Life on the Homefront: Kinston, North Carolina
A Lesson for 4th Graders

CSS NEUSE
CIVIL WAR
INTERPRETIVE CENTER
Kinston, NC
The CSS *Neuse* was one of 26 ironclads commissioned by the Confederate navy. Having a wide, flat bottom, the vessel resembled a river barge. When completed, the twin-screw steamer was covered with iron armor and measured 158 feet long and 34 feet wide. Delays in construction, low water, and lack of support from the Army prevented the gunboat from entering into full duty, but she was able to fire on Union forces at the battle of Wyse Fork in March 1865. When Union troops occupied Kinston later in March, the *Neuse* was burned by its crew, resulting in a large explosion in her port bow, which sank the vessel.

The muddy waters of the Neuse River preserved the gunboat for nearly 100 years. Private efforts to recover the ship began in 1961; but poor weather, lack of funds, and ownership controversies prevented the ship from being raised until 1963. A year later the hull was transported to the Governor Caswell Memorial on W. Vernon Ave. Amazingly, nearly 15,000 artifacts were recovered from the ship. The *Neuse* collection, one of the largest for a Confederate naval vessel, provides valuable insight into 19th-century shipbuilding and naval warfare. For additional history and lessons visit: [http://civilwarexperience.ncdcr.gov/neuse/education.htm](http://civilwarexperience.ncdcr.gov/neuse/education.htm)

**Purpose:**

To educate fourth grade children on daily life in Kinston and Lenoir Co. North Carolina during the Civil War. Children should be able to compare and contrast life during the Civil War and life today. Students will have a clear understanding of how life in Kinston was changed by the Civil War. This lesson was written to provide information about children’s roles in the Civil War. Children will be asked to read and interpret articles from the Tar Heel Junior Historian and work together to brainstorm what life would have been like if they were living in the 1860’s.

This lesson can be used as a whole or used in part to supplement other concepts learned. The main goal of this lesson is to teach children how other children in Kinston NC would have lived during the Civil War.

Read the background information to have a better idea of what life was like in Kinston before and during the Civil War. This lesson would be a great follow up lesson on antebellum life in North Carolina. Be sure to emphasize aspects of rural life including but not limited to farming, chores, free time, and school.

**Essential Standard and Common Core Goals:**

**Social Studies:**

4.H.1.3 Explain how people, events and developments brought about changes to communities in various regions of North Carolina.
4.H.1.4 Analyze North Carolina’s role in major conflicts and wars from the Pre-Colonial period through Reconstruction.
4.E.1.2 Understand how scarcity and choice in a market economy impacts business decisions.
4.E.2.2 Analyze the historical and contemporary role that major North Carolina industries have played in the state, nation and world.

**Information and Technology:**
4.TT.1.3 Use technology tools to present data and information (multimedia, audio and visual recording, online collaboration tools, etc.).
4.RP.1.1 Implement a research process by collaborating effectively with other students.

**Math:**
Build fractions from unit fractions by applying and extending previous understandings of operations on whole numbers.

4.NF.3. Understand a fraction \( \frac{a}{b} \) with \( a > 1 \) as a sum of fractions \( \frac{1}{b} \).
   a. Understand addition and subtraction of fractions as joining and separating parts referring to the same whole.
   b. Solve word problems involving addition and subtraction of fractions referring to the same whole and having like denominators, e.g., by using visual fraction models and equations to represent the problem.

**Science:**
4.P.1—Explain how various forces affect the motion of an object.
4.P.2—Understand the composition and properties of matter before and after they undergo a change or interaction.
4.L.1—Understand the effects of environmental changes, adaptations and behaviors that enable animals (including humans) to survive in changing habits.
4.L.2 - Understand food and the benefits of vitamins, minerals and exercise.

**Reading:**
Reading Standards for Informational Text K–5
Grade 4—Key Ideas & Details
Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text. Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text. Explain events, procedures, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text, including what happened and why, based on specific information in the text.
Grade 4—Craft & Structure
Describe the overall structure (e.g., chronology, comparison, cause/effect, problem/solution) of events, ideas, concepts, or information in a text or part of a text.

Writing: Grade 4—Text Type & Purpose
Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.
- Introduce a topic clearly and group related information in paragraphs and sections; include formatting (e.g., headings), illustrations, and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
- Develop the topic with facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples related to the topic.
- Link ideas within categories of information using words and phrases (e.g., another, for example, also, because).
- Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
- Provide a concluding statement or section related to the information or explanation presented.

Materials Needed:

Provided:
Picture of Sweet potatoes
Picture of Corn
Picture of Wood Burning Stove
Picture of Cast Iron Pans
Picture of Horse Pulling Plow
Picture of Freshly Plowed Field
Picture of Carders
Picture of Spinning Wheel
Picture of Loom
Picture of 1860’s School House
Picture of the CSS Neuse

Not Provided:
Masking Tape (for hopscotch game)
Wooden Spoon
Packet of Seeds (corn, pumpkin, beans, etc.)
Cotton Balls
Cotton Fabric Sample
Background Information:

Life in Lenoir County prior to the Civil War was strikingly similar to the rest of rural eastern North Carolina. In 1860, the county’s population was approximately 11,000 of which 6,000 were free citizens and 5,000 were slaves. Kinston was the major population center and citizenship was split almost equally between free citizens and slaves. 700 people were free and about 650 were slaves. Kinston was also the agricultural center in the county.

Cotton served as the major cash crop, and farming was also a significant source of income for the residents of Lenoir County. Sweet potatoes and corn were key to the survival of people in Kinston. Livestock such as milk cows, pigs, chickens, and sheep were important to the county’s livelihood. Pigs became the most significant source of income. (Still today, the pork industry provides a source of income to people living in eastern North Carolina.) Kinston was also very much a trade and manufacturing center in the area. Professions such as carpenters, painters, teachers, brick masons, clerks, butchers, druggists, and merchants all conducted business in Kinston. Lenoir County was home to several successful manufacturing businesses. A large lumber mill, shoe factory, carriage company, and bakery all called Kinston home.

There were also a large number of churches located in Lenoir County during the 1860s. These buildings served many purposes. For example, during the Civil War the Methodist Church acted as the hospital for wounded soldiers. They also served as school buildings and community gathering places.

The outbreak of the Civil War drastically changed life in Lenoir County. The town of Kinston was no longer an industrial or agricultural center. Men were drafted into the Confederate army, thus creating a large gap in labor. Also, with the fall of New Bern, many slaves living in Kinston escaped to Union territory to gain freedom. The significant drop in slave population contributed to the loss of labor in Kinston. Women and children were left to continue working in agriculture and manufacturing. During the Civil War, Kinston’s population was primarily composed of women and children. Many women living in Kinston were refugees from New Bern. These women came to Kinston to escape the Union occupation of New Bern.

The sudden shift in the work force created a new social environment in Lenoir County, and especially Kinston. There was a rise in activism for women’s rights as they gained new responsibilities in the labor force. Women were also responsible for entertaining confederate soldiers stationed in Kinston during the Civil War. There are several records that indicate that women in Kinston hosted Confederate soldiers in their homes. On several occasions soldiers described local women preparing meals and providing evening entertainment.

Women and children also found themselves working in manufacturing plants and in the fields. With the lack of male labor, children were responsible for tending the fields and feeding livestock. Other chores children were responsible for included chopping fire wood, assisting their mothers in cleaning and laundry, and cooking. Education was not a top priority for most families in Lenoir County. Children were needed to work at home to help their mothers.

Prior to the Civil War there were twenty-six schools in Lenoir County. During the war,
many schools shut their doors because of the lack of teachers. Financial resources were not available to support teachers. By the end of the Civil War there were only three teachers working in the county. Many children did not receive an education because of the lack of schools and teachers. Also, during this time children were needed to work at home and on the farms. If children were lucky enough to attend school, they only went to school for three months out of the year. This was a common practice in Lenoir County until World War I.

Although traditional education was not a common practice in Lenoir County, many young boys were given the opportunity to apprentice on the Ironclad CSS Neuse. Boys that were in their teenaged years were allowed to work aboard the CSS Neuse. Apprenticeships were meant to educate boys on Confederate Naval protocol. Boys were meant to be educated in cannon artillery, steam engines, and sailing. Although teenage boys were meant to be apprentices, many were used as gophers or runners for soldiers.

Life in Kinston was drastically changed by the Civil War. Lenoir County became a place of refuge for many women and children from New Bern. Women’s roles changed rapidly with the lack of men in Kinston. The town was no longer a trade and manufacturing hub, but rather a town filled with women and children whose responsibility was to entertain Confederate troops and simply survive.

——— Pre-Learning Activity ————

Have Children make a list of activities that fill their days. You can have them do this individually or make the list as a class. **What are some activities that children during the Civil War might have done?** To get a better general idea of what life was like for children in the Civil War read this article with your students. [http://www.civilwar.org/education/history/on-the-homefront/culture/southernchild.html](http://www.civilwar.org/education/history/on-the-homefront/culture/southernchild.html)

Have them look for main themes in the article. At the end of the lesson have them compare and contrast what they learned from this article with what they do daily.

*Activity 1*

Chores- **How many of you do chores at home?** Children in the 1860s would have been responsible for many tasks at home. Children would have gotten up before sunrise every morning to feed the cows, chickens, and pigs. Also, early morning chores consisted of milking cows and gathering eggs.

(Watch video “Tale of Two Kitchens” [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zy7QrXTlsbk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zy7QrXTlsbk)

**What are the differences between chores children did during the Civil War and what you do at home?** After completing their morning chores, children would have helped their mothers around the house. Chores such as chopping fire wood, sweeping floors, doing laundry, fetching water, and tending gardens were all activities that children were responsible for. Gardening and
cooking were very important daily tasks. Sweet potatoes and corn were important food staples for people living in Kinston during the Civil War. Show students pictures of sweet potatoes and corn. There are several records that indicate these two crops were important to Kinston. For example, Charles Porter, a gunner onboard the CSS Neuse was quoted saying,

“I will now commence and give you all the news that is floating about in this settlement as the Tar Heels say, All is quiet in the town of Kinston. The only sign of life visible in its limits is every morning you can see an old negro about town carrying and singing out sweet potatoes, sweet potatoes. That single cast of potatoes constitutes the market houses, grocery stores and commissary of the celebrated town of Kinston.”

Also, corn was very important to the people of Kinston. Corn was used to feed both people and animals. It was eaten off the cob, ground into meal, and dried and popped as pop-corn. During the Civil War, food was scarce. Farming was essential to feeding families in the 1860s. Many men were away from home fighting in the war. Women and children were left to fend for themselves and to keep the family farms and gardens. Farming was backbreaking work that proved difficult for women to manage by themselves. Also, it is important to keep in mind that women were not only responsible for feeding their children but also Confederate soldiers. We have many records that indicate that Confederate soldiers often visited local women in their homes. Soldiers frequented local homes for food because food was also scarce in the army. Meals provided to soldiers were often the only hot meal that soldiers received. Women had to be creative in their recipes to compensate for the lack of food. We have already talked about the importance of sweet potatoes in Kinston. Children, girls especially, would have helped their mothers in the kitchen. Cooking was very different in the 1860s. People then did not have electric stoves, mixers, or refrigerators. Think back to the video we watched at the beginning of the lesson. How did people cook back then? What kind of tools do you think they used? During this time, people cooked over open fires or over wood burning stoves. They also cooked out of pans made out of cast iron and used kitchen utensils made of wood. Show pictures of cast iron pans and show the wooden spoon. They had to fetch water from wells and they had to make all of their food by hand. Keep in mind that this is a modern version of a recipe used in the 1860’s. People then did not have thermometers on their stoves to tell them when the oven was preheated to 350 degrees. Look at this recipe for Sweet Potato bread. Recipes such as this were common in the Civil War.
Sweet Potato Bread
2/3c vegetable oil
1c honey
4 eggs, beaten
2c cooked, mashed sweet potatoes
1c water

3 1/2 c whole wheat flour
2tsp baking powder
2 tsp baking soda
1 tsp salt
1 tsp cinnamon
½ tsp nutmeg

Mix the moist ingredients together; mix the dry ingredients. Combine. Spoon into two loaf pans, the inside bottoms of which have been greased. Bake at 350 degrees F. for 50 minutes. Yield: 2 loaves.

This recipe would have easily fed a family of four or more. Many women probably doubled their recipes so they could feed more people at once. If we doubled the recipe, how many loaves of bread would we make? If I needed to make 6 loafs of bread what would we need to do? Can you triple the recipe?

*Challenge Question* What if we only wanted to make one loaf of bread, what would we have to do? Can you half this recipe?

To conclude this lesson, recap with the children differences in chores they do and chores that children living during the Civil war would have done. Make a new list of chores that children would have done during the 1860’s. Remind them people living then did not have modern appliances to cook or do their chores. Discuss how they would feel about doing chores without modern conveniences. With this in mind have students orally articulate or write their thoughts on the following:
How do communities develop and how do its residents work together? What role do you already play in your community? What role will you play as you get older?
Sweet Potatoes
Corn Plant and Corn on the Cob
Wood Burning Stove
Cast Iron Dutch Ovens and Cast Iron Pan
*Activity 2*

Work - **Who knows where our food comes from?** (Children will probably answer that food comes from the grocery store.) Explain that before food gets to the store that it has to come from a farm first. Farming was a full time job during the Civil War. **How do you think people grew crops in the 1860s? Do you think they used trucks, tractors, and other farm equipment?** No, during the Civil War people relied on horses and oxen to help them tend their fields. Show the children a picture of a team of horses pulling a plow. Next show this video of a modern farmer plowing a field with a team of draft horses. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bOeClbNPPrKo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bOeClbNPPrKo) For the purpose of comparison show the students this video of a modern farmer plowing with a tractor. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p78B1vLqTQM&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p78B1vLqTQM&feature=related)

Ask the students how technology has impacted how a NC farmer makes an income. This will give the students a better idea of how slow a process plowing with horses is. Explain to the children that farm work was typically a man’s job and that women and children did not work full time in the fields. During the Civil War, however, men were busy fighting and were not at home to tend the fields. Women and children had to step into male roles to continue to provide food for their families. Before food can be brought to the table, there are many steps that must take place. First, a field must be prepared for crops to be planed. Horses or oxen were hitched to a plow and guided by the farmer to turn the soil and create rows where the seeds were to be planted. Show the students a picture of a freshly plowed field. Next, someone had to plant the seeds by hand. Show various seed types to the students. **Do you think that took a long time?** Once the crops were planted, the fields still had to be tended. Weeds needed to be pulled and it was important for the soil to be aerated to absorb nutrients for the plants to grow. In a garden, weeds rob plants from important nutrients they need to grow. People pulled the weeds in order for their plants to grow and be healthier. Also, it was important for the soil to be tilled and aerated. This process turns the dirt and allows oxygen and other nutrients to reach the plants. By pulling weeds and allowing for more oxygen to reach the plants, families were able to provide more food for their families. Finally, when the crops were ready to be harvested, people living during the Civil War did not have equipment to help them harvest their crops. Instead all of their crops had to be picked by hand. Farming was, and still is, a lot of hard work. Women and children had a difficult time keeping up with the amount of work that was required for tending crops. As a result of the lack of male labor, many households fell into poverty and starvation. Also, it is important to remember that women were not only responsible for feeding their families, but also for feeding Confederate soldiers.

Read this article describing the hardships that resulted from the lack of male labor in agriculture. [http://www.ncdcr.gov/Portals/7/Collateral/Database/F00_starvation.pdf](http://www.ncdcr.gov/Portals/7/Collateral/Database/F00_starvation.pdf)
Next answer these questions about the article you just read.
1. What was life like before the Civil War? How did the war change life in North Carolina?
2. What food did people miss the most? Why? How do we preserve food today? How is it different from preservation methods in 1860?
3. What substitutions did women use to make up for the lack of supplies?
4. Why would starvation have stopped the Civil War?
5. Why did some women leave home to earn money?

What about our clothes. Where do they come from? (Children will probably answer the mall or clothing stores.) Explain that before clothes can be made that the fabric must be made from cotton or wool. Today we have fibers such as polyester and nylon that our clothes are made from. These fibers are man-made in factories and are not naturally grown. Fibers such as cotton and wool are found in nature. Cotton comes from a plant and wool comes from sheep fur. In 1860, people only had access to natural fibers. During the Civil War, children would have been responsible for working on the family farm. Almost everyone in eastern North Carolina owned a small farm. Cotton was a major crop that was grown in Kinston in the 1860s. Growing and processing cotton is a hard job. Without slave labor, children would have been the ones responsible for helping their parents pick, clean, spin, and dye cotton. Show the children a sample of raw cotton (cotton balls) and then show them a piece of cotton fabric. Explain that cotton is a plant that grows well in the South and takes a lot of care to grow. First the cotton must be harvested from the plant. Show the children a picture of a cotton plant. Second, the seeds and other debris must be removed from the fibers. The fibers are cleaned with tools called carders that resembled combs. Show children a picture of carders. Next show students this video of the process of carding cotton. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bIRs5q4apHQ&feature=related Cotton could also be cleaned by using a machine called the Cotton Gin, invented by Eli Whitney. This new invention made cleaning and preparing cotton much easier and faster. Due to shortages in the Civil War, cotton gins were not always available for use. Next, women used spinning wheels to spin the fibers into threads. Show the children a picture of a spinning wheel. After the fibers were made into threads a loom was used to make the fabric. Show the children a picture of a loom. Finally, the fabric was dyed and made into clothing. Clothes making and sewing were a major part of life during the Civil War. Women and children spent their days making clothes for themselves and Confederate soldiers. Some women formed societies to make clothing for soldiers. Although no records of these societies were formed in Kinston, it is likely that women sewed clothing for their family members serving in the Confederacy.

Read this article to learn more about sewing for the Confederate army. http://www.ncdcr.gov/Portals/7/Collateral/Database/S88.sewing_for_the_confederacy.pdf
Next answer these questions about the article you just read.

1. According to this article, what role did women have in the Civil War? What were their organizations called? Do women today still do things to help soldiers fighting wars?
2. Find the quote from Governor Vance. What did he ask women to make for men during the winter?
3. What shortages caused problems in making uniforms for confederate soldiers?

To conclude this lesson, have the children write or discuss:

1. Farming conditions in the Civil War.
2. Identify the roles of the family and explain why interdependence was critical for success.
3. What are they interdependent upon today? What will they be interdependent on in the future and how does that impact individual and community success?
4. How did scarcity impact the choices families made during the Civil War?
5. How can scarcity influence their choices today?
Modern Plowing and Nineteenth Century Plowing
Cotton Plant
Cotton Carders
1. Life before the Civil War in Kinston was much like the rest of eastern North Carolina. Trade and agriculture were an important part of the economy. Most families relied on farms as their source of income and food. Eastern North Carolina was primarily rural and small towns were scattered all over the state. The Civil War changed life in North Carolina by changing the structure of family life and the labor force. Men either signed up to fight in the war or were drafted into the army. With the lack of male presence, females had to pick up the slack. Food and labor shortages were rampant during this time, and many people fell into poverty.

2. People missed salt the most. This is because they used it to preserve foods. During the Civil War people used salt to cure their meats. Today we use refrigerators or freezers.

3. Women used dried okra as coffee, and boiled watermelon produced sugar. Wicks dipped in pine tar and wrapped around a corncob provided light in the absence of candles. Some women made stiff wooden shoes to wear instead of leather ones. Other women fashioned hats and bonnets out of pine straw.

4. Starvation would have stopped the war because the Confederate army was running out of resources. Also, families were falling into poverty so they could not afford to support their men who were fighting.

5. Women had to leave home to support their family because there were not any men available for provide an income. All the men were busy fighting the war.

Activity 2b– Answers to article questions

1. Women’s role in the Civil War was to support the soldiers. Many women were asked to sew uniforms and other clothing for the soldiers. They formed organizations called “Soldiers Aid Societies”. They met in churches to sew for the Confederacy. Women today still support soldiers, but they often do so on a personal level. For example women send care packages to family members or friends who serve in the military.

2. Governor Zebulon Vance worried that the North Carolina soldiers were going to suffer during the winter without enough clothing and blankets. In 1862 he asked the people of the state to help the troops. He wrote, “The articles most needed . . . are shoes, socks, and blankets, though drawers, shirts, and pants would be gladly received. If every mother in North Carolina would knit one strong pair of either heavy cotton or woolen socks for the army they would be abundantly supplied.” Then he said, “If you have anything to spare for the soldier, in his name I appeal to you for it. Remember when you sit down by the bright and glowing fire that the soldier is sitting upon the cold earth [and] shivering in darkness on the dangerous outpost.”
3. As the war continued, it became more difficult to make clothing for the army. By 1863 the machinery in the textile mills began to wear out. There was a severe shortage of cotton cards. Cotton cards were tools used to get cotton ready for spinning into thread. Because there was no thread, there was little sewing. Without yarn, knitting was impossible. Uniforms were left unfinished because there were no buttons. The soldiers had to wait months before they received the clothing they needed. The governor received dozens of letters from women asking for supplies to make clothing.

**Activity 3**

**School and Other Activities**

What kinds of things do you think children in the 1860s would have studied in school? Education was not a top priority for people living in the 1860s. A traditional education was not necessary to tend fields, grow gardens, sew clothing, or perform other daily activities. Prior to the Civil War, Lenoir County was home to twenty-six schools. Many teachers had to quit teaching during the Civil War due to a lack of funding. In the 1860s, any extra resources were used to fund the Confederate cause. The number of teachers in Lenoir County was reduced to three by the end of the Civil War. Many school buildings were converted into hospitals and headquarters for the Confederate army. Show the children a picture of an 1860’s school building. Explain that these buildings were also used as churches, schools, and community centers. With only three teachers in the entire county, many children went without a formal education. Most children lived too far away to be able to walk to school. Also, because men were absent from the work force, children were responsible for helping their mothers on the farm and around the house. Even if children were lucky enough to attend school, the school year only lasted for three months out of the year. A three month school year was common in Lenoir County until World War One. How many months do you go to school? Why do you think that children only went to school three months out of the year? Explain to the students that even during peace times that children were expected to help around the house and on the farm. Living was truly a family affair and required every member of the family.

When children were not in school or working, they liked to spend time with their friends playing. What kind of games do you like to play with your friends? What kinds of games do you think children living in the 1860s liked to play? Children then liked to play with marbles, jacks, hopscotch, graces, and ball and cup just to name a few. Have any of you ever played these games before? Next show the children this video of modern girls playing the game of graces. http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=endscreen&v=9kt0uP21ral&NR=1

The game of graces was played by primarily girls and it served two purposes. The game was not only fun, but it was meant to teach girls how to be graceful and light on their feet. Other games such as hopscotch, ball and cup, jacks, and marbles were played by both boys and girls.
If time and room allow use the provided template to mark out a hopscotch board on the classroom floor using masking tape to play hop scotch. As you are playing the game review the differences in children’s education in the 1860s and children’s education today. Also discuss the differences in games children used to play and the games children play now. The following video shows the rules and can be used if there isn’t time for the students to play. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fZzswQaICfM
An 1868 engraving of "James's Plantation School" in North Carolina. This freemen's school is possibly one of those established by Horace James on the Yankee or Avon Hall plantations in Pitt County in 1866. North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library.
*Activity 4*

The War Effort—Until 1862 Kinston did not have much involvement in the Civil War. October of that year was the beginning of the war for Kinston. The Confederate Navy signed a contract with Howard and Ellis, shipbuilders to build the ironclad gunboat CSS Neuse. Show the students a picture of the CSS Neuse model. The ship was constructed in White Hall, now Seven Springs, North Carolina. At the construction site workmen cut trees and sawed lumber to build the ship's keel.

“...was, at that time, a small hamlet on the Neuse River which was spanned by a substantial county bridge. The river, though much narrower at White Hall, is deep and navigable. On the northern side the river has a gentle slope to a stream, which, in 1862, was bordered by a swamp in which there was a somewhat dense growth of tall timber. A quantity of this timber had been felled and cut into logs, which lay around the bank of the river... A gunboat was in course of building, and stood, propped on rollers, in the upper end of the swamp, and near the river not far from the bridge... The little hamlet of White Hall, built on the southern bank of the Neuse, consisted of two or three stores and warehouses, and a straggling street with some neat dwellings and enclosures. The warehouses were on the bluff which is lofty on the southern side; and some eminences further from the river, and commanding the much lower level of the northern shore, gave great advantage to the former as a military position.”

Pay rosters indicate that men and a few boys from Lenoir and surrounding counties traveled with their to White Hall to help build the CSS Neuse. The ship was built with the purpose of defending and recapturing New Bern after it fell to the Union. Also, ironclads were a strong psychological deterrent against Union advancement further into North Carolina. The CSS Neuse and Kinston played an important role in defending North Carolina. Boys younger than sixteen were not officially allowed to serve onboard the ironclad while she was in service. However, a few young boys were involved in the building of the ship at White Hall, North Carolina. There are boys mentioned in official written records of who helped build the CSS Neuse. Their names were Thomas Hicks, Enoch Roberson, and Jacob Beasly. Boys were paid for working to help build the ironclad, but their pay was much less than that of a man. Boys were typically paid two or three dollars a day and worked for two or three days a week. How many of you would want to work to help build an ironclad battleship? Do you think it would have been hard work? Remember that during the Civil War, people did not have access to power tools or modern equipment. They relied on hand tools and their own strength to get the job done.
Read this quote from Gilbert Elliot, ship builder of the Albemarle, and write a short diary entry about what life was like for young boys building the *CSS Neuse*.

“*The keel was laid and construction was commenced by bolting down, across the center, a piece of frame timber, which was of yellow pine, eight by ten inches. Another frame of the same size was then dovetailed into this, extending outwardly at an angle of 45 degrees, forming the side, and at the outer end of this frame for the shield was also dovetailed, the angle being about 35 degrees. And then the top deck was added, and so on around to the other end of the bottom beam. Other beams were then bolted down to the keel and to the first one fastened, and so on, working fore and aft, the main deck beams being interposed from stem to stern. The shield was 60 feet in length and octagonal in form. When this part of the work was completed she was a solid boat, built of pine frames and if calked would have floated in that condition, but she was afterwards covered with 4 inch planking, laid on longitudinally, as ships are usually planked, and this was properly calked and pitched, cotton being used instead of oakum, the latter being very scarce and the former the only article to be had in abundance.*”

The second way boys could serve in the war was by joining the Junior Reserves. The Junior Reserves were created in an effort to keep underage boys off the battlefield. They were responsible for guarding Confederate railroad depots, bridges and prison camps. Originally, the Junior Reserves were organized into eight battalions of three or four companies. There are gaps in the records so historians do not know exactly how many boys served in the Junior Reserves. **Would you have wanted to serve in the Junior Reserves? Why do you think young boys wanted to serve in the Junior Reserves?**

Read this article about the Junior Reserves. When you are finished reading the article answer the following questions.

http://ncpedia.org/north-carolina%E2%80%99s-youngest-soldiers

1. What were some of the duties of the Junior Reserves? Where in North Carolina did they serve?
2. Why was it hard on families when their sons joined the Junior Reserves?
3. What are some of the reasons historians do not know much about the Junior Reserves? What do historians need to make the story more complete?
Activity 4-Answers to article questions

1. Junior and Senior Reserve units guarded key military points—such as bridges, railway depots, and prison camps—in the states in which they were organized. This released soldiers who previously performed those duties to be with the armies in battle. Officials did not intend for the Reserves to fight, with the possible exception of repelling raids against their posts. They helped defend Fort Fisher, near Wilmington, on December 25, 1864, and fought in the battles of Kinston, or Wyse Fork (March 8–10, 1865), and Bentonville (March 18–21, 1865).

2. It was difficult for families when their sons joined the Junior Reserves because they were needed at home to help take care of the family farm. They were needed to help their mothers to tend the garden and take care of the farm animals.

3. Unfortunately, not many wartime documents for the Junior Reserves have survived at all, whether in the form of official papers like muster rolls, or in the form of personal diaries or letter collections. It is especially unfortunate that very few wartime writings from members of the Reserves themselves exist. There is more out there from their older officers and commanders, but that is not quite the same thing. Many records simply did not survive the war. Modern historians often are limited by what family members decided to preserve (and donate to archives and other places where they can be studied). Historians need more records to be able to make a complete picture of the Junior Reserves.
Works Cited:

Research for this lesson plan was written at the CSS Neuse Historic Site. Materials were gathered from their archives to complete the research. There are also original letters such as the Bacot letters, Tyndall Thesis, and Exhibit design plans.

Articles in this lesson plan were taken from the Tar Heel Junior Historian Magazine. The THJH can be accessed through the North Carolina Museum of History’s web site at www.ncmuseumofhistory.org


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