

Teacher's Handout 1: What Happened to Soldiers in the U.S. Civil War?

Instructions: Respond to the following questions based on the materials presented in "The Horrors of War" exhibition section

(<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/exhibition/LifeandLimb/horrorsofwar.html>).

1. "No tongue can tell, no mind conceive, no pen portray the horrible sights I witnessed."
Whose quote is this? [A soldier who was wounded at Antietam.](#)

What does the quote tell you about the experience of fighting the U.S. Civil War?

[Responses will vary.](#)

2. How were most of the Civil War soldiers prepared? What were some key dangers that soldiers faced at that time?

[Many soldiers were young and without understanding or direct experience of the real fighting, violence, devastation, and destruction in a war. They often were put into battle with little or no training. Though many had predicted a quick end to the war, it dragged on and morale suffered. Many soldiers also served in unfamiliar places, far away from their home towns and cities.](#)

[Rifled muskets were more accurate and fired farther than older weapons. Minié balls caused more damage because they changed shape, shattering bone and pulling in bits of skin and clothing, increasing chances of infection as well. This resulted in many amputations.](#)

[Camps were very crowded so infections spread easily. Many young soldiers were exposed to childhood diseases and fell ill, never even seeing combat.](#)

3. Examine the photos and illustrations in "The Horrors of War." Explain what these images tell you about the experiences of the soldiers in the war that the words alone could not? ([Depending on the assessment of the photo of the "Collecting the remains of the dead," teachers may omit or change this question.](#))

[Responses will vary.](#)

4. What new understanding have you gained about the Civil War soldiers?

[Responses will vary.](#)