

ESSENTIAL CIVIL WAR CURRICULUM

Cavalry Raids

By Scott Thompson, West Virginia University

Resources

If you can read only one book

Author	<i>Title</i> . City: Publisher, Year.
Longacre, Edward	<i>Lee's Cavalrymen: A History of the Mounted Forces of the Army of Northern Virginia, 1861-1865</i> . Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2002.

Books and Articles

Author	<i>Title</i> . City: Publisher, Year.
Anderson, Paul	<i>Blood Image: Turner Ashby in the Civil War and the Southern Mind</i> . Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006.
Baggett, James Alex	<i>Homegrown Yankees: Tennessee's Union Cavalry in the Civil War</i> . Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009.
Davison, Eddy W.	<i>Nathan Bedford Forrest: In Search of the Enigma</i> . Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing, 2007.
Goodhart, Briscoe	<i>History of the Independent Loudoun Virginia Rangers. U.S. Vol. Cav. (Scouts) 1862-65</i> . Washington, D.C.: Press of McGill & Wallace, 1896.
Goodrich, Thomas	<i>Bloody Dawn: The Story of the Lawrence Massacre</i> . Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1991.

Grimsley, Mark	<i>The Hard Hand of War: Union Military Policy Towards Southern Civilians, 1861-1865.</i> Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
Hatch, Thom	<i>Clashes of Cavalry: The Civil War Careers of George Armstrong Custer and Jeb Stuart.</i> Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2001.
Horwitz, Lester V.	<i>The Longest Raid of the Civil War: Little-Known & Untold Stories of Morgan's Raid into Kentucky, Indiana & Ohio.</i> Indiana: Farmcourt, 1999.
Jones, Virgil Carrington	<i>Gray Ghosts and Rebel Raiders: The Daring Exploits of the Confederate Guerillas.</i> New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1956.
Longacre, Edward G.	<i>Lincoln's Cavalrymen: A History of the Mounted Forces of the Army of the Potomac.</i> Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2000.
_____.	<i>Lee's Cavalrymen: A History of the Mounted Forces of the Army of Northern Virginia, 1861-1865.</i> Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2002.
Mackey, Robert	<i>The Uncivil War: Irregular Warfare in the Upper South, 1861-1865.</i> Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005.
McKnight, Brian D. and Barton A. Myers	<i>The Guerrilla Hunters: Irregular Conflicts during the Civil War.</i> Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2017.
Mountcastle, Clay	<i>Punitive War: Confederate Guerrillas and Union Reprisals.</i> Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009.
Myers, Frank M.	<i>The Comanches: A History of White's Battalion, Virginia Cavalry, Laurel Brig., Hampton Div., A.N.V., C.S.A.</i> Baltimore: Kelly, Piet & Co., Publishers, 1871.
Newcomer, C. Armour	<i>Cole's Cavalry, or Three Years in the Saddle in the Shenandoah Valley.</i> Baltimore: Pushing and Company, 1895.
Ramage, James	<i>Gray Ghost: The Life of Col. John Singleton Mosby.</i> Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1999.

_____.	<i>Rebel Raider: The Life of General John Hunt Morgan</i> . Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1986.
Starr, Stephen Z.	<i>Jennison's Jayhawkers: A Civil War Cavalry Regiment and Its Commander</i> . Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993.
_____.	<i>The Union Cavalry in The Civil War</i> , 3 vols. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979, vol. 1.
Stephenson, Darl L.	<i>Headquarters in the Brush: Blazer's Independent Union Scouts</i> . Athens: Ohio University Press, 2001.
Sunderland, Daniel	<i>A Savage Conflict: The Decisive Role of Guerrillas in the American Civil War</i> . Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009.
Williamson, James J.	<i>Mosby's Rangers</i> . Alexandria: Time-Life Books, 1895.
Wittenberg, Eric, ed.	<i>At Custer's Side: Civil War Writing on James Harvey Kidd</i> . Kent, OH and London: The Kent State University Press, 2001.
York, Neil L.	<i>Fiction as Fact: The Horse Soldiers and Popular Memory</i> . Kent, OH, and London: The Kent State University Press, 2001.
Young, Bennett H.	<i>Confederate Wizards of the Saddle: Being Reminiscences and Observations of One Who Rode With Morgan</i> . Boston: Chapple Publishing Company, 1914.

Organizations

Web Resources

Other Sources

Scholars

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Topic Précis

More so than infantrymen, Civil War cavalymen displayed the nineteenth-century values of glamor, adventure, endurance, chivalry, and courage.¹ Contemporary observers and postbellum writers used colorful, romantic language to extol cavalymen as uniquely skilled and brave warriors. Traditionally, the cavalry wing of a military force performed such duties as reconnaissance, scouting for the enemy's location and strength, protecting its own flanks, and trying to outflank the enemy. Yet, due to their military effectiveness and cultural image, Civil War armies also sent their cavalry forces on separate, detached operations called raids. During these independent military actions, cavalry units rode behind enemy lines while relying on stealth. Raiders disrupted enemy supply lines, captured enemy commanders and forts, cut communication lines, destroyed railroads, caught enemy soldiers by surprise, battled gunboats, consumed enemy resources, and terrorized civilians. Due to their daring, destructive raids, the war's Confederate cavalry commanders gave the Union Army some of its most acute headaches. While less prominent until the midpoint of the war, Union cavalry raiding disrupted the Confederate war effort as well. The effectiveness of cavalry raiding for either side in the Civil War depended on the time period. With the help of its raiding activities, early in the conflict, the Confederate Army's cavalry forces proved superior to Federal horsemen. However, by 1863, Union cavalymen caught up. They shifted from being a small, incompetent body of troops that merely supported the infantry to a large, effective force with more autonomy on the battlefield and behind enemy lines. In the Eastern theater J.E.B. Stuart, Wade Hampton and Turner Ashby were the most successful Confederate cavalry raiders, while George Stoneman, Hugh Kilpatrick, Philip Sheridan and George A. Custer were the most successful Union cavalry raiders. In the Western theater cavalry raids were more about guerilla warfare than support for conventional military operations. Various small Union cavalry units fought as Jayhawkers in Kansas and Missouri and counter-guerilla raiders in Arkansas and West Virginia while Confederate guerillas and raiders were led by more famous men such as William Quantrill, Nathan Bedford Forrest, and John Hunt Morgan. Cavalry raids in particular and irregular warfare in general helped turn the Civil War from a limited conflict that protected property to a hard war in which both sides destroyed property and engaged in a cycle of reprisals. The major armies on both sides used cavalry raids to weaken the enemy during campaigns as well as to crush the will of the enemy to keep fighting. In those parts of the South with divided political loyalties, cavalry raiding became a central method of waging local and regional civil wars. With raiders fighting in both major campaigns and isolated guerrilla conflicts, they blurred the boundaries between conventional and unconventional warfare.

¹ Bennett H. Young, *Confederate Wizards of the Saddle: Being Reminiscences and Observations of One Who Rode With Morgan* (Boston: Chapple Publishing Company, 1914), xiv-xv.