

“Billy Yank” and “Johnny Reb”: Ordinary Soldiers in the Civil War Student Worksheet

Introduction:

During the Civil War, “citizen soldiers” from all walks of life fought for the Union and for the Confederacy. For many, going into the military and serving was the first time they had ever been more than a few miles from their homes and farms. Many of these soldiers found military life difficult and monotonous. Disease in the camps was common because of poor sanitation. Soldiers also suffered from bad food, and often they were unable to enjoy comforts that they enjoyed before the war; for example, Northern soldiers found it nearly impossible to get Southern tobacco for their pipes. Because of the Union blockade of southern ports, Confederate soldiers could not find coffee.

Directions: Answer the following questions about the two sources.

Life of a Union Soldier: Excerpts from the Civil War Memoirs of Daniel Crotty

http://www.socialstudies.com/c/article.html?article@crotty_unionsoldier

Life of a Confederate Soldier: Excerpts from the Civil War Memoirs of Sam Watkins

http://www.socialstudies.com/c/article.html?article@watkins_confederatesoldier

1. First, read the section of Crotty’s memoirs entitled “The Routine of Camp Life.” In your own words, describe the daily routine that Crotty experienced.

2. Scroll to Crotty’s account of “Winter in Camp.” In your own words, discuss how Crotty writes about how the men dealt with the deaths of fellow soldiers in camp.

3. Next, read Crotty’s account of “Drawing Rations and Army Cooking.” Describe what a regular meal for Crotty and other men he served with might have included. Describe the methods by which the food would have been prepared.

4. Next, go to the Watkins account. Read the section called "Impressions After a Battle." How does Watkins describe a soldier's life?

5. Read Watkins' account of "The Field Hospital in Atlanta." How does he describe the condition of the patients in the hospital?

6. Compare how Crotty and Watkins saw the life and duty of the ordinary soldier compared to that of officers. (Look at Crotty's account of "The Fate of a Soldier After Battle" and Watkins' "The Field Hospital in Atlanta.") In what ways are they similar? In what ways are they different?

7. After looking at segments of Crotty's memoirs and Watkins' writings, describe what you believe the average soldier's life would have been like during the Civil War.