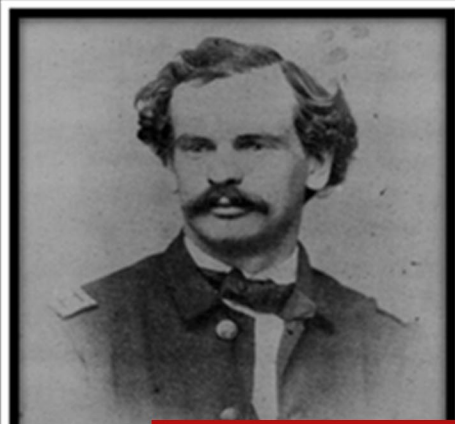


Lesson
Plan
Middle
& High
School
Grades

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Macculloch Hall Historical Museum

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From the Front Lines: Using Civil War Letters and Poems by Lindley Miller

●●● Overview

Students analyze a letter and poem written by Lindley Miller (1834-1864) to learn about the life of a Civil War soldier in the Union Army.

●●● Essential Question

What can personal letters and writings teach us about the past?

●●● Objectives

Students will:

- Read and analyze primary source materials.
- Use evidence collected from the poem and letter to identify some of the feelings a soldier had during the war.

●●● NJ Student Learning Standards

6.1.8.HistoryCC.5.c: Assess the human and material costs of the Civil War in the North and South.

6.1.12.HistoryCC.3.a: Evaluate the role of religion, music, literature, and media in shaping contemporary American culture over different time periods.

●●● Procedure

1. Define **primary** source. Examine and discuss a poem written by an American soldier during either the wars in Iraq or Afghanistan.
2. Read through the excerpt of Lindley's letter written to his mother and identify his emotions.
3. Read Lindley's poem and as a class compare the tone of the letter and poem. Discuss who the intended audience is for the poem.
4. Discuss as a class reasons why personal letters and poems are important to understanding the implications of the Civil War.

Top photos: Lindley H. Miller (1834-1864), Sherman's March by Thomas Nast (1865)

Notes for Letters and Poems written by Lindley Miller.:

T.W. His Last Words -- "Come On"

Brave Heart! whose pulses throbbed, so quick, so strong for Truth and Right
Like drum-beat, in their perfect time through discords of the fight;
For years, thy mind had braced its' thought, to meet this battle-strain;
It came: the rifle-bullet hissed, and dark was flash of eye and brain.
Too late! Thy voice had pieced the air with grander longer range,
Go find the hearts of friends afar and never swerve or change--
"Come On!" We will 'till God's ideal shall trample breathless wrong;
"Come On!" We will, till freedom ring through every human song;
"Come On!" We will till not a Soul, in gloom and dread involved,
This darkness shall give way to light this problem shall be solved.

-Lindley H. Miller (1861)

Dearest Mother,

I can hardly realize the fact I am sitting here, in a little hut made of Cypress wood, in the Northern part of Louisiana writing to you way off at Morristown. How strange it seems! When I look back upon my life for the last three months it seems like years of suffering and misery. Since I came here, I have been happier and better every day simply because I think I am accomplishing something for the good of others. Our camp is situated first behind the levee of the Mississippi. Both men and officers live in huts. The men's quarters being cozy sheds open at the side and the officers' separate enclosures. Here are cotton fields all around us and the numerous buildings and enclosures relating to a Southern plantation...

Brief Biography of Lindley Hoffman Miller (1834-1864)

By MHHM Archivist, Al Girardi

Lindley became one of the first Jersey men to join the army when the Civil War broke out, becoming a part of the 7th New York Volunteers (known also as the Silk Stocking Regiment) in April 1861. In July 1863, Lindley was stationed in New York City when the Draft Riots broke out. In August 1863, Miller sought a commission to lead Black troops, who had only recently been allowed to fight. In November of that year, he was appointed a Captain in the First Regiment of Arkansas Volunteers of African Descent, a unit composed largely of former slaves who had been freed by the Emancipation Proclamation. In his letter of January 20, 1864, Miller says, "I wrote a song for them (his men) to the tune of "John Brown" the other day, which the whole regiment sings." Soon it was printed and widely disseminated as the "Song of the First of Arkansas" and was used as a recruiting tool. While serving, Lindley contracted typhoid and later died in New York City on June 30, 1864.

Front Page Image by Thomas Nast. Sherman's March Through Georgia (study) Gouache c. 1865