Introduction

This project originated as a way to help teachers find easily accessible materials for teaching the American Civil War. History teachers search constantly for new materials to supplement their curriculums. This packet can be used as a guide to ease that search when covering this topic.

New teachers will find the information within extremely helpful. When I was in the process of completing my student teaching, I was confronted with the task of introducing ninth graders to the Civil War. I was dismayed when I saw what the textbook covered, giving a watered down and boring version of what I find to be the most important topic in United States history. I was left scrambling for materials on what little time I had available. Needless to say, guiding my way in creating this packet, the needs of the novice teacher were on my mind. However, I feel that the information included in this project will be of use to even the most veteran teachers.

Organization

In this packet, you will find three main sections of information. The first section is an annotated bibliography of Civil War movies I have screened. For each movie, I give a brief description of what it is about, followed by suggestions for how it might be used in a classroom setting. Section two deals with the music of the Civil War. The final section of this packet contains a list of websites for suggested use in the classroom. Each website listed has a short description of what can be found when accessed. The websites deal mostly with primary sources that can be easily accessed by both teachers and students.
References


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Movies in the Class

Introduction

In today's society, it's easy to see that young Americans are influenced by the visual media that constantly bombards their daily actions. Walking through a junior high or high school, you don't need studies to inform you that kids are influenced by what they see on television more than ever before. They use television in order to form perceptions of events and to make decisions in their daily lives. Everything from the actions they take to the clothes they wear is influenced by what they see through advertising and visual stimuli. Our history is being passed to future generations through a variety of media, including Hollywood films, television documentaries, and the Internet (Percoco, 1998). This influence of the media could be harnessed by the classroom teacher and used to spark interest in subjects such as history through movies and other popular sources.

In May of 2000, the American Historical Association conducted a study that represented a cross section of the entire population, consisting of over one thousand Americans. Their results showed that over forty percent of all Americans cited movies and television programs as among the most influential means in which they connect to history and the past (Weinstein, 2003).

The results of this study show a trend indicating that movies and other forms of visual media have quickly become one of the primary methods of presenting historical messages in America. More studies need to be done on how the classroom history teacher can use films in the classroom to successfully influence student learning. It is surprising to find that not many of these studies exist, when movies and television are so influential on the American public today.

As many history teachers and professors know, major Hollywood motion pictures often lack historical accuracy. However, teachers can use even the most far-fetched representations of history constructively in their classrooms. There are several methods a teacher can use when showing films to their students. Allen Yarema, (2003), suggests that instructors assign selected readings on a particular subject to be studied, then after showing the movie, discuss as a class how the film portrayed the historical event. This can be a very effective way to pose historical questions to students and promote further investigation of a subject.

Purpose of Movies in the Classroom

To me, the most important aspect of using film in the classroom is showing students a reconstruction of the past they can't fully obtain through a textbook. Films show the way in which historical figures lived their lives in a way books cannot match. Being able to see the living conditions of a Civil War soldier in camp, or the streets of Charleston the night South Carolina seceded from the Union can leave students with a mental picture they would not otherwise receive from a short reading in the textbook.

In the following pages I have reviewed six Civil War films and included my ideas on how they can be used in the classroom. For each film, there are limitless possibilities on how to use them, whether by showing a movie in full, or using selected scenes. For films that wouldn't work in their entirety, whether due to length of time or subject matter, I have tried to include a description of particular scenes that teachers may find of use in their lessons. I hope that these breakdowns will help teachers incorporate the use of movies into their Civil War curriculums.
Movie List

Movie: *The Civil War: A Film by Ken Burns*
Narration: David McCullough
Release Date: 1990

Synopsis: This Ken Burns masterpiece covers the entire conflict between the states in extensive detail. Burns takes primary sources including photographs, letters, and journals, along with interviews from leading historians, and weaves them together into a wonderful and compelling story. Burns attention to detail in the music chosen for each piece of the documentary and the people chosen to do voiceover narration is what separates his documentaries from the others. This nine part series is put out by PBS in both a VHS and DVD format.

Use in the Classroom: No unit on the Civil War would be complete without exposing students to parts of this documentary series. In my opinion, this series is the perfect classroom tool, and can be used in so many ways that I can't list them all. Having students watch selected clips from the series after briefly reading about it in their books can add a depth to the information being covered in a fun and entertaining way. This film can be useful as an anticipatory set to start discussions on a topic to be covered or as a conclusion to a lesson. After watching a clip from the film, having students free write for ten minutes about what they have seen can also be an effective way for them to learn the material.

Movie: *Glory*
Starring: Matthew Broderick, Denzel Washington, and Morgan Freeman
Release Date: 1989

Synopsis: Glory tells the story of the 54th regiment of Massachusetts, the first all black regiment to fight for the Union in the Civil War. One of the only motion pictures portraying the experience of African American soldiers during the war, Glory received three academy awards, including Denzel Washington as Best Supporting Actor for his role as a runaway slave fighting within the unit.

Use in the Classroom: Most history textbooks can overlook contributions made during the war by African Americans, which is why it is important that films such as Glory make it into the Civil War curriculum. However, this film is not without flaws, and has been attacked for its representation of the historical events surrounding this unit of African American soldiers. Still, it is one of my favorites, and can be an effective teaching tool.

The only way I would use this film is by devoting the class time needed to show it in its entirety. It would make a good introduction into a unit on African Americans and their involvement on both sides during the war. I would also recommend showing beforehand the brief documentary, The True Story of Glory Continues, put out by Tri-Star pictures as a supplement to the movie. Narrated by Morgan Freeman, it explains some of the actual history surrounding the fiction of this film, and can be found on the DVD Special Edition of Glory. Information on this documentary can be found in the following pages of this packet. Used together, discussions are sure to take place with the students in your class on this topic.

The Pepsi Company has released a filtered version of Glory, which is rated R, making it appropriate for use in the classroom. They have dubbed out brief scenes involving language and gory violence, without losing any of the movie's content and flavor.
Movie: Gettysburg  
Starring: Martin Sheen, Tom Berenger, Jeff Daniels, and Sam Elliott  
Release Date: 1993

Synopsis: Based on Michael Shaara's Pulitzer Prize winning book, The Killer Angels, this movie covers the battle of Gettysburg in extensive detail. Nearly four hours in length, this epic film gives an almost skirmish-by-skirmish account of the three-day battle that would turn the tide of the war. Thousands of Civil War re-enactors were used during the filming of this project, done on location in Gettysburg, PA.

Use in the Classroom: Highlights from the movie include a speech given by Col. Laurence Chamberlain (Jeff Daniels) to a group of over a hundred mutineers he is given command on the day before the battle. The speech does an eloquent job of summing up the cause of the Union during the Civil War. The entire scene takes about ten minutes in length, and would be a very effective introduction to a unit on the Civil War.

Chamberlain's defense of Little Round Top on the second day of battle is given extensive time. The scene first explains how this unit was the extreme flank of the Union position, indicating the importance of what took place. Charge after charge from Confederate soldiers are repelled before Chamberlain's men begin running low on ammunition, forcing him to order the infamous "swinging gate" charge down the hillside, taking the Confederates by surprise. The vivid scene will leave students with a lasting image of what took place that no textbook can duplicate.

During the last fifty minutes of this film, Pickett's Charge comes to life, using very unique aerial photography of the Confederate units marching across the mile of open field. Students will have a clear understanding of the difficulties these men faced in the doomed attack after watching this scene. More or less time can be spent on this, depending on whether or not the planning stage of the charge is covered, which I recommend. The film does an accurate job explaining the impossibility of victory, as General Longstreet, (Berenger), tries to convince General Lee, (Sheen), why the attack should not be made.

To do this movie justice, having students read Shaara's book before watching this film would be an ideal situation. Due to time constraints within the Social Studies curriculum, this may not be possible. However, an optional extra credit assignment or project alternative could be developed using the book and movie together.

Movie: The Birth of a Nation  
Director: D. W. Griffith  
Release Date: 1915

Synopsis: The Birth of a Nation is widely considered one of the classic silent movies in American film history. However, it is also one of the most controversial movies ever created. The film depicts the life of two families, one from the North, and one from the South, and takes place during the Civil War time period and Reconstruction that followed. The film is best known for its very racist and pro-confederacy views towards the Civil War and the social issues of this era. Part 1 covers the Civil War to the assassination of President Lincoln, where Part 2 focuses on Reconstruction and the rise of the Ku Klux Klan.

Use in the Classroom: The film is lengthy (154 minutes), but that is not the only reason for cautioned use in the classroom. The controversial nature of the film's subject matter and the distorted views presented in this movie make it impossible to recommend for classroom use in its entirety. The simple fact that it is a silent movie might deter the interest of most students as well. However, the scene at the end of part 1 depicting the assassination of President Lincoln at Ford's Theatre could be useful as a short video clip to introduce or reinforce a discussion of the event. An extra credit assignment could also be created from this film, asking students to compare historical truth to the history presented by this movie.
**Movie: North and South**  
**Starring:** Patrick Swayze, James Read, Lesley-Anne Down, Kirstie Alley  
**Release Date:** 1985  

**Synopsis:** This miniseries was created from the John Jakes novel and produced by the director of Roots. The story involves the friendship of two men, Orry Main, (Swayze), from South Carolina and George Hazard, (Read), from Pennsylvania who meet at West Point in the years before the Civil War conflict. The six part series shows the growing relationship between the two men, and their families, as the political and social climate of the United States changes and the country heads toward the Civil War after the election of Abraham Lincoln.

Much of this film is overpowered by the love stories surrounding the characters involved, but the authenticity of the time period displayed in the series is very accurate. This miniseries can be of use in the classroom, but needs to be screened carefully by the instructor before use. Several scenes depicting the overall climate of the country in this time period can be found, of which, a few are listed below. Each one is under ten minutes in length and could be used as an anticipatory set of a subject or a wrap up of a discussion.

I have found that there is yet another six parts to this series titled North and South-Book II, but I was unable to find copies in order to review them. Book II would most likely be more helpful in teaching the Civil War itself due to the fact that the six episodes I reviewed end with the start of the war and Book II picks up at the start of the war.

**Use in the Classroom:** Episodes 1 & 2- Selected scenes could be used to show the social and political issues surrounding the country in the years before the start of the war. Episode 2 covers the prelude to the war with Mexico.

Episode 3- There is a scene at the beginning of this episode depicting an abolitionist meeting in Philadelphia. Another scene later in part three shows a duel between two Southern Gentleman.

Episode 5- A short scene near the beginning of Part 5 shows a New Orleans political rally in support of succession in which the participants sing Dixie before concluding the meeting. Later in this episode, following the scene of the train station at Harper's Ferry, northern abolitionists sing "John Brown's Body" in the street outside the insane asylum cell of a woman who took part in the train holdup. They are mourning the recent execution of John Brown. Near the conclusion of episode 5, a political rally before the presidential election is shown in Charleston, SC.

**Movie: Glory- The True Story of Glory Continues**  
**Narration:** Morgan Freeman  
**Release Date:** 1990  

**Synopsis:** The documentary describes the true story surrounding the men of the 54th Massachusetts regiment depicted in the motion picture Glory. Selected scenes from the movie accompany historical quotes and photographs, all while being narrated by Morgan Freeman, one of the stars of the movie.

**Use in the Classroom:**

This documentary is the perfect companion to the motion picture. It helps fill in the holes left by the screenplay written for the movie portrayal. It will give students more information on the regiment, for example, both of Fredrick Douglass' sons fought in this regiment but were not in the script. It also gives a full account of the regiment's actions, much of which is left out of the original movie.
By using this documentary after viewing the actual movie, the instructor could lead a discussion or debate on why the movie depicted the famous African American regiment in the manner it did. In addition to this documentary, I also recommend a section of the book titled *Past Imperfect: History According to the Movies*, by Mark C. Carves. There is a section analyzing the movie "Glory" for its historical accuracy that is quite helpful for use in a classroom discussion used with the information presented in this documentary.

**Additional Movies to Consider for use in the Classroom**

*North and South- Book II-* (1986) Warner Studios- Patrick Swayze, James Read  
*Shenandoah-* (1965) Universal Studios, James Stewart  
*The Red Badge of Courage-* (1951) Warner Studios, Audie Murphy  
*Andersonville-* (1996) Turner Home Video  
Music in the Class

Introduction

Music was an enormous part of the daily life of the Civil War soldier. Sitting around the campfire at night, songs could be heard drifting through the air, mixing with the melody of crickets in the field. Robert E. Lee is quoted as saying, "I don't believe we can have an army without music (Caller & Edgington, 2001, 147)."

To put it simply, music is what kept the soldiers going. The toil put on their bodies by constant marching and intense fighting was eased by music. Around the campfire at night wasn't the only place music could be heard, as soldiers also sang while marching from one place to the next in order to break up the monotony of their day, or break up the tension they may be feeling. It is only fitting that teachers convey some of the songs and their different meanings to the students in a history class when covering the topic of the Civil War.

Using songs of the Civil War, arguably more than any other instructional method, involves students emotionally in what is being discussed in class. It had the same emotional response on the men who sang them; by either helping them cope with fear, or motivating them to charge headlong into battle. Regardless of the purpose, music had a profound affect on the players in this period of history. A story illustrating this point involves a group of Confederate officers listening to Union soldiers celebrating in Richmond soon after General Lee had surrendered at Appomattox. These Union soldiers were singing their favorite songs to celebrate the end of the conflict, and after hearing the music, one of the Confederate officers announced, "Gentleman, if we had had your songs, we'd have whipped you out of your boots (Waller & Edgington, 2001, 147)."

The music of the Civil War period can be categorized into five different headings. These are: (1) celebrating the cause, (2) serious soldier life, (3) lighthearted soldier life, (4) separation, and (5) loss. In category one, celebrating the cause, the songs generally consist of marching tunes that describe what the men on the sides of the North and South were fighting for. Category two, dealing with the serious side of soldier life, involves songs about the difficulty and hardships associated with daily life as a member of one of the two armies. Category three gives a more comical, or lighthearted look at the life of a soldier. These songs gave the men an outlet to laugh and joke about the problems they faced everyday. The category of separation analyzes issues such as being away from loved ones and the homesickness this brought on for many soldiers. Many of the men involved in this conflict had never ventured far from home, so the experience of life in the army was particularly hard, and is expressed through these songs. Music dealing with loss includes songs that express the remorse of a family who have lost someone involved in the conflict, or of a soldier who has lost a friend (Caller & Edgington, 2001).

In the resource list following this introduction are lyrics to some songs of the Civil War period that fit each one of these five categories. It is helpful when using these to have an overhead transparency or a copy of the lyrics for students to read while they listen to the music. It has been argued that the use of music in the classroom can help students remember key concepts better (Palmer & Burroughs, 2002). My hope is that this project will help teachers to incorporate this strategy into their classrooms.
Music List

Celebrating the Cause

- Dixie's Land  http://www.fortunecity.com/tinpan/parton/2/dixie.html
- Union Dixie  http://www.fortunecity.com/tinpan/parton/2/awaydown.html
- The Bonnie Blue Flag  http://www.civilwarmusic.net/display_song.php?song=bonnieblue
- The Battle Cry of Freedom (Southern)  http://www.civilwarpoetry.org/confederate/songs/southern_battcry.html
- We Are Coming, Father Abraham  http://www.fortunecity.com/tinpan/parton/2/abraam.html
- Maryland, My Maryland  http://www.mdarchives.state.md.us/msa/mdmanual/01glance/html/symbols/lyricsco.html
- When Sherman Marched Down to the Sea  http://www.civilwarmusic.net/display_song.php?song=sherman
- First Arkansas Marching Song  http://www.civilwarpoetry.org/union/songs/arkansas.html
- Follow the Drinking Gourd  http://www.madison.k12.wi.us/planetarium/ftdg1.htm

Serious Soldier Life

- Tenting on the Old Campground  http://www.fortunecity.com/tinpan/parton/2/tenting.html
- All Quiet Along the Potomac  http://www.fortunecity.com/tinpan/parton/2/allquiet.html

Lighthearted Soldier Life

- Goober Peas  http://www.civilwarmusic.net/display_song.php?song=gooberpeas

Separation

- Corporal Schnaaps  http://www.civilwarpoetry.org/union/songs/schnapps.html
- Lorena  http://www.fortunecity.com/tinpan/parton/2/lorena.html
- When This Cruel War is Over (Northern Version)  http://www.civilwarpoetry.org/union/songs/cruel.html
- When This Cruel War is Over (Southern Version)  http://www.civilwarpoetry.org/confederate/songs/cruel2.html
- Just Before the Battle, Mother  http://www.fortunecity.com/tinpan/parton/2/justbef.html
- Kathleen, Mavourneen  http://freepages.music.rootsweb.com/~edgmon/stkathleen.htm

Loss

- The Vacant Chair  http://www.fortunecity.com/tinpan/parton/2/vacant.html
- Grafted into the Army  http://www.civilwarmusic.net/display_song.php?song=grafted
- The Faded Coat of Blue  http://www.bluegrasslyrics.com/bluegrass_song.cfm-recordID=s00262.htm
- Somebody's Darling  http://freepages.music.rootsweb.com/~edgmon/cwdarling.htm
- Was My Brother in the Battle  http://www.fortunecity.com/tinpan/parton/2/wasmy.html
Audio Suggestions for the Classroom

- The Civil War Box Set- A four disc set has 87 tracks with vocalists singing lyrics to the songs in a traditional way. It can be found on Amazon.com for $49.98 and used by itself would be enough to supplement your curriculum.

- The Civil War: Traditional American Songs and Instrumental Music Featured in the Film by Ken Burns- This disc has instrumental music to some of the songs included in this packet, taken from the soundtrack of the television series. It would be a good CD to have playing as students walk into the classroom. It only costs $13.99 on Amazon.com.
Primary Sources

Introduction

The use of primary sources in junior high and high school history classes has been widely overlooked in the recent past. The 2001 National Assessment of Educational Progress in United States History found that eighty seven percent of students in the fourth grade, seventy percent of students in the eighth grade, and seventy seven percent of students in the twelfth grade used primary source documents just once a month or less (Lee, 2003).

These numbers indicate that a majority of history teachers are not exposing their students to these first hand historical narratives. There are a number of possible reasons why this might be the case. I believe the primary reason to be a lack of education in the history teaching community about the availability of these documents.

Before the invention of computers and the Internet, historians were faced with the challenge of searching through massive, dusty archives to find many of these primary source documents. To make matters worse, these documents were scattered in archives all over the country, making it an inconvenience for teachers to go in search of material with their cramped and busy schedules.

The Internet has revolutionized the archival system. There are an abundance of rich primary sources that have been recently made easy to locate. This new resource needs to be recognized and implemented by history teachers. These newly available documents allow for learner-centered experiences in the history classroom (Lee, 2003). Using primary sources turns the teacher into a facilitator, allowing students the chance to explore history and form their own knowledge of an event being studied.

History is often taught through textbooks as if the subject were a seamless course of events, with no gaps, no unanswered questions, and no conflicting viewpoints to be addressed (Yeager & Morris, 1995). The power and intrigue of studying history is that there is never one right answer to anything. Studying past events to gain a context to what is currently taking place is what motivates most people in this field. Students, however, are often shown history in a form of regurgitating factoids for next week's exam. Once the exam is finished, students forget what has been learned to make room for a new set of facts to be memorized for the next test. Why do history teachers allow themselves to fall into this trap of relying on the textbook for their curriculum?

Purpose

The rationale for this section of the project is twofold. One, I believe students should be exposed to multiple perspectives on historical issues of the past and present. Two, I believe students should be exposed to primary sources so that they can develop their own knowledge, skills, and predispositions. Students should not believe that the development of knowledge is only found in textbooks. A failure to push students beyond a reliance of the textbook defeats the purpose of studying history.

By dealing with primary sources directly, students are more likely to engage in asking questions, thinking critically, making reasoned inferences, and developing reasoned explanations and interpretations of historical events and issues (Singleton & Giese, 1999). These are the higher order cognitive processes we as teachers strive for our students to reach.

For this reason, I have compiled a list of the best resources available on the Internet for studying the Civil War through primary source documents. Teachers will find these resources to be easily accessible, holding a wealth of information, and lending themselves well to classroom use. I have concentrated on noting only the best websites; many more are out there. Typing, "The Civil Car," on a Google search turns
up over three million hits. Needless to say, I did not look all of them up. The sites found within this packet are mostly provided by leading American universities, specialized projects and archives, or individual historians I deemed to be trustworthy. As always, when using the Internet in the classroom, teachers will need to preview the material before its use with students.

**Primary Sources List**

**Website:** [http://www.madison.kl2.wi.us/planetarium/ftdgl.htm](http://www.madison.kl2.wi.us/planetarium/ftdgl.htm)

*Description:* This website was put together by the New Jersey State Museum Planetarium and the Raritan Valley Community College Planetarium. It gives a guide to educators on how to use the song, "Follow the Drinking Gourd" in their classroom lessons. This song can be found in the music section of this packet. One of the nice things about this site is that it breaks down the song verse by verse, giving the meanings of the words used. It also has pictures of drinking gourds and diagrams of the stars in the sky, showing students how the slaves associated one with the other. There are valuable links to a NASA website which complements the information on the background of the song, and a link to an astronomy background lesson which is associated with the song. Using the song with the information provided on this website is an easy way to incorporate astronomy into the history curriculum.

**Website:** [http://www.ukans.edu/carrie/docs/amdocs index.html](http://www.ukans.edu/carrie/docs/amdocs index.html)

*Description:* Developed by the University of Kansas, this is a well-known site among history enthusiasts. It includes primary source documents in the study of American history from the fifteenth century through President Bush’s speech to Congress following September 11. There is a complete section on the Civil War, which includes correspondence between generals and political leaders, the Gettysburg Address, and Lincoln's 2nd Inaugural Speech. This site is not only useful for the study of the Civil War, but for any United States history course.

**Website:** [http://memory.loc.gov/](http://memory.loc.gov/)

*Description:* This is the homepage for the Library of Congress's *American Memory* project. They have developed a complete collection of historical materials and made them available in a digital format over the Internet for a wide variety of historical subjects. The area devoted to the Civil War I note here for the photographs located within. Many are from the famous Civil War photographer Mathew Brady. The photograph section includes over 1,100 different pictures taken during the war that are easily accessible over the Internet. There is also a Civil War map area, where you can find a wonderful battlefield map of Gettysburg showing troop locations in the field. This website is a good resource for teachers looking for material to supplement their lessons or power point presentations.

**Website:** [http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/women/digital.html](http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/women/digital.html)

*Description:* This website has been provided by the Special Collections Library at Duke University. It is devoted to the study of women's history, and has a special section entirely devoted to Civil War women. This is a rich site of primary sources belonging to women on both sides of the conflict. The three collections featured on the site include the Rose O'Neal Greenhow Papers, a Cashington Society member and secessionist. She is known best as a spy for the Confederate States of America during the war and correspondence between her and members of the Confederacy can be accessed on this website. There is also a section on Sarah E. Thompson, a Union sympathizer in Greeneville, Tennessee, which includes correspondence between her and members of the Union during the war. Also noted is the diary of a young girl in Gallatin, Tennessee, during the Union occupation of her town. Along with these three-featured women is a link to other Civil War primary sources of women that is available on the Internet from the Duke University Collection.
Website: http://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/fpn.html
Description: This is a site devoted to first person narratives on the American South, put together by the University of North Carolina Library. The description given on the website says that the site, "focuses on the diaries, autobiographies, memoirs, travel accounts, and ex-slave narratives of relatively inaccessible populations: women, African Americans, enlisted men, laborers, and Native Americans." Any teacher of history looking for a collection of narratives on life in the South during the war need look no further than this website. It has an exhaustive alphabetical list of their electronic texts, which are composed of journals, diaries, and letters. The site is very easy to navigate, and a helpful source of information on life in the southern states.

Website: http://www.ibiscom.com
Description: The website provides a collection of primary sources on just about every area of world history. By clicking on the Civil War link, you are taken into a page that contains several primary source accounts of what happened at different battles and events surrounding the war. Following each account, the author has given the references from which the information has been obtained. This site is not as valuable to the Civil War as some of the others I have reviewed, but still worth looking into for its primary source materials.

Website: http://historymatters.gmu.edu/
Description: Put together by George Mason University with support from the National Endowment for the Humanities, this website has been created to help high school and college teachers of U.S. History find resources to use in their classrooms. One section deals with primary sources, another links past events with current issues today. There are links to guides for analyzing primary source documents in the classroom and a link to assignments other teachers have created using web resources. If one of these links and others does not point you to what you are looking for, there is a quick search box to aid you in your hunt for information. By typing "Civil War" into the quick search box, it finds helpful websites with primary source information helpful on the topic, many of which are compiled in this packet. This website is not only a helpful resource on researching information on the Civil War, but any topic enclosed within U.S. History.

Website: http://www.eivilwarletters.com
Description: This intriguing website is the home to a collection of letters and other correspondence between a 21 year old Iowa soldier during the Civil War and a woman back home. The letters describe the conditions inside Union camps, soldier's frustrations during the war, and of the diseases that inflicted heavy casualties on the men surrounding this young soldier. The website also provides links to lesson plans other teachers have created for their classrooms when using the letters provided by the website. The letters are listed in a helpful chronological table of contents page with brief descriptions of what each letter is about.

Website: http://www.letterscivilwar.com
Description: The website provides a compilation of primary source materials written during the Civil War that appeared in the Massachusetts newspapers. By clicking on the provided links, you are brought to pages that include the diaries of soldiers, letters written to home, memoirs of war experiences written after the wars conclusion, and other fascinating stories involving experiences in the Civil War. The website is very easy to navigate, and provides a wealth of information. Some of the diaries take a while to load on slower computers because of the file sizes involved. Keep in mind when searching this site, that you will only find information on groups originating from Massachusetts.
Website: http://www.cwc.lsu.edu
Description: This website is home to the United States Civil War Center created by Louisiana State University. It provides an index of information related to the Civil War that can be found on the Internet. One fascinating area of the site is entitled "Beyond Face Value," and includes a collection of images and narrative detailing the images of slavery found on assorted currency used by the Confederacy during the war years. You can find the link to this area at the bottom left of the website under the heading "Virtual Exhibits." The other option under Virtual Exhibits is a collection of children's books published by the North and South during the war. This is titled Blue and Gray for Boys and Girls and offers a museum-like tour of some of the books, including pictures of the books in special cases at the university with a short description of what the book is about and the history behind it. The index of Civil War websites is categorized into many different subtopics such as flags, food, medicine, battles, etc. Each category has several different websites listed to help you find what you're looking for, and over 7,000 total are included in the index. This website is an excellent source to start an information hunt on any topic dealing with the war.

Website: http://sunsite.utk.edu/civil-war
Description: This website is maintained by a Dr. George Hoemann, Assistant Dean of Distance Education and Independent Study at the University of Tennessee. The website started as a class project in 1995 and has grown exponentially since its launch. Much like the LSU website, it offers links to information found on the web about the Civil War and a mind-boggling list of topics. I highly recommend both this site and the LSU site as a place to point students and teachers who wish to search for information about any topic surrounding the war.

Website: http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/vshadow2
Description: This website titled, The Valley of the Shadow: Two Communities in the American Civil War, traces two communities, one Northern and one Southern, through the Civil War experience. The two communities involved are Franklin County, Pennsylvania, and Augusta County, Virginia. The sources that can be found within the site include newspapers, letters, diaries, photographs, maps, church records, population census, agricultural census, and military records. Part one of the website includes information concerning the coming of the war in the two communities, whereas part two provides information on the war years. What teachers will find helpful is links to teacher resources when using the website. These include lesson plans for grades 7-12, and research paper topics for high school and college students. The website has won numerous awards for the depth of information it provides to students and instructors of the Civil War. A word of caution, the site is massive and can eat up large parts of your day if you are not careful. There is so much content to be found within this site that I strongly recommend teachers to thoroughly overview what can be found within the site before attempting to use it with their students. Each section of the website divides the information into a floor plan, much like museum exhibits which can be visited. By clicking on areas of the floor plan, you are taken to pages where you can find the information you are looking for.

Website: http://www.civil-war.net
Description: This website offers a wide variety of documents and resources detailing events of the Civil War. Particularly useful are the primary sources found on this site such as battle reports from the field describing confrontations between the two armies. There are also many letters and diaries to be found, including the Sullivan Ballou letter recited on the Ken Bums documentary. The site makes finding information clear, and is presented in a layout that does not leave the eyes feeling tired trying to search for information as others sometimes do. Another strength of this website is a fairly complete list of major speeches given by Abraham Lincoln during the war years that are hard to find in other places.
Website: http://www.civilwar.com
Description: This is a well organized website providing information on the Civil Car. One thing I like about this website is the music section, which provides information on each song along with links to the lyrics. The list of songs is not as complete as the website provided by Kathie Watson, but still may be helpful if you are looking for information not found there. The website also provides a list of battles, and these are arranged in two ways, chronologically and by state. There is also a short list of diaries and letters that may interest some looking for more primary sources not found at other sites.

Website: http://www.civilwar.si.edu/home.html
Description: This site is home to the Smithsonian's collection of Civil War materials. The power of this site is that for each detailed description of an item, there is a full color photo of the item as well, lending itself well to the development of power point presentations. The collections found on this website are very interesting to look at, making it possible for students to take a tour of the museum without traveling all the way to Washington D.C. The pictures are very high quality, but I would expect nothing less from the Smithsonian Institution. Educators will also find the timeline and resources sections helpful. The timeline page gives a year-by-year count of events with brief descriptions. The references section offers a list of books recommended by the people at Smithsonian, as well as links to helpful websites.

Website: http://www.civilwarhome.com
Description: The best way to describe this website would be to tell you that it is a collection of assorted works on the Civil Car assembled into one place by a guy who calls himself "Shotgun." Needless to say, if you wanted to use this as a resource for your students, prescreening would be a must. Chen I investigated the site, I looked at several of the links, including the opinions about the war from Shotgun himself. I didn't see any improper language that would keep it out of the classroom, but I was also only skimming different parts of that link. Shotgun is a Southerner and has committed his life to studying the Civil Car. With all that said, most of the information on the site looks to be legit and trustworthy. There is a wide variety of material on different players in the war and descriptions of many events surrounding the war. Shotgun has divided the website into easy to use categories with links to the information you are searching for. Clicking on someone's name or an event links you to the information you have chosen, with a reference at the bottom of the page as to where the information has been taken from.