

ESSENTIAL CIVIL WAR CURRICULUM

The Experience of Battle in the Civil War

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Resources

If you can read only one book

Author	Title. City: Publisher, Year.
Adams, Michael C. C.	<i>Living Hell: The Dark Side of the Civil War</i> . Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014, chaps. 3, 4, 5, 7.

Books and Articles

Author	Title. City: Publisher, Year. "Title," in <i>Journal</i> ##, no. # (Date): #.
Bollet, Alfred Jay	<i>Civil War Medicine: Challenges and Triumphs</i> . Tucson, AZ: Galen Press, 2002, a balanced medical history.
Dean Jr., Eric T.	<i>Shook Over Hell: Post-Traumatic Stress, Vietnam, and the Civil War</i> . Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997, pioneering study of emotional traumas.
Drake, Brian Allen, ed.	<i>The Blue, the Gray, and the Green: Toward an Environmental History of the Civil War</i> . Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2015, studies the total impact of modern war.
Fox, Richard Allan	<i>Archaeology, History, and Custer's Last Battle: The Little Big Horn Reexamined</i> . Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993, the new extended skirmish line in theory and practice.
Frank, Joseph Allan and George A. Reaves	<i>Seeing the Elephant: Raw Recruits at the Battle of Shiloh</i> . Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Publishing, 1989, experiencing

	the initiation of combat.
Griffith, Paddy	<i>Forward Into Battle: Fighting Tactics from Waterloo to the Near Future</i> . Chichester, West Sussex, UK: Anthony Bird Publications, 1981, the logistics and dynamics of close-order combat.
Hess, Earl J.	<i>The Union Soldier in Battle: Enduring the Ordeal of Combat</i> . Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997, an informative study by a careful scholar.
Linderman, Gerald F.	<i>Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the American Civil War</i> . New York: Free Press, 1987, a consideration of all aspects of men in battle.
Lonn, Ella	<i>Desertion during the Civil War</i> . New York/London: The Century Company, 1928, an excellent analysis of causes and consequences of desertion.
Royster, Charles	<i>The Destructive War: William Tecumseh Sherman, Stonewall Jackson, and the Americans</i> . New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981, profiles of men who advocated war to the knife.
Sears, Stephen W.	<i>Landscape Turned Red: The Battle of Antietam</i> . Norwalk, CT: Easton Press, 1988, excellent examination of one of the bloodiest battles of the war.
Smith, Mark M.	<i>The Smell of Battle, The Taste of Siege: A Sensory History of the Civil War</i> . New York: Oxford University Press, 2014, a reminder that battle assaulted all the senses.
Wainwright, Charles S. and Allan Nevis, ed.	<i>A Diary of Battle: The Personal Journals of Colonel Charles S. Wainwright, 1861-1865</i> . New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1962, the view from an insightful Union participant.
Watkins, Sam R.	<i>“Co. Aytch” : A Side Show of the Big Show</i> . Nashville, TN: Cumberland Presbyterian Publishing House, 1882, the view from an insightful Confederate soldier.

Organizations

Web Resources

Other Sources

Scholars

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Précis

Many of the men and boys who enlisted in either army, particularly in the early stages of the war, did so to see the elephant. This exotic creature, rarely to be found outside the big cities, and only when a traveling circus came to town, epitomized the exotic and romantic in lives often dominated by the humdrum. To have seen the elephant was an experience to brag about for years to come. Recruits thought that combat would be an adventure, filled with noteworthy individual exploits, heroic and redolent with glorious deeds. They would charge forward in glamorous uniforms, decorously stepping forward over the fallen who assumed restful poses, to rout the demoralized foe. In fact, the dominant characteristics of battle proved to be anything but romantic: soldiers found anonymity, chaos, brutal assaults on the senses, the infliction of terrible wounds and painful deaths, bloody and traumatizing in the extreme. The participants became part of a killing process that was enormous and relentless—slaughter on an industrial scale. Often it was clear that battle had changed those involved because of violent or eccentric behavior, a shunning of company, heavy drinking, an inability to hold down a job, or make a successful marriage. For many, who were not disfigured or disabled, the raw edge of memory about combat softened over time. With increasing age, nostalgia for lost youth made the days of war more mellow and appealing. More than a few veterans donned rose-colored spectacles.
