



Using the information you gather on the web site, answer the following questions about the unit.

1. The two letters from a soldier in this section show changes in his attitude over a short period of time because of the war. What other kinds of changes might we see if we had a letter from him near the end of the war?

He might have become more frustrated with the war or with the scenes he was seeing. We might read of him being more tired or more eager for the war to end.

How do letters you may have written as a child differ from letters you might write today?

Students might suggest that things they worried about as kids don't worry them now. They may also mention how their friends or interests have changed over time.

How does seeing what changes a person goes through during a traumatic event (like a war) help us to better understand the impact of that event?

By being able to get a glimpse of the impact of a certain event, we can see how that event affected the person, their community, and their family more clearly. The more affected one person is by an event, the more affected (we might assume) others will be also. Often we will be able to find letters from more than one person about an event, which would also tell us something of its importance.

2. Another artifact that can tell us much about a person is the stationery on which they write their letters. Today we often choose stationery to reflect our personal interests. Where do you think the Edward Davis got his stationery for the letter he wrote from Washington, D.C.?

It's possible that the stationery was issued by the army to the soldiers, or he could have bought it at a store because he liked the design.

What can that tell us about him and his beliefs about the war?

The comment under the picture discusses treatment for "traitors," which would suggest to us that he considers the Southern troops to be traitors.

How do you think the stationery of a Confederate soldier might have been different?

A Confederate soldier might have stationery showing the North as being an evil tyrant, or might show Southerners as freedom-fighters trying to rule their own government.

3. The newspaper accounts in this section show us the war from a Northern viewpoint. How might an article about Fort Sumter be different if it was published in a Southern newspaper?

The Southern perspective on the event at Fort Sumter would be more likely to be portrayed as an invasion than a victory?

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Which do you think would be more accurate as a source?

Both are probably equally accurate, if we can assume that reporters for both sides had similar information.

What might be the best way for us as historians to get the “whole story” about this event?

To get a more balanced picture of the event, we should look at accounts from both sides of the issue. Using secondary sources that explain the event in detail would also be helpful for us.

4. Two of the newspaper articles in this section contain listings of names. One list shows the volunteers who signed up for the war, and the other shows casualties of the Gettysburg battle. How can sources like these help us as researchers?

A listing of names can give us a good “tracking device” to see “who was where and when.”

Why might these sources be less than completely reliable for our research?

Sometimes, especially with casualty listings, information was incorrect. Many soldiers were reported dead who actually survived the battles. The information also traveled slowly compared to today and often the information was out-of-date by the time it got published.

What other sources might we need to prove that a source is correct?

Using military records, other newspapers, and personal accounts of the events will all give us a way to prove or disprove the information in lists like these.