

Remembering the Civil War and the *CSS Neuse*

Essential Question: What impact did the Civil War have on the society and economy of Eastern North Carolina?

Further Questions:

- How did the perspectives of the war between North and South differ?
- What role did the *CSS Neuse* have in Kinston, North Carolina?

Essential Standards:

AH1.H.1 Apply the four interconnected dimensions of historical thinking to the American History Essential Standards in order to understand the creation and development of the United States over time.

AH1.H.1.3 Use Historical Analysis and Interpretation to:

1. Identify issues and problems in the past.
2. Consider multiple perspectives of various peoples in the past.
3. Analyze cause-and-effect relationships and multiple causation.
4. Evaluate competing historical narratives and debates among historians.
5. Evaluate the influence of the past on contemporary issues.

AH1.H.7 Understand the impact of war on American politics, economics, society.

AH1.H.7.2 Explain the impact of wars on the American economy through Reconstruction (e.g., colonial debts, salutary neglect, protective tariffs, inflation, profiteering, Hamilton's economic plan, embargo, American System, Homesteaders, etc.).

AH1.H.7.3 Explain the impact of wars on American society and culture through Reconstruction (e.g., salutary neglect, slavery, breakup of the plantation system, carpetbaggers, scalawags, KKK, and relocation of American Indians, etc.).

Common Core Standards:

Reading

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.6

Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.9

Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

Writing

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.11-12.2

Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes.

Overview:

Students will consider the impact of the Civil War on the region of Eastern North Carolina. To gain a greater perspective, students will read primary sources including letters and memoirs. In addition, students will consider secondary sources consisting of local histories and textbook excerpts. From these sources, students will gain a greater knowledge of the different perspectives of people involved in the Civil War. The students will also explain the reasons certain groups may not be represented in texts from the time period. Through this lesson, students will learn about the impact of war on the social and economic aspects of Eastern North Carolina.

Prior Knowledge:

- A basic understanding of the Civil War.
- Terms: Ironclad, *CSS Neuse*, American Civil War, Confederate, Union (Federal), primary source, secondary source, historical narrative

Skills:

- Distinguish between primary and secondary sources.
- Read and identify different types of sources.
- Write a historical narrative.

Materials:

- Documents included at the end of the lesson plan.
- An excerpt from a textbook about the Civil War.
- Table and questions need to be available to students on the board or with individual copies.

Tasks:**The teacher will:**

- Review basic information about the Civil War and its conclusion.
- Provide students with the documents to read and the corresponding chart.
- Tell students to read the documents and fill in the chart.
- Instruct students to answer the questions following the chart.
- Describe the components of a historical narrative.
- Ask students to write a historical narrative.

The student will:

- Answer questions concerning the Civil War and its conclusion.
- Read the documents provided as well as information from their textbook and fill out the corresponding chart.
- Answer the questions following the chart.
- Write a historical narrative.

Source						
Primary/ Secondary Source						
Source Type						
Author						
Purpose						
Bias?						

Questions:

- 1) Which source seems the most biased? Why?
- 2) Which source seems the least biased? Why?
- 3) Which groups/perspectives are missing from these documents?
 - a. What reasons that there is less information about these groups/perspectives?
 - b. Where could you locate more information about these groups/ perspectives?

Prompt: Construct your own historical narrative about the social and economic impact of the Civil War in Eastern North Carolina using the sources provided as well as sources you locate.

Document 1

Nathaniel Siewers to Family. Letter. May 10, 1864. Nathaniel Shober Siewers (1845 – 1901) Papers, 1858-1965, UNCC Manuscript Collection No. 11.

Kinston

May 10th, 1864

Dear Father, Mother and Sister:

Now that the hurry and bustle, in the midst of which I dropped you a few lines last Saturday are over, I can find time to write once again. Fortunately the Battalion has been left here at Kinston, and our band with it, so that for the present at least we will have a short time to rest, after our little tramp of twenty days. I would not have missed being along in the late expedition through this part of the state for anything. The march, the taking and plundering of the Yankee camps at Plymouth, the scenes at our hospitals, etc., were of course entirely new to me, and their novelty made them interesting. From the time we left Tarboro till we got back to Kinston, we had to march all the way, something between 200 and 225 miles. From Plymouth we went to Washington, where we stayed only long enough to make a pretended attack on the place, and then left for Greenville. Here we heard that the Yankees had evacuated Washington and burned a small part of their stores however, before evacuating the town. They themselves went by land to Newbern, for which place we started a few days after. Crossing both the Neuse and Trent rivers on pontoons, we kept marching down the latter to Pollocksville a little town 12 miles from Newbern. Here our brigade went into camp; the others keeping on down the river for some 10 or 12 miles further. From what I could hear they had taken two block-houses and some 60 prisoners, when Gen. Hoke received orders to fall back, as the troops were needed elsewhere. Could he have had two or three more days, I have no doubt Newbern would have shared a fate similar to that of Plymouth. We had received considerable reinforcements from Kinston, our iron-clad "Albemarle" was to come round from Plymouth and our Kinston gunboat, the "Neuse" was to come down the river to meet her, while to cooperate with both we had quite a formidable little mosquito fleet, similar to the one we used so successfully in our former attempt on Newbern. The gunboat at Kinston was unfortunately run aground before she had gotten far from town, and the river being very low she has been unable to get off so far. Gen. Hoke was confident that he could take the place, though I am told he said it was by far the best fortified place that he had ever seen. Making a forced march back, our brigade reached this place last Saturday and immediately took the train for Goldsboro. The other troops have since followed them. Their destination is probably reached this place last Saturday and immediately took the train for Goldsboro. The other troops have since followed them. Their destination is probably Petersburg, near which place the Yankees have been making a raid, burning bridges on the railroad, tearing up the track, etc. On the whole raid we have been making, we have been feasting and fasting by turns. At Plymouth we just had everything almost we could think of, and plenty of it, since then we have either done without or only drawn half rations. Most of the provisions taken there were immediately sent on to Gen. Lee's army, and the rest was left with Martin's brigade who were sent down to hold the place and enjoy the fruits of the victory which

our man had gained. Several times we had to make a day's march of 20 miles on a breakfast of a couple hard Confed. crackers and a piece of bacon about the size of my two fingers. We band boys fortunately made the raise of a horse and cart at Plymouth, and since Keesler returned from taking the boys' boxes of plunder to Tarboro, we have had our blankets, etc., hauled. You have no idea of the dust and dirt we had to go through on the trip. The weather was terribly warm, and by evening we were usually in a pretty bad fix, all wet with sweat, and with our eyes, nose and mouth full of dust. Our column extended several miles, and from one end to the other a vast cloud of dust kept continually rising. If we happened to be marching in front we escaped the most of it, but if our brigade was behind, we caught it all.

I wish some of our up-country grumblers could have seen some of the sights I did. If I saw one, I saw a hundred houses in a heap of ruins. Several little villages were entirely destroyed by fiendish enemy, and at one place I saw where a family graveyard had been entered, the bodies removed and the marble slabs broken and defaced. I never believed half the stories I heard of Yankee barbarity before, now I had full proof of it. The few citizens who still were living in the Yankee lines had been compelled to take the oath to save their property, but they received us kindly and it was a pleasure to do all they could for our troops. Provisions were comparatively plenty between the lines and we could get good meals at 50 cents apiece. Other things were in proportion.

We met Professor Neave the other day, with his regiment, the 49th. He is permanently connected with the 49th bend which he is teaching. We are to get several new pieces from him as soon as he can find time to write them out for us. Our old pieces are getting decidedly worn out and I shall be glad to hear some new ones once again.

What do you think of our prospects now? Are they not getting brighter The opinion is getting almost universal that this summer's fighting is to end the war; even Neave who used to be so desponding on the Rapidan last Winter is now in excellent spirits. News of success is coming in from every state in the Confederacy, and even now Lee is probably giving the Yankees a sound drubbing in Va. Ere another summer we all hope to be at home again. O what a happy time that will be when peace, blessed Peace, shall again resume her gentle sway; when the sword shall be turned into a ploughshare, and the spear into a pruning hook; when everyone shall sit down under his own vine and fig tree and there shall be none to make him afraid. Who can describe the joy that will be caused when we hear the first glad tidings of peace? Who can picture the scenes that will then take place when the long absent ones shall return to the homes to which they have been so long wishing to return, and meet those they love.

But I must close as I would like to send my letter by to-day's mail. Your last letter was dated the 14th of April. Do please write once again. I shall wait to hear from you before I write again. With much love to all, I remain

Your ever affectionate

Son and Brother

Nathaniel

Document 2

An excerpt from a memoir *Great War Relic: Together with A Sketch of My Life Service in the Army and How I Lost My Feet Since the War* by Charles L. Cummings a Union soldier in North Carolina.

“On the 10th they hustled us about considerably. During the night, the enemy (being partially defeated and somewhat afraid we were being reinforced, for all night long the bands marched up and down our lines, and everybody was hurrahing for Sherman) retreated, burning the bridge in their rear when they crossed the Neuse river. The musketry during the afternoon of the 9th, also the 10th, was most terrific; old veterans said they never experienced heavier. During our charge on the 9th our Sergeant Major was nearly killed by the concussion of a shell, which passed so close to his head he said it made a fool of him, and I thought it had killed him until I met him in Detroit, Mich., in August, 1888. While waiting for the engineers to rebuild the bridge, we buried our dead and cared for the wounded. I never knew what was done with the prisoners we captured; I heard some of them say they were glad to be captured in order to get something to eat; poor fellows, they fought well, even if they were nearly starved. Some of the boys said they went over the field and found out line of battle had been nearly seven miles long and in the shape of a horse-shoe. Our force was estimated at 15,000; that of the enemy was much greater. The command we were in constituted a part of the force concentrating in the vicinity of Wilmington. While the details were burying the dead I went out to negotiate for a ham or any other movable property. I had secured a good woolen coverlet, an excellent blanket, and was in a smoke house negotiating for a well-cured ham, and did not know that hundreds of other men were in that vicinity on a similar mission, when bang! bang! bang! and then two distinct volleys of musketry considerable disturbed my arbitrary negotiations for the ham. I rushed out very lively to see if I was killed or only captured. I feared the colored people who I had persuaded to loan me the blanket—which I needed, having lost my own in one of our charges through the green briars—had become suspicious of my “varacity” and had betrayed me into the hands of the enemy, and to be killed or captured in a smoke house was, in my opinion, the mark of a poor soldier. Determined to give them a good fight, I rushed out to find it was some our boys killing sheep—a necessity of war, for we had been without rations for several days. You can, perhaps, imagine my relief when I found I was still alive and not captured.

March 14th, my seventeenth birthday, we marched to Kinston, but a few miles from the scene of our late conflict; after we had feasted on government and other rations, our gallant commander, Colonel W.W. Wheeler, ordered the men to remove the top rails from the fences, which order was obeyed until no rails remained within one mile of our lines, then the boys went to work with pick and shovel and worked faithfully until near midnight, when we were allowed to rest until five o’clock on the morning of the 15th, and then had to answer to our names at roll-call. Immediately after that little fires began to twinkle along the line while the stars were fading away, soon the aroma of coffee and bacon suggested creature comforts, and the whole economy of life, behind the magnificent earthworks that had been erected the previous night, was moving as steadily on as if it had never been interrupted. Before we had fairly begun to enjoy the

pleasures of exploring the surrounding country the drums beat the long roll of assembly, and before the sun had risen very high we had resumed our march and the reconstruction of the railroad to Goldsboro', where we arrived on the 21st, when the brigade was placed on duty guarding the Atlanta and North Carolina Railroad. We had re-built this road from Newbern, and brought supplies to this point for Sherman's Army. The Twenty-eighth was stationed several miles east of Goldsboro', and given a section of the railroad to patrol. I was stationed at the home of an old man to act as safe-guard for the family. I felt the deepest sympathy for them, as they had two sons who had been pressed into the Confederate Army. On the 9th of April we returned to Goldsboro'. While here the Twenty-eighth supported a detachment of the First Michigan mechanics while they built a bridge across the river that Sherman's Army must cross before entering Goldsboro'. The first to arrive were the scouts and foragers, we called them bummers, and I suppose the unfortunate people living and trying to live along their line of march called them many other names. The army soon resumed its march westward. The second and third divisions of the Twenty-third corps was halted on a plantation with heavy pine forests on two sides, each regiment was drawn up in line, and the whole corps was massed quite close together, then came the command "Attention to Orders!" and the order was read to each regiment by its commanding officer, that Lee had surrendered. Immediately following this someone set fire to a large tar kiln in the forest, the troops broke ranks, carrying their officers on their shoulders and shouting themselves hoarse, while many washed the soot off their faces with tears, so great was their joy at the glad tidings. The flames from the tar kilns leaped beyond the tops of the highest trees, while the wind carried the smoke over our heads, making a dense black canopy over this to all appearances demoralized mob of howling demons, but military discipline soon restored order and we march away never to behold a sight to equal the one we were leaving and the ever vigilant, creeping, tickling, biting, little graybacks bit and crawled up and down our backs with the same energy they did before the surrender."

Document 3

Bacot to Sister. Letter. March 27, 1865. CSS *Neuse* Civil War Interpretive Center.

Judge Saunders
Raleigh N.C.
March 27th 1865

Dearest Sis,

This is the first chance I've had to get a letter through to you since the fall of Wilmington. As you will see by the heading of this I am now on a visit to sister Jacque to find out all about home & the different members of the family. I was agreeably surprised on my arrival here, to find that the Yankees had not been to our neighborhood; when I came I expected to hear that the houses & cotton had been burnt & the Negroes scattered as a gentleman who came from Darlington to Warrenton N.C. said that the enemy were at Florence & Darlington & were raiding through the country, burning & pillaging as they went. Pet & Ajax are near Goldsboro; their Company is Gen Hardee's body guard. They left here just before I arrived here so I did not see them. My old home the "Neuse," is gone, all the troops were withdrawn from Kinston & the Yankees 18,000 strong came upon us & not having any prospect of being relieved before our provisions gave out & being in a narrow river where we could not work the ship under fire, after shelling the Yankee Cavalry for a little while, we removed our powder & stores & burnt the vessel. We fortunately saved our clothing & C & are very comfortably fixed at Halifax N.C. on the Roanoke river where we are waiting for something to turn up. If I am not ordered to the Trans-Mississippi & have to leave Eastern N.C. I will probably go into the army.

The hardest part of the evacuation of Kinston for me, was to have to leave without seeing my darling little Sweetheart. You future sister in law is now in the enemy's lines & as they have occupied the town in force I am afraid they will be very troublesome. Yes Sis I am engaged to be married to a dear, sweet little soul Miss Fannie Bryan of Newbern. I wish you could know her & her family. I think without exception it is the nicest family taken as a whole that I ever saw. My Fan will be eighteen in November; five years younger than I am. Three of her sisters are engaged to three of my intimate friends. I wonder when I'll be able to Marry? I hope soon – next year.

Sister Jacque says she wrote to you a few days ago. She is now writing to Carrie & wont have time to write to you this time but will do so again shortly.

You would have a fine field for using your hospital experience here – there are a great many wounded here from Averisboro & Bentonville where we whipped the Yankees (part of Sherman's Army) pretty badly. Sherman is now at Goldsboro & Johnston is trying to force a fight. I hope in less than two weeks we will fight & whip him in a general engagement – then the tide will have turned in our favor. All you overrun people must keep up your spirits, the soldiers are very cheerful. Write to Sis J & me by first opportunity she will forward letters to me. I have been trying to find out whether I belong to Navy or Army. I have no ship, live on land, drill at light Artillery & infantry tactics & have been in the trenches at Weldon (that Paradise) which do you think I belong to?

Maj Lucas is just recovering from a wound in the stomach recd at Bentonville & is stopping at Dr. Smede's.

I've met a good many Charleston friends here, all looking hard. I have to close as I have to send this off at once. Kiss Alfie for me & give my regards to Miss Jenny & Mr. Clarke. Ever your Affec bro

R.H. Bacot

An excerpt from *200 Years of Progress: A Report of the History and Achievements of the People of Lenoir County* published by the Lenoir County Board of Commissioners and the Kinston-Lenoir County Bicentennial Commission

William's Relates "Atrocities"

In a taped interview in 1972, conducted by the Lenoir County Historical Association, Juan Williams, age 94, told of some of the atrocities of Foster's troops at the home of his grandmother near Wyse Fork.

"They fired on my Grandmother Williams' house and tried to destroy the mill. They invaded the house next day and Gen. Foster talked to my grandmother. He told her he knew she had some boys in the army. She told him yes, she had four sons and two grandsons in the Army. And he told her he was going to make it hard on her.

"He (Gen. Foster) proceeded to take everything she had – livestock, all the food. They broke in the smokehouse and got everything, took the feed out of the barn from the horses. They even took the food off the table in the house which had been prepared for the family's dinner. He took that, destroyed the family Bible, destroyed the paintings on the wall, took the feather beds out in the yard and moved my grandmother's daughter who was at the point of death with typhoid fever out of the house. She died that night."