and my feet to the foe" one of them sent a bullet so near my face that I felt it pass, but "A miss is as good as a mile" sometimes. In the morning we moved to the right and built a breastwork of rails and stones. (this is Rebel paper)

Monday 6th. We remained behind Friday and Saturday. Friday there was no firing till about 3 P.M. when the batteries on both sides opened up and for some time there was a shot or shell whizzing through the air all the time. Before one would stop, another would start. There was no firing at all Sat. Sunday morning our Division advanced about a mile and a half, built a breastwork of fence rails, and went to work picking up arms. We got [some] hundred rifles and 3 Rebel caissons.⁴ Here the rebs evidently left in a hurry, for they left clothing, blankets, bread, and other trash. There I picked up this paper and envelope. The field was covered with dead horses and men. In two places there were 3 rebels on a space of 12 feet and, in one place, 17 horses lay almost touching each other. In a burned barn were the remains of 5 wounded rebels nearly all burned up. The smell was awful. . . . The chaplain is calling for letters and I must close.

Give love to all.

Your aff son, Will P. Lamson

³This was the Battle of Little Round Top.

⁴caisson: chest of ammunition

Doc. 6.4D

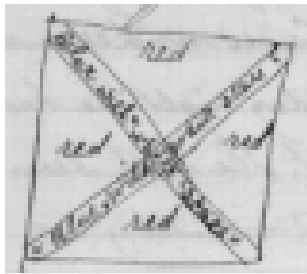
Camp near Sharpsburg, Md.
Sunday Oct 5th 1862

Dear Sister Jennie,

I received your letter of Sept 28th this morning and I was glad to get it. I heard that news had reached Maine that our Regt. was all cut up and was afraid you had heard the same and would worry so you "couldn't sleep moren 10 or 12 hours for the whole night" as Chandler said when his boy was lost in the woods. We did not have any fighting to do, but had 3 men slightly wounded by bullets fired at men on the top of a hill, some of which came over across the river. Some of our men thought they saw Rebel pickets⁵ and "blazed away" but I don't think they diminished Jackson's army a great deal. I saw a rebel flag the other day. (a captured one.)

It was made like this:

a red field with blue "bars" from corner to corner with white "stars" on them. . . .



Charles White, one of our Co., is under guard for sleeping guard Friday night. He has not been sentenced yet. He had been on guard Wednesday night and Thursday, for getting a man to take his place on guard and going over to the 6th Regiment [Maine] without getting leave and staying all night. A fellow in another Co. has been marching back and forth along the street in front of the tents with a sheet of paper pinned on his breast and back marked in "large Captable letters" "Thief." he stole a canteen half full of molasses. I reckon *he* felt well. *I should*. You probably heard Saturday or will Tuesday by the "daily" that the army was reviewed Friday by *Father Abraham* [Lincoln], *Little Mack* [General McClellan], and others. Lincoln is not *very* handsome and not *so very* homely. I thought that Mc looked a little cross.

Tuesday

The bugle sounded for dress parade while I was writing Sunday and I had to close in a hurry. Today we are on picket⁶ and I am sitting among the roots of an old elm on the bank of the Potomac trying to finish this sheet. They are firing cannon a short distance above us 4 or 5 times from our side and one from the other, I should think by the sound. They've stopped firing. I guess they were trying to "fraid" somebody. We are in a very pleasant place today on the bank of the river with not a rebel in sight except 2 or 3 who

⁵pickets: guards

⁶on picket: on guard duty

came down to the other side with a flag of truce. Lt. Lyford went over and found it was a man who wanted to come over and get a dead brother. There is a Doctor and his family over there now waiting to come across. They want to go to Washington. An officer has just gone over, I suppose to see about letting them come. Three ambulances have just gone over loaded with wounded rebel prisoners who have been paroled. As my paper is most full, I will close. You see I have got me a pen and ink. I thought it would be better to read than pencil marks.

Give love to Uncle Joseph and the rest of the family. he ought to be here. He would have a good chance to "scrach" [sketch] as Ed says. Accept much love and excuse this scrawl from your aff Brother,

Will