

**Military Music & Instruments of the Civil War Era**  
**Traveling Trunk Lesson #3**

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION**

What role did the fife and drum play in battle, while marching, and in camp during the Civil War?

**OVERVIEW**

Fife and drum bands were common to both armies. Utilized in previous wars, the fife and drum were not strangers to the battlefields. These instruments, among others, and the soldiers who comprised military bands served to help soldiers during marches and on the battlefields as a form of communication. Soldiers could hear the loud drums and the piercing melodies of the fife over the roar of battle. These instruments were used to help commanders communicate with the troops in an efficient way. Their presence also served as a motivational tool for soldiers during the height of battle.

The average age of a drum or fife player was often very young. Enlistment ages were often overlooked when enlisting drummer boys. Many times, these young boys were orphaned children or the sons of enlisted men of a particular unit. The number of rudiments and calls that they were required to know was lofty for drummers of such a young age. Nevertheless, their dedication to state and country allowed them to succeed and leave their mark on the Civil War.

Additional Resources: [Civil War Music](#)

**OBJECTIVES**

Upon completion of this lesson, the students will be able to:

1. Knowledge
  - Describe the different instruments used in the military bands of the Civil War.
  - List the characteristics of a fife and the characteristics of a snare drum.
2. Comprehension/Application/Analysis
  - Correctly identify the different instruments used by soldiers in military bands by examining images of the period.
  - Discuss how music played an important role in armies during the Civil War.
3. Evaluation
  - Evaluate military band music through active listening.

**TRUNK MATERIALS**

→ Fife

## ACTIVITIES

### Motivational Activity:

1. Explain to students that there are two common types of bands during the Civil War era. The first is the brass band and the second is the fife and drum band. This lesson will focus solely on the fife and drum bands.
2. Then, pass out *Handout #1- Instrument Identification* to students. Instruct students to identify and list as many characteristics of both the fife and drum as possible.
3. The students can also brainstorm the military uses for both instruments.
4. Share out student answers on the board, making sure to ask guided questions to move the discussion forward.

### Procedure:

1. Today we are going to learn about the instruments that were played in the armies during the American Civil War, specifically the fife and drum.
  - a. Please note that it is not possible to ship a Civil War era replica drum in the Traveling Trunk. You may choose to show your class an image.
  - b. You may choose to pass the fife around to the class at this time.
2. Next, open the PowerPoint presentation and proceed with the lesson.
  - a. There are two musical examples to play for students as the class progresses.
3. Guiding questions to ask the students during the lesson:
  - a. Do the fife and drum share equal importance?
  - b. Why do you think these Civil War soldiers need this music or band?
    - i. Was it helpful for marching?
    - ii. Was it helpful during the roar of battle?
    - iii. Do you think it made communicating commands easier?
    - iv. Was it useful to the men in camp?
    - v. Could it be used for entertainment?
  - c. What mood does it create?
  - d. What images come to mind when you hear it?

### Summary Activity:

Distribute *Handout #2- Sum it Up Exit Slip*. Students can complete the worksheet using an idea web to gather their thoughts and then complete the guided lesson closure paragraph.

### Homework/Assessment:

Have students complete the following writing prompt on *Handout #3- My Favorite Civil War Instrument*. At the conclusion of the writing prompt, either have students draw and color the

instrument they have selected, provide a coloring page of the instrument that they have chosen, or have them research an image of that instrument and print it and attach it to their writing.

### **Writing Prompt:**

Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis are planning to remove fife and drum corps from the armies. Write a persuasive letter in support of keeping the musicians, music, and instruments in the armies.

### **Extensions:**

A great extension would be to make simple musical instruments related to those that they have learned about during this lesson. It would take several periods and some different materials. A perfect project to jointly do with your art teacher! There are numerous resources to construct instruments. I suggest for the elementary level, *My First Music Book: A Life-Size Guide to Making and Playing Simple Musical Instruments* by Helen Drew. The instrument construction in this guide is simple and requires the least amount of materials. Although the book is out of print, it can be readily found online at a very inexpensive cost.

## **STANDARDS**

### **Common Core State Standards- ELA & History/Social Studies**

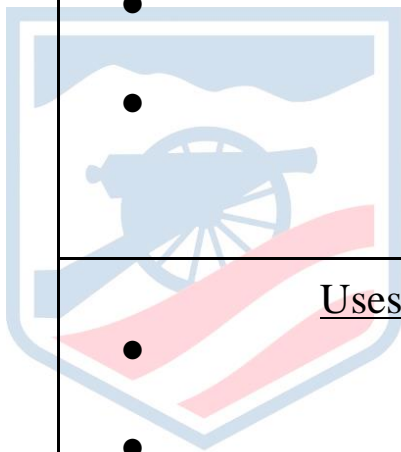
- Key Ideas and Details:
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2
    - Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.
- Craft and Structure:
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.4
    - Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.
- Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7
    - Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

### **Social Studies - National Council for the Social Studies**

- Theme 1: Culture
- Theme 2: Time, Continuity, and Change
- Theme 3: People, Places, and Environments
- Theme 4: Individual Development and Identity
- Theme 5: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions

Lesson 3- Handout #1  
**Instrument Identification**

<u>Fife</u>	<u>Drum</u>
<u>Characteristics</u>	<u>Characteristics</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
<u>Uses</u>	<u>Uses</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>



AMERICAN  
 BATTLEFIELD  
 TRUST ★ ★ ★  
 PRESERVE. EDUCATE. INSPIRE.

Lesson 3- Handout #2  
**Sum it Up Exit Slip**

Today's lesson \_\_\_\_\_

One key idea was:

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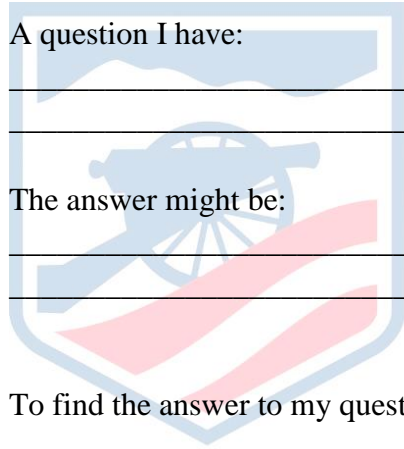
This key idea is important because:

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A question I have:



The answer might be:

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To find the answer to my question, I might look...

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**Lesson 3- Military Music & Instruments of the Civil War Era**  
**Handout #3 – My Favorite Civil War Instrument**

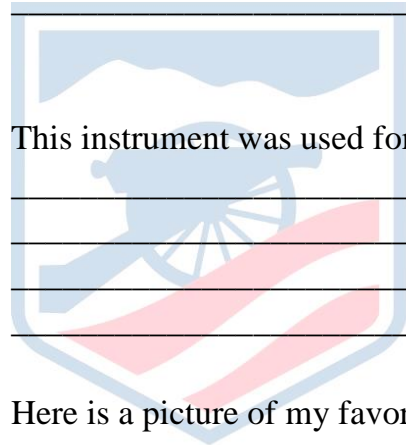
Name: \_\_\_\_\_

My favorite instrument from the Civil War is:

\_\_\_\_\_.

This instrument is my favorite because:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



This instrument was used for the following purposes:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Here is a picture of my favorite Civil War instrument:

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*Example:*

