

ESSENTIAL CIVIL WAR CURRICULUM

Soldiers' Letters and Diaries

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Resources

If you can read only two books

Author	Title. City: Publisher, Year.
Wiley, Bell Irvine.	<i>The Life of Johnny Reb</i> . Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1943.
_____.	<i>The Life of Billy Yank</i> . Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1952.

Books and Articles

Author	Title. City: Publisher, Year.
Berlin, Ira; Reidy, Joseph P.; and Rowland, Lesley, eds.	<i>Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation, 1861-1867. Ser. II: The Black Military Experience</i> . New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982.
Dornbusch, C. E. comp.	<i>Regimental Publications and Personal Narratives of the Civil War: A Checklist</i> . 9 vols. New York: New York Public Library 1961.
Foroughi, Andrea R., ed.	<i>Go If You Think It Your Duty: A Minnesota Couple's Civil War Letters</i> . St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2008.
Gallagher, Gary	<i>The Union War</i> . Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011, 54-62.
Glatthaar, Joseph T.	<i>The March to the Sea and Beyond: Sherman's Troops in the Savannah and Carolinas Campaign</i> . New York: New York University Press, 1985.
_____.	<i>General Lee's Army: From Victory to Collapse</i> . New York: Free Press, 2008.
_____.	<i>Soldiering in the Army of Northern Virginia:</i>

	<i>A Statistical Portrait of the Troops Who Served under Robert E. Lee.</i> Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2011.
Hess, Earl J.	<i>The Union Soldier in Battle: Enduring the Ordeal of Combat.</i> Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997.
Kohl, Lawrence Frederick and Richard, Margaret Cossé, eds.	<i>Irish Green and Union Blue: The Civil War Letters of Peter Welsh.</i> New York: Fordham University Press, 1996.
McPherson, James M.	<i>For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War.</i> New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.
McPherson, James M. and William J. Cooper Jr., eds.	<i>Writing the Civil War: The Quest to Understand.</i> Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998, 81-95.
Manning, Chandra	<i>What this Cruel War was Over: Soldiers, Slavery, and the Civil War.</i> New York: Knopf, 2007.
Mitchell, Reid	<i>Civil War Soldiers: Their Expectations and Their Experiences.</i> New York: Viking, 1998.
———.	<i>The Vacant Chair: The Northern Soldier Leaves Home.</i> New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.
Nevins, Alan, James I. Robertson, Jr., and Bell I. Wiley, eds.	<i>Civil War Books: A Critical Bibliography.</i> 2 vols. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press/Broadfoot, 1967.
Noe, Kenneth	<i>Reluctant Rebels: The Confederates Who Joined the Army after 1861.</i> Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010.
James I. Robertson, Jr.	<i>Soldiers Blue and Gray.</i> Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1988.
Rozier, John, ed.	<i>The Granite Farm Letters: The Civil War Correspondence of Edgeworth and Sallie Bird.</i> Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998.
Sheehan-Dean, Aaron	<i>Why Confederates Fought: Family and Nation in Civil War Virginia.</i> Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007.
Sheehan-Dean, ed., Aaron	<i>The View from the Ground: Experiences of Civil War Soldiers.</i> Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2007, 9-30.
Woodworth, Steven E., ed.	<i>The American Civil War: A Handbook of Literature and Research.</i> Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996, 59-98.

Organizations

Web Resources

URL	Name and description
http://digital.lib.uiowa.edu/cwd/index.php	Civil War Diaries and Letters at the University of Iowa has a large collection of diaries and letters available on line.
https://delicious.com/vccws	Virginia Tech's Virginia Center for Civil War Studies Gateway to Digitized Sources in Civil War Era history provides links to dozens of websites with digital collections of soldiers' letters and diaries.
http://www.vmi.edu/archives.aspx?id=3945	Virginia Military Institute's Civil War Letters, Diaries, and Manuscripts Collection is available on line.

Other Sources

Name	Description, Contact information including address, email
Duke University's David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library	This is the guide to Civil War Resources in Duke's David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library contains a large collection of diaries and letters which are available to read at the library. The Guide to the library is at: http://guides.library.duke.edu/content.php?pid=180041&sid=1641613
Emory University's Southern History Collection	Emory University's Southern History collection includes the papers of more than two hundred Civil War soldiers which are available for study at the University. The Guide to the collection is at: http://marbl.library.emory.edu/collections/southern-history.html
The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History's "The Civil War, 1861-1865" Collection	The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History's "The Civil War, 1861-1865" Collection is available for study at the Institute. The website is: http://www.gilderlehrman.org/collections/groups/civil-war-1861-1865

Princeton University Library's Collection of Civil War Diaries Letters and Memoirs	The Princeton University Library Collection contains over 1,000 diaries, letters and memoirs and is available to those with a University NetID. Their website is: http://library.princeton.edu/resource/3580
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Google Keywords

Civil War soldiers' diaries and letters Sullivan Ballou Library of Congress Huntington Library United States Army Military History Institute John L. Nau III Duke University University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Emory University Louisiana State University University of Michigan Western Reserve Historical Society Connecticut Historical Society Chicago Historical Society New York State Library Filson Club Historical Society Tennessee Historical Society Virginia Historical Society

Perhaps the most famous soldier's letter of the Civil War was written by Major Sullivan Ballou of the Second Rhode Island Infantry Regiment one week before he was mortally wounded at the Battle of First Bull Run.

July the 14th, 1861

Washington D.C.

My very dear Sarah:

The indications are very strong that we shall move in a few days—perhaps tomorrow. Lest I should not be able to write you again, I feel impelled to write lines that may fall under your eye when I shall be no more.

Our movement may be one of a few days duration and full of pleasure—and it may be one of severe conflict and death to me. Not my will, but thine O God, be done. If it is necessary that I should fall on the battlefield for my country, I am ready. I have no misgivings about, or lack of confidence in, the cause in which I am engaged, and my courage does not halt or falter. I know how strongly American Civilization now leans upon the triumph of the Government, and how great a debt we owe to those who went before us through the blood and suffering of the Revolution. And I am willing—perfectly willing—to lay down all my joys in this life, to help maintain this Government, and to pay that debt.

But, my dear wife, when I know that with my own joys I lay down nearly all of yours, and replace them in this life with cares and sorrows—when, after having eaten for long years the bitter fruit of orphanage myself, I must offer it as their only sustenance to my dear little children—is it weak or dishonorable, while the banner of my purpose floats calmly and proudly in the breeze, that my unbounded love for you, my darling wife and children, should struggle in fierce, though useless, contest with my love of country.

Sarah, my love for you is deathless, it seems to bind me to you with mighty cables that nothing but Omnipotence could break; and yet my love of Country comes over me like a strong wind and bears me irresistibly on with all these chains to the battlefield.

The memories of the blissful moments I have spent with you come creeping over me, and I feel most gratified to God and to you that I have enjoyed them so long. And hard it is for me to give them up and burn to ashes the hopes of future years, when God willing, we might still have lived and loved together and seen our sons grow up to honorable manhood around us. I have, I know, but few and small claims upon Divine Providence, but something whispers to me—perhaps it is the wafted prayer of my little Edgar—that I shall return to my loved ones unharmed. If I do not, my dear Sarah, never forget how much I love you, and when my last breath escapes me on the battlefield, it will whisper your name.

Forgive my many faults, and the many pains I have caused you. How thoughtless and foolish I have often been! How gladly would I wash out with my tears every little spot upon your happiness, and struggle with all the misfortune of this world, to shield you and my children from harm. But I cannot. I must watch you from the spirit land and hover near you, while you buffet the storms with your precious little freight, and wait with sad patience till we meet to part no more.

But, O Sarah! If the dead can come back to this earth and flit unseen around those they loved, I shall always be near you; in the brightest day and in the darkest night—amidst your happiest scenes and gloomiest hours—always, always; and if there be a soft breeze upon your cheek, it shall be my breath; or the cool air fans your throbbing temple, it shall be my spirit passing by.

Sarah, do not mourn me dead; think I am gone and wait for me, for we shall meet again.

As for my little boys, they will grow as I have done, and never know a father's love and care. Little Willie is too young to remember me long, and my blue-eyed Edgar will keep my frolics with him among the dimmest memories of his childhood. Sarah, I have unlimited confidence in your maternal care and your development of their characters. Tell my two mothers his and hers I call God's blessing upon them. O Sarah, I wait for you there! Come to me, and lead thither my children.

Sullivan
