

ESSENTIAL CIVIL WAR CURRICULUM

The Alabama Affair

By **Donald Rakestraw**, Winthrop University

Resources

If you can read only one book

Author	<i>Title</i> . City: Publisher, Year.
Merli, Frank J.	<i>The Alabama, British Neutrality, and the American Civil War</i> . Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2004.

Books and Articles

Author	<i>Title</i> . City: Publisher, Year.
Cook, Adrian	<i>The Alabama Claims: American Politics and Anglo-American Relations, 1865-1872</i> . Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975.
Cross II, Coy F.	<i>Lincoln's Man in Liverpool: Consul Dudley and the Legal Battle to Stop Confederate Warships</i> . DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2007.
Fox, Stephen	<i>Wolf of the Deep: Raphael Semmes and the Notorious Confederate Raider CSS Alabama</i> . New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007.
Hearn, Chester G.	<i>Gray Raiders of the Sea: How Eight Confederate Warships Destroyed the Union's High Seas Commerce</i> . Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992.
Jones, Howard	<i>Blue and Gray Diplomacy: A History of Union and Confederate Foreign Relations</i> . Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010.

McPherson, James M.	<i>War on the Waters: The Union and Confederate Navies, 1861-1865</i> . Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012.
Merli, Frank J.	<i>Great Britain and the Confederate Navy, 1861-1865</i> . Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970.
Spencer, Warren F.	<i>The Confederate Navy in Europe</i> . Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1983.
Wilson, Walter E. and Gary L. McKay	<i>James D. Bulloch: Secret Agent and Master Mind of the Confederate Navy</i> . Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2012.

Organizations

Web Resources

URL	Name and description
http://css-alabama.com/	The CSS <i>Alabama</i> Association is a non-profit organization and relies upon membership dues, grants and similar donations as means to finance the recovery and conservation of artifacts from the ship.

Other Sources

Name	Description, Contact information including address, email
United States Navy Department, <i>Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion</i> , 31 vols. (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1894-1927), Series I, volumes 1-3.	Volumes 1-3 of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies cover the operations of the Confederate Cruisers. They can be accessed on line at: http://ebooks.library.cornell.edu/m/moawar/ofre.html
University of Wisconsin Digital Collections	The University of Wisconsin Digital Collections includes a collection of primary source documents on Foreign Relations of the United States which is accessible on line at: http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=browse&scope=FRUS.FRUS1

Hansard	The United Kingdom's Hansard documents are accessible on line at: http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/
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Précis

On Sunday, June 19, 1864 the storied career of the CSS *Alabama* ended as she sank in the English Channel after losing a naval battle with the USS *Kearsarge*. *Alabama*'s captain, Raphael Semmes, evaded capture when he was rescued by a private English yacht the *Deerhound* which was owned by John Lancaster. Under maritime rules Lancaster was only obligated to take Semmes and other sailors rescued from the *Alabama* to the nearest port, which he did, taking them to Southampton. CSS *Alabama*, the Confederacy's most famous ship, was a commerce raider built in a private British shipyard under a contract dated August 1, 1861. Diplomatic and legal wrangling between Britain and the United States arose over this. By the time the government in London decided to act to seize the ship it had already sailed, on July 29, 1862. The ship was armed and crewed in the Azores and formally commissioned on August 14, 1862. The *Alabama* took her first prize on September 18, 1862 and over her brief career burned or bonded over 60 ships. American diplomats catalogued every capture and complaint with the British Foreign Office with a view to obtaining compensation. Anglo-American relations suffered as a direct consequence of the *Alabama*'s successes. *Alabama*'s success could be measured not only in prizes and monetary losses, but also in the impact on American shipping and northern opinion. During the two-year cruise of the *Alabama*, insurance rates increased to a debilitating ten percent, encouraging the bulk of northern commerce to flee to foreign hulls as Britain secured the position as America's dominant carrier, a position she would hold for decades. Likewise, newspapers could not resist the temptation to report the pain inflicted on the Union by the scourge of the seas. News of Semmes's firing of American ships began to arrive in October and with it disbelief that a single ship could terrorize Union ocean trade. As reports mounted, fear shifted from the ocean to the port cities themselves as Bostonians began to fear exposure should the *Alabama* descend on the Boston Bay. The increasing attention caused American diplomats to continue to remind the British Foreign Office of British culpability for the damage the *Alabama* was causing. After the war negotiations between the British and American governments over compensation were protracted. In May 1871 the *Alabama* claims joined a catalog of outstanding disputes between the two nations which were settled by the Treaty of Washington. The *Alabama* claims were settled under the treaty by a payment of \$15.5 million from the British government.

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