Technology in the Civil War Era

Lesson Submitted by: Lindsay Stewart

Unit: Slavery and the Civil War

Topic: This lesson explores advances in technology in the Civil War Era

Grade Level/Course: 6–8, US History

Duration: 3-5 days

Focus Question: How did the Civil War help to move the nation forward technologically?

Common Core Alignment, Writing 1: Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence. a. Introduce claim(s), acknowledge and distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically. b. Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text. Writing 2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content. a. Introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; organize ideas, concepts, and information into broader categories; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension. b. Develop the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.

Maryland State Curriculum Alignment: 4.A.3.b. Examine why and how technology and production in the industrial North influenced the outcome of the Civil War.

Lesson Objectives (Students will be able to): Describe the effect the Civil War had on the advancement of technology in the United States.

Vocabulary: technology, minié, telegraph, interchangeable, Ironsides, repeater, artillery, anesthetic, toxic, dysentery, malaria, sanitary, amputation

Materials: Interactive website (Civil War 150), dictionaries (text and digital), Changes in Medicine During the Civil War graphic organizer, vocabulary words, computers, Civil War
Instructional Procedure:

**Day One – Medical Advancement**

a. **Cue Set** – Students will explore the interactive website called *Civil War 150* ([http://www.history.com/interactives/civil-war-150](http://www.history.com/interactives/civil-war-150)), focusing on the section entitled, “How They Died” using their SmartBoard. Students will pick the aspect of the interactive that is most interesting to them and share with their seat groups. Then students will volunteer to share with the entire class.

b. Students will work with partners using either print or text reference to create a foldable of the medical vocabulary terms. Students will put the term and picture on the outside, and definition in their own terms on the inside of each tab.

c. Students will share their vernacular definitions with a table partner.

d. Students will be put into mixed ability groups and given one aspect of Civil War medicine to research. A recommended website for this research is the webpage of the National Museum of Civil War Medicine ([http://www.civilwarmed.org](http://www.civilwarmed.org)). With their research, groups are to create a fact sheet to be used in a station activity. Students will include the following headings for their fact sheets: technology before the war, reason for change, changes made, effects of the changes, and at least one color image representing their technology. Technologies to be assigned are: surgery, amputation, disease treatment, field treatment, and hospitals. (See graphic organizer entitled, *Changes in Medicine During the Civil War*.)

e. Students will share the most interesting fact they learned about their topic as a closure.

**Day Two – Medical Advancement (continued)**

a. Students will begin class by completely filling all rows of their *Changes in Medicine During the Civil War* graphic organizer. This will be done by completing a station rotation using the products created by the students the day before.

b. Independently, students will use the information gathered to compose a fictional diary entry (patient, doctor, or loved one) describing what medical treatment was like for the soldiers during the Civil War.

c. As a closing activity, students will share which medical advancement they believe is most groundbreaking and why.

**Day Three – Advancement in Weaponry**

a. **Cue Set** – Students will once again use a SmartBoard to explore the *Civil War 150* interactive website. This time the focus will be on the section entitled, “Weapons of the War.” Students make a prediction for which technology was the most useful to the soldiers on the battlefield.
b. Students will take the vocabulary terms for this half of the lesson (technology, minie, telegraph, interchangeable, Ironsides, repeater, and artillery) and create a memory game to play with a set of index cards – half with the words and half with the definitions.

c. Students will play the memory game with partners – one with the cards and one to check their answers. Students will switch positions when the game has been completed.

d. Students will fill in the Technology in the Civil War graphic organizer with their partners using the Civil War 150 website. On this graphic organizer, they will compare Union and Confederate forces and their access to the following technologies: minie ball, telegraph, interchangeable parts, iron-sided ships, and artillery.

e. Students will share their completed graphic organizers with a new partner and compare answers.

Day Four – Advancement in Weaponry (continued)

a. Cue Set – Students will play their match game with a seat partner using the same format as the previous day.

b. The whole class will review the graphic organizer together that was completed the day before.

c. Independently, students will take a stance on which side had the technological advantage. Students will prove their stance in persuasive writing essay using yesterday’s data as their source.

d. As a closing activity, each student will explain his/her argument to another student, then a group of students, and then, as a class, discuss the pros and cons for each side in the Civil War. The class will create a Venn diagram for this closing activity.

Assessment Activity:

Days 1 & 2 – Diary entries and graphic organizers

Days 3 & 4 – Graphic organizers and persuasive writing essays

Extension Activity:

a. Cue Set – Review all the technologies covered in this lesson (medicine & weaponry)

b. Students talk in groups about the value of each change. Students rank them in order of importance to the future of the country.

c. In small groups, discuss the difficulty in deciding on these rankings.

d. Students work independently to decide for themselves what is the most important advancement made during the Civil War era. Each student will create a 3-minute presentation on that technology and why it is the most important to the country. Presentations can be poster or technology based (iMovie, PowerPoint, Prezi, etc.).

e. Students give their presentations the next day.