

Chapter 7

Teaching Historical Reading and Writing With Library of Congress Resources

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Figure 1. *Sherman's March to the Sea*, Felix Darley, 1883



Note. Darley, F. O. C. (ca. 1883). *Sherman's march to the sea* [Lithograph]. Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/item/96512373/>

Inquiry, as promoted in the C3 Framework, culminates in students taking informed action (NCSS, 2013). Much of the conversation about preparing young people to take informed civic action focuses on engaging them in *action* (see, for example, Levinson & Levine, 2013). In contrast, this chapter addresses the *informed* feature of informed civic action—individuals in democratic societies need to be informed, and becoming informed in the 21st century has become an extremely challenging process (Wineburg, 2018). The challenge is not a result of a lack of access to information, but a result of the growing responsibility of readers to critically evaluate the information they are exposed to (Nokes et al., 2020). As you read this chapter, you will see how historical reading and writing skills, once developed by young people, can and should be applied to become informed in a post-truth era when information is often confused with misinformation, disinformation, and fake news (McGrew et al., 2018).

After reading this chapter, you should be more capable of supporting students' historical reading and writing as they engage in historical inquiry, as they read online, and as they use social media. Specifically, by the time you finish this chapter, you should be able to (a) describe the disciplinary reading and writing used by historians to become informed, identifying target reading strategies for students; (b) consider challenges students face as code breakers, meaning-makers, text critics, and text users of historical evidence; (c) use instructional

strategies like explicit and implicit strategy instruction to help students improve their historical reading and writing skills; (d) assess students' ability to read and write historically; and (e) most importantly, explain how to help students transfer historical reading and writing skills to become better informed during online reading and social media use. I provide examples of teaching methods using a lesson on Sherman's March to the Sea with primary sources found in the Library of Congress and elsewhere (see [Figure 1](#)). The lesson materials shared in [Appendix A](#), [B](#), and [C](#) include objectives, procedures, and resources designed for secondary students. Throughout the chapter these lesson materials are used to illustrate how historians read and to demonstrate instructional strategies that foster students' historical literacies.

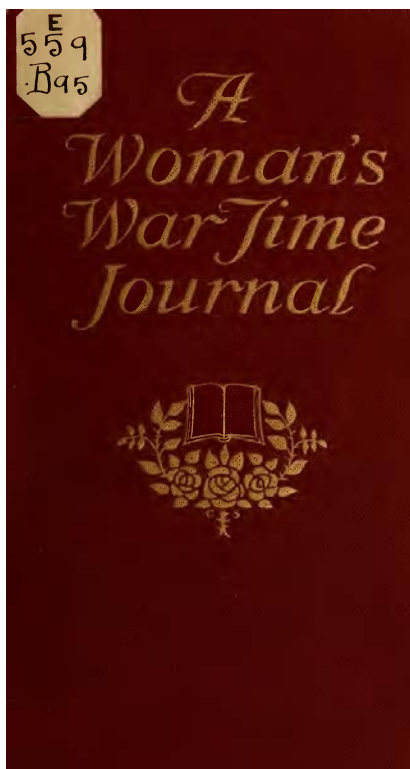
The Disciplinary Reading and Writing of Historians

Historical reading and historical writing are the processes historians use to identify worthwhile questions about the past, find and analyze evidence, develop interpretations, create narratives, and defend their interpretations (Williams, 2012). These reading and writing processes are often rolled together into the concept of historical literacy (Nokes, 2022). The C3 Framework promotes the teaching of historical literacy (NCSS, 2013) through four dimensions of inquiry: (a) developing questions and planning inquiries, (b) applying disciplinary concepts and tools, (c) evaluating sources and evidence, and (d) communicating conclusions and taking informed action. New directions and standards in social studies teaching, championed by the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS, 2013), the National Council for History Education (NCHE, n.d), and described in many state standards documents (Stern et al., 2021) require that history teachers foster students' historical literacies. It is important that prospective social studies teachers have a deep understanding of the meaning of historical literacy and are themselves historically literate.

Historical Texts

Historical literacy is the ability to read and write the types of texts that historians use in their study of the past. The term *text* is conceptualized broadly and includes not only language-based texts, such as words and sentences, but also non-language-based texts, such as paintings or highways. Further, texts include printed resources, like a magazine article or a scrapbook page, digital resources like a Tweet or a webpage, non-print sources like music or a spoken lecture, or material sources like a woman's dress or a cold cereal box (Cope & Kalantsis, 2000; Draper et al., 2010). Historical texts include primary sources, government documents, oral histories, artifacts, photographs, movies, numerical data, artwork, music, fashions, secondary sources produced by other historians, and texts of countless other genres (Collingwood, 2005).

Figure 2. *Dolly Sumner Lunt's Diary*



Note. Lunt, D. S. (1918). *A woman's wartime journal; An account of the passage over a Georgia plantaion of Sherman's army on the march to the sea, as recorded in the diary of Dolly Sumner Lunt*. Library of Congress. <https://archive.org/details/womanswartimejou00lunt>

Because there are no texts more important to historians than primary source evidence (Presnell, 2019), it follows that history teachers should regularly present students with primary sources along with other formats of historical evidence (Nokes, 2022). For instance, when studying Sherman's March to the Sea, Dolly Sumner Lunt's diary (See Figure 2) is a primary source, providing evidence of Union troops' activities during the campaign (Lunt, 1918). Lunt was a plantation-owning widow in rural Georgia and an eyewitness of Sherman's march, documenting the Union troops' advance from the perspective of a wealthy White woman who enslaved individuals (Appendix B, Document 1). An enslaved man named Will Sherman¹ also witnessed the advance of Sherman's troops. His story, recorded by a White interviewer in 1936, provides an alternative perspective, with conflicting evidence of the impact of Sherman's advance on those who were held in bondage (Appendix B, Document 13). Historians grapple with such conflicting primary sources as they construct historical narratives. For historians, becoming informed is not just a matter of reading an account and remembering what it says. It involves constructing an understanding from conflicting evidence representing multiple perspectives.

¹ Will Sherman, a formerly enslaved African American man should not be confused with William Sherman, the Union general who led the campaign through Georgia.

Historical texts also include the materials that historians produce, such as monographs, charts, maps, diagrams, documentary videos, journal articles, websites, textbooks, lectures, and presentations. Because their narratives are often interpretive in nature, they must argue their case (Nokes & De La Paz, 2018). Teachers nurture students' historical literacies when they teach students strategies for both reading and writing texts in ways that mirror historians' reading and writing to the degree possible (Monte Sano et al., 2014).

Furthermore, historical texts include public histories, historical accounts produced for the general public rather than a specialized historian audience. Public histories, which are sometimes created by professionally trained historians but are often produced by journalists, fiction authors, or amateur historians, include movies set in historical time periods, historical fiction, popular nonfiction books about past events, museum exhibits, and magazine articles written for a general audience. Working with public histories can present challenges for young people (and adults) as they are often seduced by the phrase "based on actual events" to believe that what was produced to entertain was actually produced to educate (Marcus et al., 2018). Teachers can help students learn to read differently the many diverse types of texts, particularly primary sources produced by eyewitnesses, secondary sources produced by historians, and public histories produced to entertain. Because historians use and produce a wide range of texts, teachers have a vast number of resources to choose from, with the responsibility to teach and model historical reading and writing with many types of text.

Historical Literacy and History Content

Historical literacy does not require an encyclopedic knowledge of historical facts from every era or global location (VanSledright, 2011). Such breadth of knowledge is not possessed by historians (who have specialized expertise) and is an impossible aim of secondary history teaching. Instead, historical literacy is the possession of skills necessary to question, read, reason, write, and learn with historical evidence, producing interpretations that reflect those skills. Knowledge of historical facts and concepts can enhance students' historical literacies (Zygouris-Cole, 2014). And factual and conceptual knowledge grows when students engage in historical inquiry (Reisman, 2012). Teachers do not have to choose between teaching historical literacies or teaching historical concepts, as the literature shows that as teachers foster historical literacies, students develop both content knowledge and historical literacy (Nokes et al., 2007; Reisman, 2012). Further, historical inquiries may nurture dispositions such as the tendency to defend the rights of others, to work together with adversaries, to compromise, to remain curious about current issues, to be vigilant and observant in watching for problems, and to unite with like-minded peers to increase political power (Nokes, 2019). In history classrooms that adopt the C3 Framework, the learning of content, the development of skills, and the preparation for civic engagement are complementary processes as demonstrated in the content, skill, and dispositional objectives that guide the lesson introduced at the end of this chapter.

How Historians Construct Knowledge

Historical literacy is not just a matter of working with the same kinds of texts that historians use, but it requires students to think about history as historians do. Historians understand that the same evidence can be interpreted in different ways depending on a researcher's background, research questions, and methodologies. In contrast, students often believe that learning history is merely memorizing what happened. They sometimes become frustrated with historical inquiries that lead to different interpretations (Lesh, 2011). Without a more mature understanding of the nature of historical knowledge, students often approach historical study believing that history is the past, just what happened, with a single historical narrative to be memorized. Traditional history instruction that relies heavily upon textbooks, lectures, and multiple-choice tests, is not only boring but reinforces these misconceptions about the nature of history (VanSledright, 2011). Students may become frustrated when exposed to conflicting evidence, or differing accounts from multiple perspectives, wondering why the teacher won't just tell them the answer (Lesh, 2011). The reading and writing strategies associated with historical inquiry seem unnecessary to students who do not understand how historical knowledge is constructed, demanding that teachers help students understand the interpretive nature of historical research. Exposure to primary source evidence plays a vital role in this process.

For instance, a memoir of Union soldier, John Potter, published more than thirty years after the Civil War ended provides evidence that Sherman's march brought great joy and hope for liberation to enslaved individuals ([Appendix B, Document 12](#)). However, the memoir of Union soldier Oscar Lopham, also written decades after the war, suggests that Sherman's campaign brought great harm to enslaved individuals ([Appendix B, Document 10](#)). Dolly Sumner Lunt's diary gives clues that Sherman's troops frightened and abused enslaved individuals ([Appendix B, Document 1](#)). And the enslaved man, Will Sherman's 1936 interview provides evidence that the Union troops brought great hope but also grave dangers ([Appendix B, Document 13](#)). Visual evidence, such as an engraving produced by Waud in 1865 (see Figure 3), adds complexity to the question by showing the violence with which Union troops passed through the South. Such conflicting evidence may frustrate students who just want to know the answer: "Did Sherman's march help enslaved people or harm them?"

Figure 3. *Sherman's March Through South Carolina—The Burning of McPhersonville, February 1, 1865*



Note. Waud, W. (1865). *Sherman's March Through South Carolina—Burning of McPhersonville, February 1, 1865* [Engraving]. Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2004661258/>

How Students Construct Historical Knowledge

As students mature, they sometimes believe that because history is open to interpretation, and because people today cannot know what happened with perfect certainty, any narrative is equally acceptable (VanSledright & Maggioni, 2016). They erroneously believe that any opinion about what happened is just as valid as any other because everyone is entitled to their own views. Researchers have found that students who approach historical inquiry from this stance will discount evidence out of hand when it does not match their opinion, often claiming that a source “lied” (Lee, 2005), a phenomenon all too familiar in the post-truth era (Cinelli et al., 2021). Or, they use other unsophisticated strategies for analyzing evidence, such as counting how many sources tell one story and how many tell a different story, siding with the majority rather than with the evidence that is most reliable or compelling (Ashby et al., 2005). Students who think that historical interpretations are all relative might conclude that Sherman’s March liberated all enslaved individuals but might also take no issue with someone who concludes that the enslaved people were primarily responsible for their own

liberation. They do not understand that “the fact that there is not just one best story most certainly does not mean that any story will do” (Lee, 2005, p. 70).

Instead, strategies exist for evaluating historical evidence in a manner that leads to defensible interpretations. Students, like historians, can develop sound interpretations by “grappling with the sources” (Ashby et al., 2005, p. 119). When students begin to look at historical inquiry like detective work (Bain, 2006) or like jury service (Kuhn et al., 1994), they understand the purpose for strategic reading and argumentative writing.

Teacher educators have developed resources for helping students approach historical inquiry with an appropriate frame of mind. For example, [a lesson](#) developed by the Stanford History Education Group compares historical research with the process a principal would go through to gather and analyze written statements from witnesses of a school fight. In this lesson, students see that the principal, like a historian, is able to construct an interpretation of what happened from biased, disagreeing accounts. The principal, like a historian, acknowledges the value and challenges of consulting multiple perspectives. The school fight investigation analogy can help students understand how historical knowledge is constructed.

A student who approaches a document-based inquiry lesson on Sherman’s March with the proper frame of mind might construct the following tragic narrative from the evidence: enslaved individuals reacted differently to the Union army’s march through Georgia. Many, but not every enslaved person, viewed Sherman’s troops as a great liberating force bringing hope for freedom. Thousands fled from bondage and sought refuge with the Union troops. Some, primarily out of a distrust of Union troops, remained in bondage. The hopes of many who followed the Union troops were dashed when on December 9, 1864, the Union army intentionally abandoned them while crossing Ebenezer Creek. Some were killed by Confederate scouts, others drowned trying to escape the Confederates, and the remainder were returned to enslavement. Such an account, though not the only possible interpretation, is defensible using the conflicting evidence provided by primary sources.

Historians’ Historical Literacy Strategies

Authentic texts and an understanding of how historical knowledge is constructed from evidence create conditions where historical literacy is possible for students. But these conditions do not guarantee students will approach texts like historians do. Historical literacy requires the use of historians’ strategies for working with evidence. Such strategies include *sourcing*—paying attention to a document’s source and using source information to interpret its content; *corroboration*—comparing and contrasting the contents of multiple sources; and *contextualization*—attempting to place oneself in the time and place of the document’s creation and comprehending it with that context in mind (Reisman, 2012; Wineburg, 1991). Using these and other strategies, historians exhibit a sophisticated process of becoming informed on a historical event. The Library of Congress provides [primary source analysis tools](#) for working with many different types of evidence.

A historian who approached Dolly Sumner Lunt’s eyewitness account of General Sherman’s March to the Sea would think deeply about Lunt as a source ([Appendix B, Document 1](#)). They would observe that she owned a plantation and assume that she enslaved African Americans there. With information searchable online, they would find that she was originally from Maine, a Northerner who had moved to the South. They would think about the emotional trauma and uncertainty that she felt as she observed the Union troops foraging in her yard, writing about it on the very day it occurred. Historians would remember that she lived at a time when Southerners propagated and often believed the racist falsehood that the enslavement of African Americans was paternalistic and benefitted enslaved individuals. All these factors would come into play as Lunt made her record, and historians would consider these contextual factors as they read her record.

Similarly, a historian who read a transcript of Will Sherman’s interview would think carefully about its origin ([Appendix B, Document 13](#)). They would observe that the interview was conducted by a White man during the Jim Crow era, questioning how candid Sherman would be with him. The historian would note that the interview was conducted during the Great Depression, a time particularly difficult for most African Americans, which might have made Sherman’s views of the past seem more pleasant than times actually had been. Furthermore, the interview was conducted seven decades after the Civil War, when Sherman’s memory may have faded.

The process historians follow in becoming informed about a historical event using fragmentary, conflicting, and subjective evidence involves an array of critical reading strategies and habits of mind. In addition to sourcing, corroboration, and contextualization, historians engage in *close reading*, moving slowly through an important account, thinking deeply about word choice, inclusions, and omissions (Reisman, 2012). Historians fill in gaps in the evidence with *logical inferences* (Collingwood, 2005), remain *skeptical* about interpretations, even their own (Nokes & Kesler-Lund, 2019), and remain *open-minded* about the new evidence that is constantly being uncovered. They are adept at *using evidence* in argumentative writing and speaking. They think about their *audience and purpose* as they write (Nokes & Kesler-Lund, 2019). History teachers who expose students to a wide range of historical texts should also be prepared to teach students several historical reading and writing strategies that will help them think critically about those texts. Some methods of doing so are explained and modeled later.

Historians’ Argumentation Strategies

As previously explained, writing within the discipline of history has some characteristics that distinguish it from writing in other fields, with argumentative writing holding the most prestigious position (Nokes & De La Paz, 2018). In addition to the narratives and descriptions in historical writing, when engaged in original inquiries, historians have to convince an audience of their peers that their interpretations are warranted given the evidence at hand.

And as with their critical reading of evidence, historians exhibit unique argumentative writing skills. Their formation of an argument begins as soon as they start to investigate historical evidence. The reason that they apply sourcing and other historical reading strategies is so that they can use evidence more convincingly as they argue in defense of their interpretation (Nokes & Kesler-Lund, 2019). Historical writing *answers questions* that are authentic, open-ended, debatable, significant, answerable with evidence, and related to historical concepts such as causes and effects, changes and continuities, comparisons, and historical contexts (Barton & Levstik, 2004; van Drie & van Boxtel, 2008). Further, historians *make claims* in their writing. Claims are original, evidence-based, rational, yet disputable statements that explain historical events or conditions. Historians *substantiate claims* with historical evidence, quoting or paraphrasing evidence and explaining how the evidence supports their interpretation (Monte-Sano et al, 2014). Historians *refute opposing claims* in their writing. They show how evidence that seems to weaken their claim can be explained, and why alternative claims are incomplete or not as strong as theirs (Monte-Sano et al., 2014). In addition, historians display *academic humility*, which allows them to revise their writing in the face of stronger evidence (Nokes & Kesler-Lund, 2019).

Teaching Historical Reading and Writing

Historical literacy, both reading and writing, allows students to independently construct and share interpretations of the past using historical evidence to substantiate claims. Teachers facilitate historical literacy by designing activities and assessments that allow students to construct their own interpretations rather than simply requiring students to remember the interpretations constructed by others (Downey & Long, 2016; Nokes, 2022). Additionally, historical literacy allows students to use evidence to persuasively defend in writing or speech their independently constructed interpretations. For example, the historical inquiry on Sherman's March to the Sea included at the end of this chapter gives students the space needed to choose the focus of their inquiry and to construct independent interpretations. The evidence included in documents 1–13 ([Appendix B](#)) allow for a breadth of outcomes, each interpretation defensible based upon students' choices and their evaluation of the evidence. The activity concludes with a brief argumentative writing assignment, during which students defend their interpretations citing historical evidence.

The primary objective of historical literacy instruction is not to produce mini-historians but to help young people develop the ability to read and use the complex texts of the 21st century, a point discussed in greater detail later. Students respond to historical literacy instruction by demonstrating improved critical literacy skills (VanSledright, 2005) and improved historical content knowledge (Nokes et al., 2007; Riesman, 2013). They become better readers in general (Riesman, 2013) and produce stronger argumentative writing (De La Paz et al., 2017). Current research is revealing how historical literacies can be applied to civic online reasoning to help young people become better informed on current issues

through skillful online reading (Breakstone et al., 2021). Fostering historical literacy at the secondary level is primarily your responsibility as a history or social studies teacher. Language Arts, science, and math teachers are experts in their respective fields, but may lack training in the historian’s craft. As a history teacher, you cannot shirk your duty to teach historical literacies with the excuse that students will be taught these skills by others.

The Four Roles as a Reader and the Challenges Students Face

Most students do not instinctively engage in the sophisticated strategies or processes of historical reading and writing (Reisman, 2012; Wineburg, 1991). Teachers must identify the challenges students face and design instruction to help them overcome the many hardships. Researchers Freebody and Luke (1990) developed a useful way of thinking about students’ reading. They break down the reading process into four roles every reader assumes: code breaker, meaning maker, text critic, and text user. I will describe these four roles as they apply to historical reading.

Code Breaker

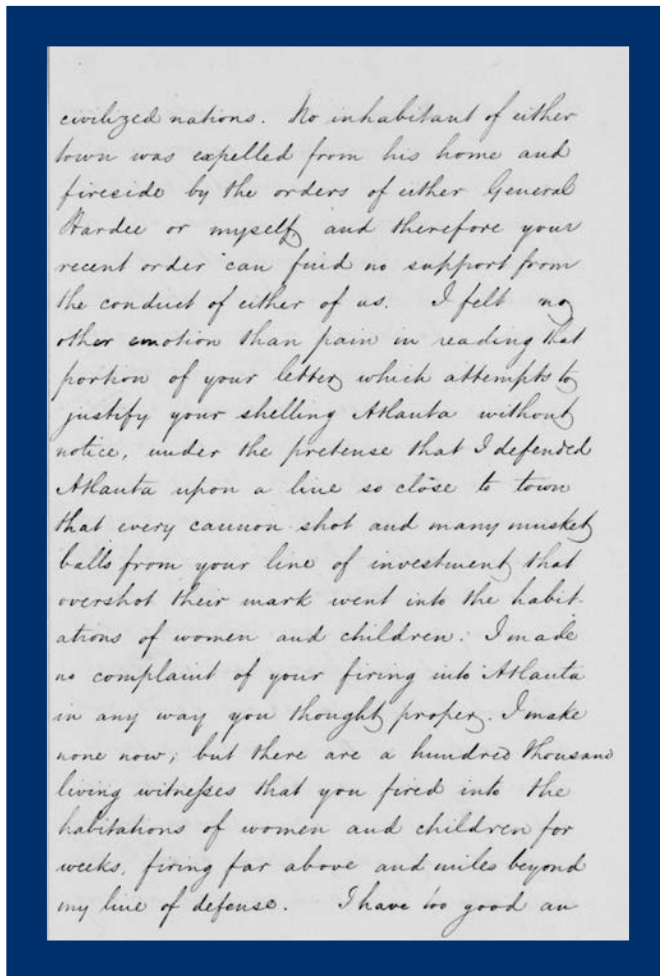
A student’s first role in historical reading is to try to make sense of symbols—to break the code. Sometimes the handwriting of a primary source is difficult to decipher, or the manuscript is faded or damaged making it hard to read. Sometimes a symbolic image on a propaganda poster or political cartoon may be unidentifiable. When students struggle to break the symbolic code, they have fewer cognitive resources with which to analyze a text as evidence (Nokes, 2011). One solution for code-breaking issues is fairly simple—the teacher can provide students with a transcription of a document that is difficult to decode. Teachers can pause a movie that is being used as evidence to give students time to identify important elements of a fast-moving scene. They can give students transcripts of speeches so students can read along as they listen. Teachers must remember that students cannot analyze a document they cannot decode, and they may struggle to think deeply about a document that is hard for them to read.

Meaning Maker

The reader’s second role is that of a meaning maker—comprehending what they read, hear, or see. Sometimes, even when students can pronounce the words in a document, the meaning of words and phrases might be unclear. Unfamiliar vocabulary, unusually worded phrases, fast-paced speeches, or unidentifiable images may complicate the meaning-making process. For instance, a lengthy letter written in 1864 by a military official using Army jargon might be difficult for teenagers in the twenty-first century to understand. If written in cursive, it combines code-breaking challenges with meaning-making issues.

Consider the following scenario as an example. As a teacher gathers primary resources on Sherman's March to the Sea, the teacher discovers in the Library of Congress digital archives that on September 12, 1864, Confederate General J. B. Hood wrote an eleven-page letter to General Sherman accusing Sherman's artillery officers of intentionally killing women and children of Atlanta ([Appendix B, Document 11](#)). The teacher recognizes this letter as a primary source that will allow students to practice sourcing and contextualization and addresses an important question about the abuses of the Union army. However, the teacher also sees that the letter is long, uses racist language, is written in cursive, uses military terminology, and includes sophisticated language written in a nineteenth-century style that would be challenging for students to comprehend. [Figure 4](#) shows one page of this letter. Try reading it, and you will likely experience code-breaking challenges.

Figure 4. A letter from Confederate General Hood to Union General Sherman, September 12, 1864



Note. Excerpt of a letter written by Confederate General Hood to Union General Sherman on September 12, 1864. *William T. Sherman Papers: General Correspondence*. [Manuscript/Mixed Material]. Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/item/mss398000017/>

The teacher prepares the document for the lesson by first choosing from the eleven-page letter a short passage of manageable length that gets at the heart of the issue that students will explore about Sherman's march. Next, the teacher prepares a transcription of the passage, eliminating the cursive script as a decoding barrier (see [Figure 5](#)). After doing so, the teacher realizes that the letter still includes words and phrases that will present comprehension challenges to students, words like "line of investment," "habitation," "fieldworks" and "want of skill." The teacher translates this passage from the language of a nineteenth-century general into words that a twenty-first-century teenager can easily comprehend (Wineberg & Martin, 2011). The resulting passage is shown as Document 11 in the lesson materials (Appendix B). The teacher intends to give students the original letter (Figure 4), the original transcription (Figure 5), and her translated passage ([Document 11](#)) so students can refer to any of them or all three as desired. I have modified all the documents included in the primary source collection in [Appendix B](#) on Sherman's March to the Sea through this same process (choosing short purposeful excerpts, transcribing them, conventionalizing grammar and spelling, and simplifying difficult vocabulary and phrases) in order to support students as code breakers and meaning makers. Each document also includes a link to the original.

Figure 5. *Transcription of an excerpt of General Hood's letter to General Sherman preserving Hood's original language*

I felt no other emotion than pain in reading that portion of your letter which attempts to justify your shelling Atlanta without notice, under the pretense that I defended Atlanta upon a line so close to town that every cannon shot and many musketballs from your line of investment that overshot their mark went into the habitations of women and children. I made no complaint of your firing into Atlanta in any way you thought proper. I make none now; but there are a hundred thousand living witnesses that you fired into the habitations of women and children for weeks, firing far above and miles beyond my line of defenses. I have too good an opinion, founded both upon observation and experience, of the skill of your artillerists to credit the insinuation that they for several weeks unintentionally fired too high for my modest fieldworks, and slaughtered women and children by accident and want of skill....

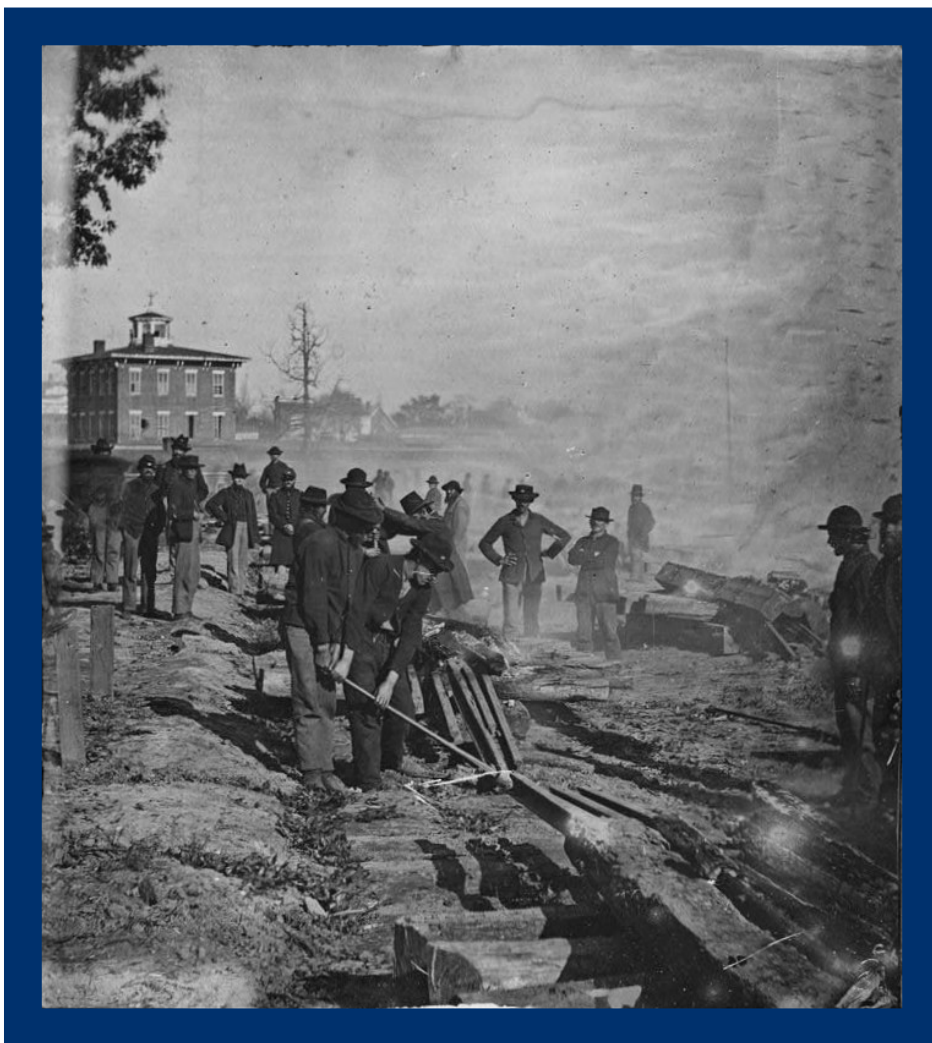
You say "let us fight it out like men." To this my reply is, for myself, and I believe, for all true men, aye and women and children in my country, we will fight you to the death. Better to die a thousand deaths than submit to live under you or your government and your negro allies.

Source information: *Parts of a letter written by Confederate General J.B. Hood to William T. Sherman on September 12, 1864. Found in the William T. Sherman Papers: General Correspondence 1837-1891; 1864, Apr 8-Oct. 11., images 225, 226, and 232 at <https://www.loc.gov/item/mss398000017>*

Teachers can support students as code breakers and meaning makers in a number of other ways. If working with an image with symbols, such as a political cartoon, the teacher could lead the class in a discussion, calling on students to model for their classmates how they determine the meaning of the symbols. Teachers can support students by reading documents out loud as a class, defining difficult vocabulary. Teachers might give students texts with the

definitions of difficult words written in the margins. Teachers can differentiate instruction by tailoring the documents to meet the needs of particular students. For example, some students might benefit most by working with the original documents, others might learn most by working with documents translated into simpler English, and others might learn more by working with documents translated into a different language. Technology, such as translation apps and oral reading apps like Speechify, provides additional resources that teachers can use to make accommodations for other students with unique needs. Teachers should remember that because of the many challenges involved in using historical texts as evidence in historical inquiry, when students have to work hard at code breaking and meaning making, they are less capable of thinking critically about what they have read, comparing across documents, or using documents as evidence in argumentative writing (Nokes, 2011).

Figure 6. *Sherman's Men Destroying Railroad*



Note. Barnard, G. N. (1864). *Atlanta, Georgia. Sherman's men destroying railroad.* [Photograph]. Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/resource/cwpb.03394/>

Text Critic

Young readers tend to believe what they read unless they have a strong reason to not believe it. Some researchers have theorized that this is a result of instruction on reading comprehension in primary grades, during which students' main role is to understand the author's intended meaning—not to think critically about the text's accuracy (VanSledright, 2002). The overuse of textbooks further weakens any tendency to think critically about the history students read (Loewen, 2018; Paxton, 1997). Regardless of why, students tend to accept at face value the information that they find in written historical evidence. They are even more likely to believe that photographs, such as an image of Sherman's troops destroying railroads ([Appendix B, Document 6](#)), are snapshots of reality (see Figure 6). In contrast, historians are expertly critical as they evaluate evidence, understanding that an author's purpose, audience, biases, values, and context influence how they talk about what happened. Even photographs reflect the photographer's purposes, audience, and values. It is during critical reading that many of the strategies described above—sourcing, corroboration, contextualization, remaining skeptical, perspective recognition, and others—come into play.

One way a teacher might help students be more critical about evidence is by exposing them to conflicting accounts of the same event. If two texts relate different facts about what happened, students cannot accept both as accurate. For example, in the primary source mentioned above, Lunt claimed that the individuals she enslaved did not want to leave her plantation. "One, Newton," she wrote, "jumped into bed in his cabin, and said he was sick. Another crawled under the floor—he was a lame boy—but they pulled him out, placed him on a horse, and drove him off" (Lunt, 1918, p. 24). Lunt's story conflicts to some degree with an account written by Oscar Lapham included in [Document 10](#) (Appendix B). Decades after the war he remembered,

Very early in the march, the Negroes began to join our columns, and their number swelled at every town and plantation. Their intense longing for freedom had become more than a passion; it seemed like an uncontrollable frenzy. Of all ages, and both sexes, some in health, but many bent with age or feeble with disease, they struggled on, burning to be free. (Lapham, 1889, p. 26)

A third account, the 1936 interview of Will Sherman, presents a different perspective ([Appendix B, Document 13](#)).

As the federal troops marched ahead they were followed by the volunteer slaves. Most of these unfortunate slaves were slain by "bushwackers" (Confederate snipers who fired upon them from ambush.) After being killed they were decapitated and their heads placed upon posts that lined the fields so that they could be seen by other slaves to warn them of what would befall them if they attempted to escape. (Sherman, 1936, p. 295)

Placing these conflicting accounts side-by-side in front of students might encourage them to think more critically about what they read. However, teachers may need to do more. They may need to point out the discrepancies if students overlook them, something that happens frequently (Bråten et al., 2009; Stahl et al., 1996). Or a teacher may need to question students about the documents to help them discover the discrepancies. How do the documents disagree? Why do they disagree? Might they all be accurate? If some students need additional support, the teacher might ask how the source of the account influenced the content of each. Additionally, students tend to be more critical of primary sources when the teacher asks students to rate or rank the documents in terms of their reliability. A simple question such as, “which document did you trust the most?” followed up with “why?” is likely to elicit critical thinking (Nokes et al., 2007). Ideally, and with repeated practice and appropriate scaffolding, students will approach texts with mild skepticism and with tools to think critically about them, just as historians do (Reisman, 2012).

In addition, the critical reader thinks not only about the historical evidence that is present but also what is missing. Because historians have traditionally valued written primary source records over other types of evidence (i.e., legends, folk art, Indigenous oral histories), societies with written records have a greater presence in stories of the past. The voices of other groups, in particular Indigenous peoples, victims of colonization, and enslaved African Americans, lacking a tradition of writing, are often omitted. Fortunately, current trends in historical inquiry recognize this flawed tradition, and historians are doing more to acknowledge and use more inclusive types of historical evidence as the conception of text is expanded. Students’ critical reading is enhanced when they are encouraged to watch for ways that certain groups are marginalized in the historical record and to seek diverse perspectives during inquiry.

Text User

Teachers can better position students as text users by asking them to use texts as historians would. Why do historians read and write? They read in order to position themselves to construct new interpretations of things that happened in the past. They use secondary sources to see what other historians have written about a topic. They use primary sources to gain a richer understanding of a topic and to gather evidence to defend an interpretation that takes shape as they read (Nokes & De La Paz, 2023). They write to share narratives with colleagues, students, or the general public and to defend their interpretations.

In contrast, why do history students generally read and write? If their experience with historical texts is limited to a textbook, their reading is likely done to gather information. They write in order to manage information and to prove to the teacher they have retained that information. Such reading and writing may be common in schools, but it has little resemblance to the reading and writing that historians do. The fourth role of the reader is text user, and history teachers in inquiry-driven classrooms position students to use texts

in ways that simulate historians' use of texts. Historians and students during inquiry lessons use texts to become informed, not by accepting information uncritically and attempting to remember it, but by piecing together informed interpretations that are based on historical evidence. During inquiry, students may use texts to formulate questions, gather evidence, construct an interpretation, gain a balanced understanding, cross check evidence, and support their ideas in writing.

In the lesson on Sherman's March to the Sea, students use documents to investigate the compelling question, "Can total war be justified?" and one or more of the supporting questions, "Did General Sherman and the Union troops use excessive force during their March to the Sea, or were they just doing what they needed to do to win the war?" "How did those held in bondage react to the advance of Sherman's troops?" and/or "How did Sherman's March impact enslaved individuals?" These questions are still debated among historians (Blinder, 2014), providing an opportunity for a more authentic inquiry experience than answering a settled question would. Accounts from Northerners, Southerners, soldiers, civilians, formerly enslaved people, men, and women provide conflicting evidence that students use to construct defensible answers to these questions.

One key to having students engage as text-users is to provide opportunities for them to produce a historical argument in writing. Teachers can support students' writing by giving them a manageable question to work with. Teachers can vary the level of scaffolding for particular students by altering the question(s) they investigate. The questions listed above related to Sherman's March are interpretative in nature and allow a range of responses, are answerable using the evidence provided in documents, but are simple enough for young students to grapple with. In addition, graphic organizers, such as that shown in [Figure 7](#), can help students harvest evidence from primary sources. Such study aids could be completed in small groups using an online collaborative document editor such as Google Docs to scaffold student work. The writing prompt included with the graphic organizer asks students to write a paragraph listing their question and interpretation, then use evidence to support their claim, a writing task that could be completed collectively or individually depending on the teacher's objectives. One of the keys to supporting students as text users is to ask questions and promote writing that requires them to use texts the way that a historian would—in argumentation.

To summarize, teachers can support students' historical reading and writing in a number of ways. They can prepare documents to ensure that code breaking and meaning making occur nearly automatically, leaving students with the cognitive resources needed to think critically about the texts they read. They can support students' use of the reading strategies that historians use by providing graphic organizers and asking authentic questions. Finally, they can provide students with opportunities to engage in inquiries during which students use texts in argumentation that simulate, to the degree possible, the writing of historians. Code breaking, meaning making, and text criticism culminate as students use texts in writing and speaking to defend their independently developed interpretations. I now describe four

specific research-based teaching methods that can be used to support students as they learn the challenging processes of historical inquiry.

Instructional Strategies that Improve Students' Historical Reading and Writing Skills

Simply placing primary source documents in front of students and asking them to use them to answer authentic historical questions is likely to produce frustration unless teachers also provide instruction on how to read and write like a historian. The most successful approaches to fostering historical reading and writing skills include combinations of (a) practice and feedback, (b) explicit strategy instruction, (c) implicit strategy instruction, and (d) cognitive apprenticeships, each described briefly below.

Practice and Feedback

Many years ago, researchers found that giving students repeated opportunities to analyze and write about primary source documents, coupled with feedback on their writing, improved their historical reading and writing over the course of a school year (Young & Lienhardt, 1998). But not all reading and writing tasks are equally effective in nurturing historical literacies. The best reading and writing tasks require students to construct and defend an interpretation from multiple pieces of evidence (Wiley & Voss, 1999). Teachers provide an open-ended question, give the scaffolding and structure students need, and grant students the intellectual freedom to figure things out using the evidence, subsequently providing feedback on students' written work. Aware that even historians disagree over causes, significance, and even basic "facts," teachers are generally not concerned that students come up with a single predetermined correct interpretation. Instead, the teacher provides feedback on students' analysis and use of evidence in their written defense of an interpretation, whatever it might be. Of course, students sometimes arrive at seriously flawed interpretations that should also be corrected. Through feedback, teachers can urge students to show in their writing that they have carefully vetted evidence, used evidence to construct an interpretation, then substantiated their interpretation using evidence. See Figure 8 for an example of the feedback a teacher might give to a student.

Figure 8. *Examples of Student Written Responses, Teacher Feedback, and Reasons for Feedback*

Explicit Strategy Instruction

Some researchers have found that providing students with explicit strategy instruction on the skills used by historians improves their ability to use sourcing and corroboration (Nokes et al., 2007; Reisman, 2012). Explicit strategy instruction includes four parts. Teachers first talk about the skill with students, giving the skill a label, such as *sourcing*, and telling

students how to do it, when it is useful, and why it is effective. Teachers help students see

Student 1: Dolly Lunt’s diary shows that Sherman used excessive force. She says that his troops were just obeying orders and that they were breaking things without any reason.

Teacher feedback: How does Lunt’s account compare with Sherman’s orders shown in Document 2? How do you explain the differences?

Reason for feedback: To encourage the student to use corroboration by making comparisons across documents and to avoid cherry-picking evidence that supports an interpretation while ignoring evidence that contradicts the opinion.

Student 2: The accounts of northerners, like General Howard and General Sherman himself, call what the Union troops are doing “foraging.” But the southerners, like General Hampton and the editorial in the South Carolina paper, call the same actions “pillaging.” And northerners and southerners describe the Union troops’ actions in completely different ways.

Teacher feedback: I’m impressed by the way you use corroboration and notice both the similarities between accounts and the differences. I also like the way you use sourcing to explain some of these differences.

Reasons for feedback: To reinforce the vocabulary of “corroboration” and “sourcing” and to emphasize the specific actions associated with those two strategies.

the usefulness of the strategy in historical inquiry and in more generalized settings. Teachers then model the strategy, thinking aloud as a historian would if the historian were looking at a document for the first time. Because explicit strategy instruction tends to be tedious, it should be brief and direct.

If I were modeling the strategy of sourcing for students, I could project an excerpt from Lunt’s diary ([Figure 9](#)) on a screen in front of the class and think aloud, with students paying attention to what I do. I might say something like this, revealing my thought processes:

First of all, I need to know who is saying this and what kind of document it is before I can know how much to trust it. There must be some information about the source somewhere. Oh, here it is on the bottom of the page. Ok, I can see that this is from a woman, Dolly Lunt, who owned a plantation. So, she is a Southerner, and I’ll bet she enslaved individuals on that plantation. I can also see that this comes from her diary. And looking at the document, I see an entry for November 19th and November 20th, so it looks like she wrote in her diary every day. It says she was an eyewitness of Sherman’s March, so I’ll bet she watched it happen during the day and made her record that evening. So, on the surface it looks like a pretty reliable source. An eyewitness writing in her diary. A diary is a private record, not usually meant for the public and sometimes pretty truthful.

But this diary was written by someone with really strong opinions that I'm sure influenced what she wrote and maybe even what she saw. Just for the fun of it, I think I will do a Google search of Dolly Sumner Lunt and see if I can find out anything else about her.

It is not enough to model the products of good thinking, such as showing a strong essay written by a student. Teachers must also model the processes involved in the strategy being taught.

During explicit strategy instruction, after the teacher has taught the class about a strategy and modeled its use, students engage in guided practice. *Guided practice* is so called because teachers provide scaffolding or guidance to make the complex tasks of historical reading and writing more manageable. Scaffolding might include group work for peer support, simplified texts, graphic organizers, assignments that have been partially completed, cues and reminders on posters or bookmarks, and ongoing and spontaneous teacher support. The [graphic organizer](#) included with the lesson materials in Appendix B is an example of scaffolding. The first column of the graphic organizer reminds students to think about the source of each document, highlighting the perspective that it represents. The second column provides a place for students to gather and summarize evidence. The third column invites them to think critically about the document and the evidence it provides. Teachers could model for students how to use the graphic organizer by completing the first row with them as shown in Figure 10. The scales on the back of the graphic organizer help students to integrate conflicting evidence into an interpretation. When different objectives call for it, teachers might provide a graphic organizer in the form of a t-chart, Venn diagram, timeline, concept map, or other structure. In addition to giving students a graphic organizer, the teacher might allow students to analyze documents in small, purposely-formed cooperative learning groups so that students can support each other as meaning makers and text critics. Teacher support is what makes guided practice *guided*.

Figure 9. *A Document Projected in Front of the Class for the Teacher to Use to Model Sourcing.*

November 19, 1864

Like demons the Yankee soldiers rush in! My yards are full.

To my smokehouse, my dairy, pantry, kitchen, and cellar, like famished wolves they come, breaking locks and whatever is in their way. The thousand pounds of meat in my smokehouse is gone in a twinkling. My flour, my meat, my lard, butter, eggs, pickles of various kinds—both in vinegar and brine—wine, jars, and jugs are all gone. My eighteen fat turkeys, my hens, chickens, and fowls, my young pigs, are shot down in my yard and hunted as if they were rebels themselves. Utterly powerless I ran out and pled with the guard.

‘I cannot help you, Madam. It is orders.’

...Alas! little did I think while trying to save my house from plunder and fire that they were forcing my slaves from home at the point of the bayonet. One, Newton, jumped into bed in his cabin, and said he was sick. Another crawled under the floor—he was a lame boy—but they pulled him out, placed him on a horse, and drove him off. ... Jack came crying to me, the big tears flowing down his cheeks, saying they were making him go. I said: ‘Stay in my room.’ But a man followed in, cursing him and threatening to shoot him if he did not go; so poor Jack had to go.

...Sherman himself and a large part of his army passed my house that day. All day, as the sad moments rolled on, were they passing not only in front of my house, but from behind. They tore down my garden fence, made a road through my backyard and lot field, driving their animals and riding through, tearing down my fences and desolating my home—doing it on purpose when there was no need for it. ...As night fell around us, the skies from every point were lit up with flames from burning buildings. Dinnerless and supperless as we were, it was nothing in comparison with the fear of being driven out homeless to the dreary woods. Nothing to eat! I could give my guard no supper, so he left us.

November 20, 1864.

About ten o’clock they had all passed except one, who came in and wanted coffee made, which was done, and he, too, went on. A few minutes elapsed, and two messengers riding rapidly passed back. Then more soldiers came by. And this ended the passing of Sherman’s army by my place, leaving me poorer by thirty thousand dollars than I was yesterday morning. And a much stronger Rebel!”

Source information: Dolly Sumner Lunt was a plantation-owning widow in rural Georgia. Her eyewitness account appears in her published diary. (Changed for easier reading.) Lunt, D. S. (1918). *A woman’s wartime journal; An account of the passage over a Georgia plantation of Sherman’s army on the march to the sea, as recorded in the diary of Dolly Sumner Lunt*. Library of Congress. <https://archive.org/details/womanswartimejou00lunt>

Figure 10. Graphic Organizer to Model Harvesting Evidence

Graphic Organizer

Did General Sherman and the Union troops use excessive force during their “march to the sea” or did they just do what they needed to do to win the war? How did Sherman’s March impact the enslaved?

INSTRUCTIONS: Choose one of the questions listed above or another historical question approved by your teacher. Then use the following chart to record and evaluate the evidence given in the primary sources. List the strongest evidence on the scales on the back of this paper, with evidence supporting one interpretation on one side of the scales and evidence supporting other interpretations on the opposite side. Then weigh the evidence to reach a conclusion and write about your conclusion at the bottom of the page as instructed.

| Source and Perspective | The Document Says... | Your Evaluation Of It... |
|---|---|---|
| Plantation owning widow. Born in Maine. Enslaved individuals on plantation. Southern perspective. Eye-witness. Writing in diary the day of. | Yankees raiding farm taking/killing all animals. “Following orders.” Forced slaves to leave against their will. Intentionally destroying with no need. Dinnerless. Home left standing. “A much stronger rebel.” | An eyewitness account in a diary should be reliable. Concerns with her description of taking of slaves. They may have been in shock/fear too. Exaggerated loyalty?? Yankee soldiers not friendly to enslaved. |
| | | |

After guided practice, the students engage in independent practice, during which they work without support. The teacher might assign students to conduct an analysis of one of the primary sources from the document packet on their own, either in class or at home. Students might be required to submit a brief written analysis describing its strengths and weaknesses as evidence. Teachers subsequently review students’ independent work and provide feedback such as the examples previously shown in [Figure 8](#). Teachers should match their strategy instruction to the resources they are using. For example, in the lesson on Sherman’s March, it would be particularly important for students to identify the source of each account, especially whether it represents a Northern or Southern perspective.

Implicit Strategy Instruction

During some lessons, a teacher might want to provide implicit rather than explicit strategy instruction. In implicit strategy instruction, the teacher does not talk explicitly about the historical thinking strategy but instead designs a lesson that promotes the use of the unnamed strategy (Dole, 2000). For instance, the use of evidence to support an interpretation is a vital strategy in historical writing. The second page of the [graphic organizer](#) included with the materials for the lesson on Sherman’s March (Appendix B) provides a place for students to record evidence that Sherman used excessive force and to record evidence that he did not use excessive force. The instructions on the graphic organizer then ask students to write a paragraph explaining their position, with the note, “include evidence that supports your interpretation.” The teacher does not need to take time during this lesson to talk about the way historians use evidence to support their interpretation. That strategy might be taught explicitly on a different day during another lesson. Instead, during this lesson, the teacher has merely asked students to use evidence to support an interpretation, then provided support in the form of a graphic organizer to help them do so.

Implicit strategy instruction is less tedious than explicit strategy instruction, involves less teacher talk, and allows students to “discover” strategies with less teacher guidance (Dole, 2004). However, implicit strategy instruction might be insufficient in helping all students adopt historians’ reading, thinking, and writing skills. Ideally, teachers will integrate both explicit and implicit strategy instruction into their historical inquiry lessons.

Cognitive Apprenticeships

Cognitive apprenticeships, as described in Chapter 2 (“Models of Instruction: Varying Teaching to Support Learners During Inquiry” by Jeffery D. Nokes), are one of the most effective ways to foster students’ historical literacies. Unlike explicit strategy instruction or implicit strategy instruction, cognitive apprenticeships do not occur during a single lesson. Instead, over the course of a school year, the teacher uses *modeling* (demonstrating how to engage in historical reading and writing), *coaching* (advising students as they engage in historical reading and writing), and varying levels of *scaffolding* (supporting students as they engage in historical reading and writing) as students gradually become more fluent in the processes of historical inquiry. Following the “gradual release model,” the responsibility for historical reading, thinking, and writing gradually shifts from the teacher to the students as they gain proficiency (Fisher & Frey, 2013). For instance, within a cognitive apprenticeship, the lesson materials provided on Sherman’s March would be used according to students’ diverse needs, with teachers providing more or less modeling of thinking processes and higher or lower levels of scaffolding during small group work, based upon the status of the class as a whole and students individually. This lesson would be used in coordination with other lessons to help students become more skilled and increasingly independent in their historical inquiries. A great deal of research shows that teachers who develop cognitive apprenticeships in their classrooms help their students become more thoughtful and skillful historical readers and writers (De La Paz et al., 2017).

To summarize, teachers who have the greatest success in fostering students’ historical literacies apply a variety of instructional approaches. The most successful approaches include many opportunities for students to practice historical reading and writing, receiving feedback from their teacher. Explicit strategy instruction, with direct talk about strategies and teacher modeling, fosters students’ skills, particularly those who struggle to learn. Implicit strategy instruction encourages students’ historical reading and writing without openly talking about specific strategies. A balance of explicit and implicit strategy instruction usually works best. And the formation of cognitive apprenticeships allows teachers to provide varying levels of modeling, coaching, and support across the school year as students become more skillful and independent in their ability to engage in historical inquiries.

Assessing Students' Historical Reading and Writing

There are numerous strategies for using Library of Congress resources for purposeful social studies assessment (Nokes, in press). Teachers should assess students' learning of the course objectives. Thus, if the objectives of the class include the development of historical literacies, teachers should assess students' historical reading and writing skills. In addition, in learning-centered classrooms, teachers assess before, during, and after instruction, making adjustments to their teaching in response to data collected in both formal and informal assessments. Traditional, content-focused assessments, both multiple choice and free response, may help teachers evaluate students' content knowledge, but they are generally inadequate for assessing historical literacy. In addition to these forms of assessment, well-designed, open-ended prompts that require argumentative writing can provide evidence of whether students can use the reading and writing strategies of historians to develop defensible interpretations.

As described in this chapter, one of the most basic skills associated with historical reading is *sourcing*, paying attention to the source of a document and using source information to evaluate its reliability. How might a teacher assess students' ability to engage in sourcing? One way to do so would be to provide only the source information for two different documents, Lunt's diary and Will Sherman's interview, for instance, and ask students to write a sentence about each, predicting how that person might describe Sherman's march. The teacher could quickly evaluate each student's sentence, looking for indications that they can make inferences about how the source of a document influences the document's content. The Stanford History Education Group's [Beyond the Bubble](#) resources include over 200 relatively quick assessments of historical reading skills that use Library of Congress materials. Assessment should be continuous and can include informal methods as well. For example, one quick formative assessment would be to project a document with the source information missing, ask students to analyze the document, and see which students request source information. Students who do not seek information about the source probably need more instruction on that strategy.

A teacher can administer more formal assessments of sourcing by giving students multiple documents with sources of varying credibility and asking students to rank them in terms of reliability, justifying each ranking. Students who notice the source, valuing eyewitness accounts produced soon after the event, demonstrate an ability to engage in sourcing. It should be noted, though, that students who source some primary documents may not use sourcing when working with other genres of evidence, such as photographs or websites (McGrew et al., 2018). As a result, teaching and assessing learning must be ongoing as students take on increasingly complex inquiries with diverse types of texts, a process Parker

(2018) and others refer to as *looping*. In looping, teachers teach and reteach the same skills throughout a course, progressively increasing their expectations for the level of sophistication in students' strategy use.

Although isolated strategies, such as sourcing, are fairly simple to assess, teachers will sometimes want to assess students' historical reading and writing through longer argumentative writing assignments. Monte-Sano and colleagues (2014) have developed resources to help teachers teach and assess students' argumentative historical writing. They assess students' writing using four criteria: (a) whether students use evidence to substantiate their claims; (b) students' *evaluation of evidence*, using strategies such as sourcing and corroboration; (c) whether students use an *organizational framework* that leads the reader in a logical manner in defense of their interpretations; and (d) students' *use of language* that is valued in historical inquiry.

Applying Historical Reading and Writing in Civic Engagement

At the start of this chapter, I foreshadowed its focus on strategies that prepare informed members of a society who could take informed action. Much of the chapter has dealt with the way historians become informed when working with conflicting evidence from multiple perspectives using sophisticated critical reading strategies. I have also explained how teachers can help students read more like historians. Yet the link between historical literacies and civic engagement might not be clear to you. In the era of the internet, social media, "fake news," and Twitter feeds, it is more important than ever that people understand how to think critically about the information they find (or that finds them). Wineburg (2018) explains that locating information is no longer an issue—many platforms provide access to more information than a person could ever soak in. Instead, vetting and assessing the accuracy of information is the primary challenge of becoming informed in the twenty-first century (Nokes et al., 2020).

Because more Americans learn about current events from online sources than ever before (American Press Institute, 2015), it is essential that they have strategies for evaluating online texts. And several strategies that are central to historical literacy have important applications in online reading. For example, historians approach texts with healthy skepticism, unwilling to accept what they read at face value, particularly before investigating the veracity and reliability of the source, and cross-checking information against other sources representing diverse perspectives. These ways of approaching texts are precisely what online readers need to do when researching current political issues. Students who learn historical literacies develop these strategies for working with evidence during historical investigations. However, there is some evidence that these strategies, once developed for historical inquiry, are not transferred to online reading, even by historians (McGrew et al., 2018).

To remedy this, a teacher might model effective online reading by conducting an internet search for a video of Sherman's March to the Sea. The teacher might select [the video produced by Discerning History](#), one of the first search results. Watching a minute of the video, the teacher might note its professional appearance and authoritative narrator. The teacher might then pause the video and suggest that the class needs to know who is behind it. Doing a search of "Discerning History," the teacher can find that a series of videos have been produced by a Southern Christian organization and that a pastor is the narrator of these videos. Investigating further, the teacher can find a video produced by Discerning History on the transatlantic slave trade that downplays the horror of the experience, comparing the kidnapping of Africans to the experience of Chinese indentured servants who arrived on America's West Coast. An additional video from the same source addresses the question, "Was Martin Luther King, Jr., a Christian?" intimating that he was not. The teacher might then consider with students the risks involved in gathering information on Sherman's March from a source of this kind, particularly when the materials are presented in such a professional-sounding manner. These same strategies of sourcing and corroboration used in historical inquiry are a key to finding accurate information online.

Transferring Historical Literacies to Online Reading

History teachers can make history classrooms an indispensable part of the school curriculum by helping students apply historical literacies in a way that will improve their online reading. Along with teaching students to evaluate the source of historical documents and to cross check documents with other primary source evidence, teachers can teach students explicitly about the importance of vetting online sources of information when studying current controversial issues, modelling for students how to apply sourcing and corroboration in online research. A teacher might model *lateral reading*, a sourcing strategy used by professional fact-checkers to assess the reliability of information found on a webpage (McGrew et al., 2018). In lateral reading, the researcher opens multiple browser windows and leaves a website to find out about its source. It is not enough to hit an "about us" link on a website to investigate its origins. The critical reader wants to know what others have to say about the organization or individual behind a website. Wikipedia has been shown to be an efficient place to start (McGrew et al., 2018). To model this process, the teacher would project for students the computer screen as the teacher seeks information on a current controversial issue. Students could observe the teacher doing an internet search, choosing a webpage to get information, then investigating the source of that webpage using lateral reading. The teacher could then return to the internet search and choose an alternative webpage to corroborate what was found on the original site that was investigated.

Historians seek evidence that represents alternative perspectives (Nokes & Kesler-Lund, 2018), with the understanding that their research will be reviewed by peers who demand an inclusive and exhaustive search. Historians cannot cherry-pick evidence if they hope to

have their work published. Alternative perspectives enrich the narratives that historians produce and strengthen the substantiation of their arguments. When engaged in historical inquiry, students should do likewise by seeking out diverse perspectives on an event. Such an approach to becoming historically informed has applications for taking informed action. Teachers can help students transfer historical literacies to the civic arena by helping them acknowledge the need to seek alternative perspectives on issues. Reading social media feeds from peers and outlets who share a young person's point of view does not qualify that individual as being informed. Only when a person understands the arguments and evidence employed by those who have different political opinions, and carefully considers the merits of their opponents' claims, can a person be truly informed. Living in an echo chamber created by social media increases polarization in societies (Cinelli et al., 2021) and hinders people's ability to work together toward a common good (Barton & Levstik, 2004).

Historians understand the need to substantiate their claims with evidence that has been carefully vetted. They analyze evidence with an understanding that they will need to use it to substantiate their claims (Nokes & Kesler-Lund, 2019). When they read the work of other historians, they pay close attention to the way evidence has been used. Students can similarly be taught to question their peers about their use of evidence during debriefing sessions as explained in the lesson that follows. In preparation for taking informed action, students can be taught to demand evidence for the claims made on social media, on news programs, and by politicians. If necessary, students should be taught to follow up on the evidence used to substantiate claims—the Internet, if used with the skills highlighted in this section, makes it easier than ever to investigate the claims made by others. Before a social media post is shared, individuals have the responsibility to make certain that the claims it makes are substantiated by reliable evidence. The tragedy of the January 6, 2021, Capitol insurrection might have been avoided if individuals had been more vigilant in investigating the evidence behind Donald Trump's claims of a stolen election. Instead, the actions of the insurgents demonstrate that taking action can do more harm than good when it is not informed by reliable evidence. Additional teaching ideas for helping students transfer historical reading skills to online reading, as well as the research that supports such instruction can be found through [Stanford University's Civic Online Reasoning](#). No better educational context exists than history and social studies classrooms for fostering historical literacies and the related civic online reasoning strategies.

Conclusions

The processes through which historians become informed about historical events through a critical analysis of fragmentary and contradictory evidence representing multiple perspectives serve as a model of how an individual may become informed on current controversial events when faced with politicized information, misinformation, disinformation, and “fake news” found online and received through social media. The skills

and dispositions of historians, particularly sourcing, corroboration, and argumentation are promoted by the C3 Framework (NCSS, 2013) and seem especially applicable for those who intend to take informed action. Teachers who foster students' ability to use historical literacies when engaged in historical inquiry, and model for students how to apply these skills in online reading, prepare students to be informed on current political issues. Doing so secures history's essential place in the curriculum, with a vital role in preparing young people with the skills needed to take informed action. In the twenty-first century, vetting information is a greater challenge than finding information (Wineburg, 2018), and taking informed action requires individuals to be informed, a process that involves the skills of sourcing, corroboration, and argumentation, foundational in historical literacy.

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Appendix A

A Historical Inquiry Lesson: Sherman’s March to the Sea

Background for Lesson

Sherman’s March to the Sea is one of the most controversial series of events in a very divisive period of United States history: the Civil War (Blinder, 2014). The materials included in this lesson, designed for secondary United States history students, allow young people to use evidence to develop an interpretation of Sherman’s March to the Sea. Historical inquiries begin with authentic questions. The questions addressed in this lesson are “Can total war be justified?” “Did General Sherman and the Union troops use excessive force during their March to the Sea or were they just doing what they needed to do to win the war?” “How did those held in bondage react to the advance of Sherman’s troops?” and “How did Sherman’s March to the Sea impact enslaved individuals?” Such questions continue to be debated by historians (Blinding, 2014) and address curriculum recommendations from the Teaching Hard History framework,² which demands that students know that “in the South, enslaved men, women, and children left plantations in large numbers or refused to work. Their actions affected the Confederacy’s ability to supply its army and feed its civilians” (Shuster et al., 2019, p. 41). The perspectives of eyewitnesses influenced how individuals in Sherman’s day answered these questions. The polarized perspectives of eyewitnesses who produced the evidence create challenges that historians today face in researching this topic.

Lesson Objectives

Three objectives guide this lesson.

- Students will explain the impact of Sherman’s March to the Sea on civilians, refugees from enslavement, and the outcomes of the war.
- Students will use sourcing, corroboration, and contextualization, to critically analyze primary sources and construct interpretations of Sherman’s March to the Sea.
- Students will apply historical reading strategies to critically evaluate information that they find through online sources and social media, using vetted evidence to defend claims.

Lesson Procedures

This lesson is designed to cover two 90-minute class periods. During the first day, the teacher might complete steps 1–2b that follow. On the second day, the teacher might complete steps 2c–2h, starting with students continuing to work in the groups that they

² The Teaching Hard History framework is part of the Learning for Justice initiative, developed by the Southern Poverty Law Center to improve instruction that promotes social justice. Found at <https://www.learningforjustice.org/sites/default/files/2020-08/TT-2007-Teaching-Hard-History-6-12-Framework.pdf>

were in during the previous class. This activity could be shortened by reducing the number of documents students are given or by letting students choose which documents of the entire set they analyze based upon their research interests.

Step 1

Teachers should first provide students with background information on Union General William Tecumseh Sherman's March to the Sea, either through a mini-lecture, reading, or video clip. For example, the teacher might show the first 7:45 of the video clip taken from the documentary movie *The Civil War* produced by Ken Burns (with a warning about the racist language contained in some primary sources quoted in the movie). Alternatively, a teacher might have students independently review the information from [Chronicling America from the Library of Congress](#) or a passage on Sherman's March to the Sea available on an open-access textbook. A short, purposeful lecture can set the stage for a more equitable activity by increasing the likelihood that all students, even those with little background knowledge, will know enough to work with the specific documents used in the activity. If a teacher decides to lecture, they should limit it to fifteen minutes with the purpose of providing students with just enough background information to ensure that students will be able to understand the documents in this investigation. The following information is important for students to know in order to work with the specific primary sources included in this lesson:

- Sherman's March to the Sea began after the capture of Atlanta, Georgia. It ended after about 285 miles, and more than a month later, on the Atlantic Coast in Savannah, Georgia.
- Sherman abandoned supply and communication lines during the March. The 60,000 men under his command were divided into several columns and foraged for their own supplies.
- The war had been going on for 3 ½ years, and the South was losing strength. But many Southerners still hoped for victory. Northerners were frustrated by the Confederacy's refusal to surrender.
- Many enslaved individuals viewed the advancing Union army as liberators. Many left their plantations to follow the Union troops, some men and women finding jobs or volunteering with the army. These refugees from enslavement were seen as a burden by many Union officers and soldiers who held racist views.
- On December 9, 1864, Union troops crossed Ebenezer Creek on a pontoon bridge they had built. They intentionally destroyed the bridge behind them before the refugees from enslavement could cross. Many of the formerly enslaved individuals who had been following the Union troops were massacred by Confederate scouts. Others rushed into the creek and were drowned in what became known as the Ebenezer Creek Massacre.

Step 2

The teacher can conclude the mini-lecture by introducing the compelling question and supporting questions of the lesson: “Can total war be justified?” “Did General Sherman and the Union troops use excessive force during their March to the Sea, or were they just doing what they needed to do to win the war?” “How did those held in bondage react to the advance of Sherman’s troops?” and “How did Sherman’s March impact enslaved individuals?” Students are encouraged to focus on one of the supporting questions during the inquiry activity that follows.

Step 2a. The teacher either passes out a paper copy of the graphic organizer ([Appendix B](#)) or prepares a digital copy for students, granting them access to it. The teacher then provides explicit strategy instruction on *sourcing* and models for students the analysis of one of the documents as shown in this chapter using Dolly Lunt’s diary.

Step 2b. The teacher forms students into groups of three or four, provides each group with a folder with documents 1–13 ([Appendix B](#)), either physical copies or in a digital folder, and has them collaboratively analyze some or all of the remaining documents, following the process that has been modeled. The teacher encourages students to choose documents first that are directly related to their interests, whether it is the excessive use of force or the reaction of enslaved individuals to Sherman’s advancement. Students record information on their graphic organizer about each document’s source, content, and their evaluation of the evidence. This can be done individually or collaboratively using an online document editing application like Google Docs.

Step 2c. As prompted on the graphic organizer, students, either with the support of cooperative learning groups or independently, write an argumentative paragraph on the bottom of their graphic organizer, relating the question that they focused on during their investigation, a claim associated with their interpretation, and the evidence that substantiated their claim.

Step 2d. If students want to review additional evidence related to their specific questions, the teacher can encourage them to explore more resources in the Library of Congress digital archives. The teacher models how this could be done. Students might be directed toward the resources in [Appendix C](#) related to Sherman’s March, or they might begin their search at [Chronicling America](#) that curates many Library of Congress resources related to Sherman’s March to the Sea. Such a search would allow greater autonomy than an inquiry with prescribed documents. Appendix C and the Library of Congress page on Sherman provide scaffolding for students by allowing them to explore a manageable subset of the Library of Congress’ vast collection. Students might be assigned to choose four or five sources that are relevant to their inquiry and provide curated access to those documents through a content sharing app such as Padlet.

Step 2e. After students have had time to analyze multiple documents, the teacher brings the whole class together for a debriefing on students' interpretations and the processes they went through during the inquiry. The teacher asks students who considered whether Sherman's troops used excessive force to explain their conclusions, then asks the same of the students who investigated the response of enslaved people to Sherman's March to the Sea. During the debriefing the teacher regularly asks, "What evidence led you to that conclusion?" and "Why do you trust Northern sources more than you trust Southern sources?" to encourage students to practice historical argumentation by citing evidence from the documents to support their interpretations and claims. As part of the debriefing, the teacher asks students to identify those groups whose perspectives were missing or underrepresented in the documents they received, considering how historical inquiry often marginalizes the oral histories of Indigenous peoples, African Americans, and others. During the debriefing, the teacher encourages students to respond to one another's ideas as a form of peer review. A poster on the wall prompts them to ask questions of each other such as, "What evidence led to that conclusion?" "How do you explain evidence that contradicts your interpretation?" and "Why do you trust some sources more than you trust other sources?"

Step 2f. After discussing each of the supporting questions of the inquiry, the teacher leads the class in a discussion of the compelling question: "Can total war be justified?" Students are encouraged to use the evidence they gathered and their interpretations associated with the supporting questions to inform their consideration of the compelling question.

Step 2g. The teacher concludes the lesson by teaching explicitly the importance of critically evaluating information found online. The teacher might explain that just as the contents of the documents used in this inquiry were influenced by the perspectives and values of the people who created them, so are online sources of information influenced by the people and groups who create them. Just as corroborating across documents that represented multiple perspectives gave students a clearer view of Sherman's March and helped them find errors in individual accounts, seeking multiple sources of online information, representing diverse perspectives, can help an online reader identify misinformation and gain a more nuanced understanding of current issues. It can prepare them to communicate their ideas (in writing or speaking) with greater confidence as they use carefully vetted evidence to back up their views and account for evidence that may seem to go against their ideas. If time allows, the teacher might model lateral reading using the video on Sherman's March to the Sea or a related current controversial topic such as the current debate over police reform. The teacher would use a search engine to find two or three articles with conflicting information about the current event, then investigate the sources of those articles by opening new tabs and leaving the original webpages to seek information about the sources. If the teacher used a Google search to find information on Dolly Sumner Lunt during the document-based activity, the teacher could make a connection to that process and lateral reading.

Step 2h. As an extension of this lesson, students could look to see whether the Ebenezer Creek Massacre is included in their textbook or in the state’s curriculum standards. If not, they could write a letter to an appropriate official making a case for its inclusion in the curriculum.

Lesson Materials

[Appendix B](#) provides the materials needed for this lesson. Thirteen documents are included that have been edited to make them easier for students to read. These documents include the perspective of Union and Confederate soldiers and civilians, including African Americans who followed the Union army to escape from enslavement. I also included a graphic organizer, the purpose of which was previously described. The document set includes the following:

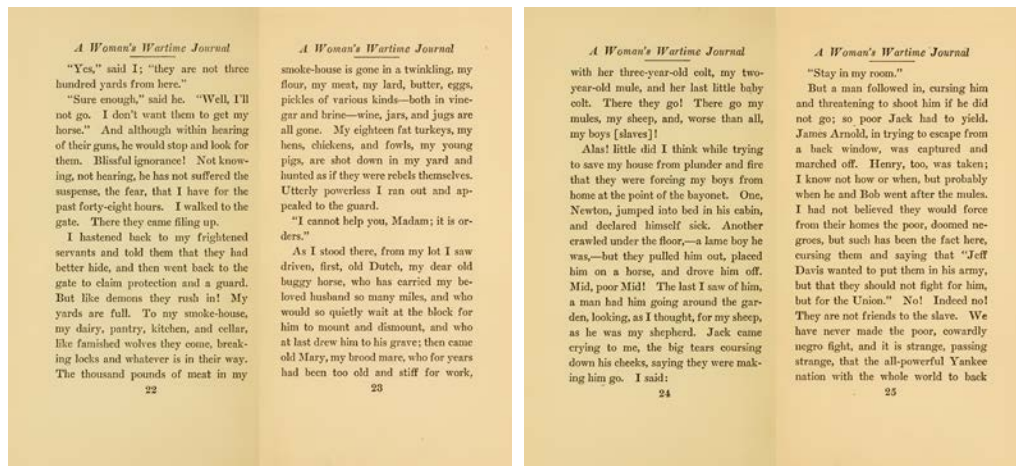
1. [A diary entry of Dolly Sumner Lunt](#), a plantation-owning widow in rural Georgia who witnessed the passage of General Sherman’s army across her plantation and wrote about it on November 19 and 20, 1864, the days that the troops passed (Lunt, 1918).
2. [General Sherman’s Special Field Orders Number 120](#), issued November 9, 1864, giving orders for his troops’ foraging operations (Sherman, 1869).
3. [Part of a letter](#) written by General Sherman to the political leaders of Atlanta on September 12, 1864, in response to a letter they wrote to him requesting that residents of Atlanta be allowed to remain in their city (Sherman, 1864).
4. [Part of a letter](#) titled “Morale of Sherman’s Army” by an unidentified writer to the editor of *The Columbia Phoenix*, a South Carolina newspaper, published April 15, 1865, criticizing Yankee pillaging (Morale of Sherman’s Army, 1865).
5. [A drawing titled *Sherman’s March to the Sea*](#), by Pennsylvania-born artist, F. O. C. Darly, published in 1883. (Darly, 1883)
6. [A photograph titled *Atlanta, Georgia. Sherman’s Men Destroying Railroad*](#) taken in 1864 by George N. Barnard, a Union Army photographer (Barnard, 1864).
7. [Part of a letter](#) written by Confederate General Wade Hampton on June 19, 1865, citing an eyewitness account of Sherman’s entry into Columbia, South Carolina, which appeared in a South Carolina newspaper on April 7, 1866 (Hampton, 1865).
8. [Part of an account](#) of Union foraging during Sherman’s March to the Sea, given by Union General Oliver Otis Howard and published in the *New York Tribune* on October 27, 1907 (Howard, 1907).

9. [An entry in a Union soldier's journal](#) from December 12, 1865, summarizing some of the effects of Sherman's march (War Chronicle, 1865).
10. [Part of the memoir of Oscar Lapham](#), a Union soldier from Rhode Island, published in 1885, describing the reaction of enslaved individuals to the advance of Sherman's army (Lapham, 1885).
11. [Part of a letter written by Confederate General J. B. Hood](#) to General Sherman on September 12, 1864, criticizing the Union's artillery shelling of Atlanta (Hood, 1864).
12. [An account given by Union soldier John Potter](#) in his memoir, published in 1897, describing the reunion of an African American family in a Union army camp (Potter, 1897).
13. [Part of an interview](#) given by a formerly enslaved individual, Will Sherman, to a White interviewer in 1936, describing his attempt to gain freedom during General Sherman's March (Sherman, 1936).

Appendix B

Lesson materials for a document-based lesson on Sherman's March to the Sea

Document 1



November 19, 1864

Like demons the Yankee soldiers rush in! My yards are full.

To my smoke-house, my dairy, pantry, kitchen, and cellar, like famished wolves they come, breaking locks and whatever is in their way. The thousand pounds of meat in my smoke-house is gone in a twinkling. My flour, my meat, my lard, butter, eggs, pickles of various kinds—both in vinegar and brine—wine, jars, and jugs are all gone. My eighteen fat turkeys, my hens, chickens, and fowls, my young pigs, are shot down in my yard and hunted as if they were rebels themselves. Utterly powerless I ran out and pled with the guard.

'I cannot help you, Madam. It is orders.'

...Alas! little did I think while trying to save my house from plunder and fire that they were forcing my slaves from home at the point of the bayonet. One, Newton, jumped into bed in his cabin, and said he was sick. Another crawled under the floor—he was a lame boy—but they pulled him out, placed him on a horse, and drove him off. ... Jack came crying to me, the big tears flowing down his cheeks, saying they were making him go. I said: 'Stay in my room.' But a man followed in, cursing him and threatening to shoot him if he did not go; so poor Jack had to go.

...Sherman himself and a large part of his army passed my house that day. All day, as the sad moments rolled on, were they passing not only in front of my house, but from behind. They tore down my garden fence, made a road through my backyard and lot field, driving their animals and riding through, tearing down my fences and desolating my home—doing it on purpose when there was no need for it. ...As night fell around us, the skies from every point were lit up with flames from burning buildings. Dinnerless and supperless as we were, it was nothing in comparison with the fear of being driven out homeless to the dreary woods. Nothing to eat! I could give my guard no supper, so he left us.

November 20, 1864.

About ten o'clock they had all passed except one, who came in and wanted coffee made, which was done, and he, too, went on. A few minutes elapsed, and two messengers riding rapidly passed back. Then more soldiers came by. And this ended the passing of Sherman's army by my

Document 1 (continued)

place, leaving me poorer by thirty thousand dollars than I was yesterday morning. And a much stronger Rebel!”

Source information: Dolly Sumner Lunt was a plantation-owning widow in rural Georgia. Her eyewitness account appears in her published diary. Lunt, D. S. (1918). *A woman's wartime journal; An account of the passage over a Georgia plantaion of Sherman's army on the march to the sea, as recorded in the diary of Dolly Sumner Lunt*. Library of Congress. <https://archive.org/details/womanswartimejou00lunt> (Changed for easier reading.) Found on pages 22-25.

Document 2

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base, and a long and difficult march to a new one. All the chances of war have been considered and provided for, as far as human sagacity can. All he asks of you is to maintain that discipline, patience and courage, which have characterized you in the past; and he hopes, through you, to strike a blow at our enemy that will have a material effect in producing what we all so much desire—his complete overthrow. Of all things the most important is, that the men, during marches and in camp, keep their places and not scatter about as stragglers or foragers, to be picked up by a hostile people in detail. It is also of the utmost importance that our wagons should not be loaded with anything but provisions and ammunition. All surplus supplies, non-essentials and refugees should now go to the rear, and none should be encouraged to encumber us on the march. At some future time we will be enabled to provide for the poor whites and blacks who seek to escape the bondage under which they are now suffering. With these few simple cautions in your minds, he hopes to lead you to achievements equal in importance to those of the past.

By order of Major General W. T. Sherman:
L. M. DAYTON,
Aide-de-Camp.

SPECIAL FIELD ORDERS } HEADQUARTERS,
MILITARY DIVISION OF THE MISSISSIPPI,
No. 120. } In the Field, Kingston, Ga., Nov. 9, 1864.

I. For the purpose of military operations this army is divided into two wings, viz:—

The right wing, Major General O. O. Howard commanding, the 15th and 17th Corps.

The left wing, Major General H. W. Slocum commanding, the 14th and 20th Corps.

II. The habitual order of march will be, wherever practicable, by four roads, as near parallel as possible, and covering as points hereafter indicated in orders. The Cavalry, Brigadier General Kilpatrick commanding, will receive special orders from the Commander-in-Chief.

III. There will be no general train of supplies, but each corps will have its ammunition train and provision train, distributed habitually as follows: behind each regiment should follow one

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wagon and one ambulance; behind each brigade should follow a due proportion of ammunition wagons, provision wagons and ambulances. In case of danger, each Army Corps Commander should change this order of march, by having his advance and rear brigades unencumbered by wheels. The separate columns will start habitually at 7 a. m., and make about fifteen miles per day, unless otherwise fixed in orders.

IV. The army will forage liberally on the country during the march. To this end, each Brigade Commander will organize a good and sufficient foraging party, under the command of one or more discreet officers, who will gather, near the route traveled, corn or forage of any kind, meat of any kind, vegetables, corn meal, or whatever is needed by the command, aiming at all times to keep in the wagons at least ten days' provisions for the command, and three days' forage. Soldiers must not enter the dwellings of the inhabitants or commit any crimes, but during a halt or a camp, they may be permitted to gather turnips, potatoes and other vegetables, and to drive in stock in sight of their camp. To regular foraging parties must be indicated the gathering of provisions and forage at any distance from the road traveled.

V. To Army Corps Commanders alone is intrusted the power to destroy mills, houses, cotton gins, &c.; and for them this general principle is laid down: in districts and neighborhoods where the army is unopposed, no destruction of such property should be permitted; but should guerrillas or bushwhackers molest our march, or should the inhabitants burn bridges, obstruct roads, or otherwise manifest local hostility, then Army Commanders should order and enforce a devastation more or less relentless, according to the measure of such hostility.

VI. As for horses, mules, wagons, &c., belonging to the inhabitants, the Cavalry and Artillery may appropriate freely and without limit; discriminating, however, between the rich, who are usually hostile, and the poor or industrious, usually neutral or friendly. Foraging parties may also take mules or horses to replace the jaded animals of their train, or to serve as pack mules for the regiments or brigades. In all foraging, of whatever kind, the parties engaged will refrain from abusive or threatening language, and may, where

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the officer in command thinks proper, give written certificates of the facts, but no receipts; and they will endeavor to leave with each family a reasonable portion for their maintenance.

VII. Negroes who are able-bodied and can be of service to the several columns, may be taken along; but each Army Commander will bear in mind that the question of supplies is a very important one, and that his first duty is to see to them who bear arms.

VIII. The organization, at once, of a good pioneer battalion for each Army Corps, composed, if possible, of negroes, should be attended to. This battalion should follow the advance guard, should repair roads and double them if possible, so that the column will not be delayed after reaching bad places. Also, Army Commanders should study the habits of giving the Artillery and wagons the road, and marching their troops on one side; and also instruct their troops to assist wagons up steep hills or lead crossings of streams.

IX. Captain O. M. Poe, Chief Engineer, will assign to each wing of the army a pontoon train, fully equipped and organized; and the commanders thereof will see to its being properly protected at all times.

By order of Major General W. T. Sherman:
L. M. DAYTON,
Aide-de-Camp.

SPECIAL FIELD ORDERS } HEADQUARTERS,
MILITARY DIVISION OF THE MISSISSIPPI,
No. 122. } In the Field, Kingston, Ga., Nov. 11, 1864.

I. Major General Thomas, commanding Department of the Cumberland, will organize into battalions all officers, recruits, and furloughed men now in the Department of the Cumberland, or who may arrive there, belonging to the 14th, 15th, 17th, and 20th Corps, keeping them as far as possible distinct by corps, and in reserve until further orders.

II. Brigadier General N. J. Jackson, United States Volunteer, having reported for duty, is hereby assigned to the Department of the Cumberland, and in person to Major General Slocum, commanding 20th Corps, for immediate assignment to duty.

...IV. The army will gather whatever food they need from the countryside during the march. Each brigade commander will organize a good and large foraging [gathering] group, led by one or more careful officers. They will gather, near the path traveled, corn or food of any kind, meat of any kind, vegetables, corn-meal, or whatever is needed by the army. They will try at all times to keep in the wagons at least ten days' supplies for the command and three days' food. Soldiers must not enter the homes of the people, or trespass in any way. But during a stop or a camp they may be allowed to gather turnips, potatoes, and other vegetables, and to gather animals for their camp. ...

V. Only the army corps commanders are given the power to destroy mills, houses, cotton-gins, etc. And they must follow this rule: in places and neighborhoods where the army is not treated bad, no destruction of that property should be allowed. But if guerrillas or bushwhackers [rebel fighters] attack our march, or if southerners burn bridges, block roads, or show local unfriendliness, then army commanders should order and carry out a destruction more or less harsh based upon how hostile the people are.

VI. As for horses, mules, wagons, etc. belonging to the southerners, the cavalry and artillery may take as many as they want. They should, however, take more from the rich, who are usually hostile, than from the poor and hardworking, usually neutral or friendly. ...

VII. Negroes who are strong and can be of service to the army may be taken along. But each army commander should remember that supplies are limited. It is very important that his first duty is to care for the soldiers.

Source information: Sherman, W. T. (1864, November 9). Special Field Orders Number 120. Library of Congress. (Changed for easier reading). Found on pages 315-317 at <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc/gdc/scd0001.00136735457>

Document 3



...we must stop the war that now desolates our once happy and favored country. To stop war, we must defeat the rebel armies which are now fighting against the laws and Constitution that everyone must respect and obey. To defeat those armies, we must prepare the way to reach them in their hiding places, with the weapons and tools that will help us to reach our goals. ...

I tell you that our military plans make it necessary for the people who live in Atlanta to leave, and I can only renew my offer to help make their exit in any direction as easy and comfortable as possible. You cannot describe war in harsher terms than I will. War is cruelty, and you cannot make it pleasant; and those who brought war into our country deserve all the curses and hardships a people can give them.

...submit to the authority of the national government, and, instead of using your houses and streets and roads for a dreaded war, I and this army will then become your protectors and supporters, shielding you from danger, wherever it may come from. ...

We don't want your negroes, or your horses, or your houses, or your hands, or anything that you have, but we do want and will have you obey the laws of the United States.

...my dear sirs when Peace does come, you may ask me for anything. Then I will share with you the last cracker, and watch with you to protect your homes and families against danger from anywhere.

Source information: Parts of a letter written by William Tecumseh Sherman to James M. Calhoun and other leaders of the city of Atlanta, on September 12, 1864, in response to their request to allow the residents of Atlanta to stay in their city. (Changed for easier reading). Found at <https://cwc.omeka.chass.ncsu.edu/items/show/23>

Morale of Sherman's Army

A correspondent of the *Chester Carolinian*, from Johnston's army, thus reports on the condition of Sherman's troops, their inferior morale and the prospect before them and us:

"The Yankee dead and the prisoners bear upon them the marks of their plundering campaign—silk dresses, gold rings, chinaware, knives, forks, &c. Sherman's army was, no doubt, at one time, a formidable one, but now they are only a band of plunderers, preferring trophies stolen from defenceless women and children to the trophies of the battle-field, and resorting to any means, even to the burning of houses, to extort the gold and silver won by honest toil from the helpless. These Yankees have fought before this, and fought well, but the moment the warfare became one of plunder, battles became odious, and a few brave men now suffice to drive them back.


"The firing on the 21st continued with but little intermission until 2 a. m., when we fell back across a creek on our extreme right. At daylight, the Yankees moved forward vigorously, as if they intended to drive us further, but we were well prepared—so well, indeed, that they did not attack. Gen. Johnston fell back at his leisure, bringing off everything. Since then we have not seen or heard from the Yankees. Sherman has probably found it necessary to halt to dress his wounds. Be this as it may, let him advance where he will, henceforth he will not march as he did through Georgia and South Carolina. There is a lion in his path, who will demand toll in human flesh and blood for every foot of ground that he gains. Our force is now sufficient to dispute the country with the enemy."

The Yankee dead and the prisoners are wearing and carrying things they have plundered [stolen] including silk dresses, gold rings, chinaware, knives, forks, etc. Sherman's army was no doubt at one time a strong one, but now they are only a band of plunderers [thieves]. They would rather steal things from defenseless women and children than have success on the battle field. And they do anything, even burning houses to steal the gold and silver earned by honest work from the helpless. These Yankees have fought before this, and fought well, but the moment the warfare became one of plunder, battles became disgraceful, and a few brave men now are enough to drive them back.

Source information: Morale of Sherman's Army. (1865, April 15). *The Columbia Phoenix*. [Chronicling America, Library of Congress](#). (Changed for easier reading).

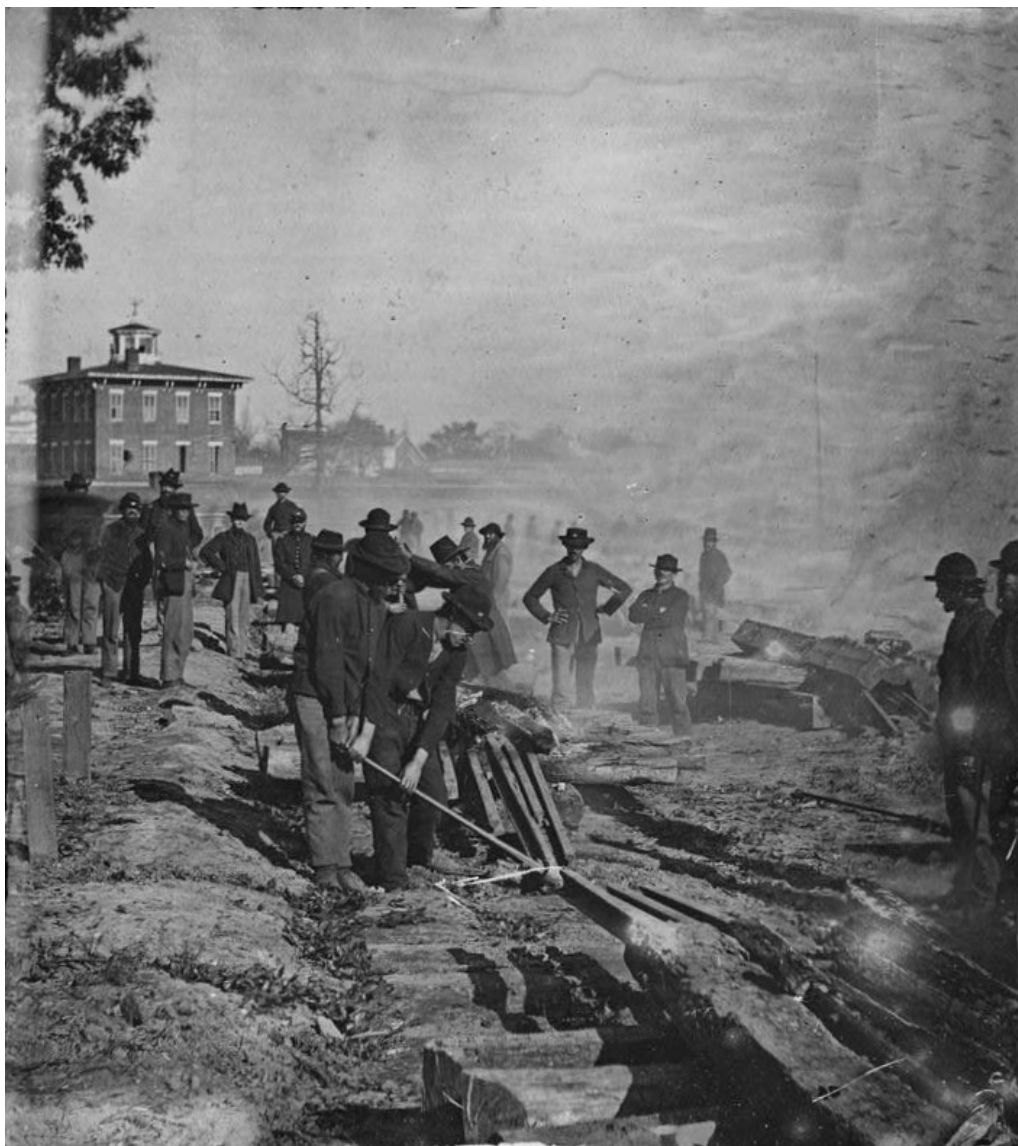
Document 5



SHERMAN'S MARCH  TO THE SEA.

Source information: Darley, F. O. C. (ca. 1883). *Sherman's march to the sea* [Lithograph]. Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/item/96512373/>

Document 6



Source information: Photograph taken in 1864 by George N. Barnard, Union army photographer. Barnard, G. N. (1864). *Atlanta, Georgia. Sherman's men destroying railroad* [Photograph]. <https://www.loc.gov/resource/cwpb.03394/>



At about 11 o'clock the first of the [Northern] soldiers reached Market Hall. The troops had hardly reached the Market Hall when they began to pillage [rob]. Stores were broken open with thousands watching the first hour after their arrival. No one tried to arrest the burglars. The Union leaders, officers, and soldiers, all let it happen. And any [Southerner] who carried a watch with gold chain, or who wore a nice hat, or overcoat, or boots or shoes was in trouble. He was immediately stripped by soldiers.... And so, the miserable day went on in pillage, insult, and constant confusion and terror. ... Sherman crossed the streets everywhere, so did his officers, and yet they saw nothing to change or stop. Robbery was going on at every corner, in every house, yet there was no criticism or punishment....

Some terrible soldiers were ordered to burn things. They were well prepared with all the tools they needed to do their work. They carried with them from house to house, pots and jars filled with explosive liquids, and with balls of fire soaked in this liquid, they carried the flames with great speed from house to house. Old men and women and children were seen, often while the flames were burning and raging around them, while walls were cracking and rafters tottering and falling, trying to save their clothing and some of their more valuable things. They were driven out roughly, with pistols against their heads, violent hands on their throats and collars. And the rough soldiers didn't treat women any different than men. Ladies were hustled from their rooms by force, sometimes with a pistol pointed at their hearts, their jewelry taken from their bodies—the things they carried taken from their hands.

Source information: Part of a letter written by Confederate General Wade Hampton on June 19, 1865, in which he cites a distinguished citizen of South Carolina (who he is not allowed to name) who gave the eyewitness account of Sherman's entry into Columbia, South Carolina recorded here. Hampton, W. (1866, April 7). [Letter to the editors of the *New York Day Book*]. *Keowee Courier*. [Chronicling America](#), [Library of Congress](#). (Changed for easier reading.)

WAR CHRONICLE,

BEING A RECORD OF BATTLES, SIEGES, SKIRMISHES, &c., FROM

Jan. 1. to Dec. 31, 1864.

[NOTE.—The dates of war events are those of the occurrences mentioned.]

Sherman's march; Howard's column moving upon Millen, Nov. 28
 Sherman's march; left wing reaches Ogeechee river, Nov. 28
 Sherman's march; town of Louisville destroyed, Nov. 29
 Sherman's march; Twentieth Corps tearing up railroads, Nov. 29
 Sherman's march; whole army approaching the Ogeechee, Nov. 30
 Sherman's march; Fourteenth Corps threatens Augusta, Dec. 1
 Sherman's march; Howard's right arrives at Millen, Dec. 2
 Sherman's march; Howard marches toward Jacksonboro without attacking Millen, Dec. 3
 Sherman's march; skirmish between Kilpatrick and Sherman, Dec. 4
 Sherman's march; his advance within 16 miles of Savannah, Dec. 4
 Sherman's march; Kilpatrick debates Wheeler at Waynesboro, Dec. 5
 Sherman's march; skirmishing at a station 25 miles from Savannah, Dec. 6
 Sherman's march; the army contracting and moving down Savannah river, Dec. 6
 Sherman's march; several skirmishes during the day, Dec. 7
 Sherman's march; his army concentrated in the vicinity of Savannah, Dec. 8
 Sherman's march; a small Rebel fort, fifteen miles from Savannah, captured, Dec. 9
 Sherman's march; the left wing within 10 miles of Savannah; scouts sent to communicate with the fleet in Ossabaw Sound, Dec. 9
 Sherman's march; the Seventeenth Corps from Savannah, Dec. 10
 Sherman's march; three scouts from Gen. Dahlgren in Ossabaw Sound, Dec. 11
 Sherman's march; Savannah and Charleston railroad torn up to within four miles of Savannah; left wing of the army invests the city, Dec. 11
 Sherman's march; gunboat Dandellon brings three of Sherman's scouts to Port Royal, Dec. 12
 Sherman's march; the whole army arrive before Savannah, having passed through forty-two of the finest counties of Georgia, capturing or occupying 200 villages, destroying 300 miles of railroad, bringing in 7,000 negroes and 10,000 horses and mules, having burned all the bridges and a vast amount of property, capturing millions of Rebel currency, 100,000 head of cattle, and 4,000 prisoners, subsisting the army for one month on the Rebels, with an aggregate loss of less than 1,000, Dec. 12
 Sherman's march; Sherman destroys all the railroads leading to the city, and completes the investment thereof, Dec. 13
 Sherman's march; he captures Fort McAllister, on the Ogeechee, 23 guns, 12 officers and 250 men, Dec. 13
 Sherman's march; Gen. Sherman makes a formal demand for the surrender of Savannah, which is refused, Dec. 16
 Sherman's march; General Hardee, with 15,000 men, burn the Navy Yard, blow up their iron-clads, and evacuate Savannah, passing over the Savannah river toward Charleston, Dec. 29
 Sherman's march; Gen. Sherman occupies the city of Savannah, getting 800 prisoners, 150 guns, 13 locomotives, 150 cars, 3 steamers, and 30,000 bales of cotton, Dec. 21
 Sheridan, Gen., appointed a Major-Gen. in the regular army, Nov. 8
 Sigel, Gen., assigned to command West Virginia, Feb. 25

Smithfield, Va.; gunboat expedition to Rebel stores destroyed, April 14
 Smith, Gen. Kirby, given command of the Rebels west of the Mississippi river, Jan. 6
 Soldiers' voting law adopted by the people in New York, March 8
 South Carolina; Union expedition under Birney ascends Ashpury river; steamboat grounds and is abandoned, May 25
 South Carolina; Foster attacks Seabrook and other islands, capturing a fort on James Island, July 1
 South Carolina; expedition from Port Royal to cut Savannah railroad to help Sherman, Nov. 29
 South Carolina; Foster's forces defeated at Honey Hill, and driven to the gunboats, Nov. 30
 South Carolina; land and naval expedition goes up Broad river to destroy Potomato bridge, Dec. 5
 South Carolina; the 25th Ohio surprises a Rebel fort at Church bridge, near Pocatungo, capturing two guns, Dec. 11
 Stoneman, Gen., made chief of cavalry under Grant, Jan. 5
 Stover, Commodore, U. S. Navy, died, Jan. 8
 Strawberry Plains, Tenn.; cavalry fight at, Rebel repulsed, Jan. 10
 Strawberry Plains; Longstreet retreats from, toward Bull's Gap, Feb. 20
 Suffolk, Va., captured by the Union forces, March 10
 Tazewell, Tenn., attacked by Rebel cavalry, who are repulsed, Jan. 26
 Thomas, Gen., made Brigadier-General in regular army, Jan. 7
 Tennessee; Longstreet's force advancing toward Knoxville, Jan. 17
 Tennessee; struggle, with Union force, retreats from Strawberry Plains to Knoxville, Jan. 19
 Tennessee; Rebel cavalry beaten near Sevierville, Jan. 27
 Tennessee; Rebel cavalry defeated at Mossy Creek by McCook; 14 killed and 40 prisoners, Jan. 12
 Tennessee; Rebel cavalry ravaging east of Knoxville, March 5
 Tennessee; Union city captured by the Rebels, March 24
 Tennessee; raid of guerrillas on Shelbyville, April 8
 Tennessee; Grierson driving Forrest toward Alabama, April 22
 Tennessee; Rebels capture and murder Union pickets at Nickajack, April 23
 Tennessee; battle at Strawberry Plains; Rebel works carried, Aug. 14
 Tennessee; guerrilla raid on Woodbourne; depot burned, Aug. 20
 Tennessee; Forrest's cavalry make a dash into Memphis; are afterward defeated, Aug. 21
 Tennessee; skirmish at Rogersville, Aug. 22
 Tennessee; Rebels defeated and driven from vicinity of Murfreesborough, Sept. 1
 Tennessee; Rebel cavalry near Murfreesborough defeated by Milroy, Sept. 3
 Tennessee; John Morgan killed and his forces routed at Greenville, Sept. 4
 Tennessee; Union cavalry surprised at Readyville, losing 180, Sept. 7
 Tennessee; Rebel cavalry cross the Tennessee at Harpeth Shoals, on a raid North, Oct. 11
 Tennessee; Gillem repulses Rebels under Vaughn, capturing a battery, Oct. 28
 Tennessee; Rebels repulsed in trying to cross the Tennessee at Blue Water, Nov. 2
 Tennessee; forty boats burned to keep them from the Rebels at Johnsonville, Nov. 4
 Tennessee; Union forces evacuate Johnsonville, Nov. 5
 Tennessee; several transports on the Tennessee destroyed by Forrest, Nov. 5
 Tennessee; Johnsonville evacuated by the Rebels, and re-occupied by our forces, Nov. 8
 Tennessee; battle at Battle Gap, Union defeat, Nov. 13
 Tennessee; Union forces under Gillem reach Knoxville in retreat, Nov. 20
 Tennessee; Barbridge begins an advance beyond Cumberland Gap in Virginia, Nov. 21
 Tennessee; Thomas retires from Pulaski

to Columbus, Nov. 23
 Tennessee; Hood threatening Nashville, Nov. 24
 Tennessee; Hood advancing toward Franklin, Nov. 26
 Tennessee; fight at Spring Hill; Hood moving upon Franklin, Nov. 29
 Tennessee; Rebel plot to burn the Memphis and Charleston railroad discovered, Nov. 30
 Tennessee; battle of Franklin; Hood's army suffers immense loss; Thomas retires to Nashville, Dec. 5
 Tennessee; Hood crosses Harpeth Shoals, Thomas retiring before him, Dec. 5
 Tennessee; Hood's left wing defeated by our gunboats; two transports retaken, Dec. 6
 Tennessee; Barbridge occupies Ben's station, driving Breckinridge beyond Bull's Gap, Dec. 6
 Tennessee; three steamers recaptured from the Rebels on the Cumberland river, Dec. 7
 Tennessee; a Rebel force, under Lyon, crosses the Cumberland, moving toward Kentucky, Dec. 10
 Tennessee; Barbridge routs John Morgan's old brigade at Kingsport, Dec. 13
 Tennessee; Bristol captured by General Gillem, with 250 prisoners, Dec. 13
 Tennessee; battle of Nashville; Hood's army attacked, driven three miles, with a loss of 1,000 prisoners; Hood retreating during the night, Dec. 15
 Tennessee; Rosecrank attacks a Rebel force near Murfreesborough; Rebel loss 1,500, Dec. 15
 Tennessee; Thomas again attacks Hood, driving him out of the intrenchments, and capturing 50 cannon and a large number of prisoners, Dec. 16
 Tennessee; Thomas pursues Hood beyond Franklin, capturing the Rebel hospitals, with 3,000 wounded; Hood in rapid retreat, Dec. 17
 Tennessee; the pursuit of Hood still continued, prisoners constantly captured, Dec. 18
 Tennessee; Hood's army pursued beyond Duck river, Dec. 19
 Tennessee; gunboats in the Tennessee river destroyed as far as possible all means for Hood to cross the river below Florence, Dec. 20
 Tennessee; Rebel cavalry under Forrest join Hood at Columbia and protect his retreat, Dec. 20
 Tennessee; Thomas still continues the pursuit of Hood; Union loss since the 15th estimated at 7,000; Rebel loss at guns, 18,000 small arms, 3,000 killed, 9,000 wounded and prisoners, Dec. 20
 Tennessee; Hood's army reaches Pulaski, closely pursued by Union cavalry, Dec. 23
 Tennessee; Hood's army said to have crossed above Muscle Shoals, Dec. 22
 Tennessee; General Steadman, with a large force, reaches Decatur in pursuit of Hood, Dec. 24
 Tennessee; Hood's advance in pursuit of Hood twenty-one miles south of Columbia, Dec. 25
 Tennessee; Hood's army said to be entirely disorganized, Dec. 27
 Tennessee, Ala.; Union supply train captured at, but recaptured the same day, Jan 14
 Texas; fight at Brownsville and Matamoros, in which Mexicans participate, Sept. 6
 Texas; the Mexican General Cortinas drives the rebels out of Brownsville, Sept. 6
 Texas; American Consul at Matamoros returns to Brownsville, under protection of Gen. Herron, Dec. 14
 Thanksgiving; grand patriotic dinner in the Potomac army, furnished by the people, Nov. 24
 Three-mile station, Va.; Rebels attempt to capture and fail, Jan. 16
 Treasury; resignation of Salmon P. Chase, June 23
 Tunnel Hill, Ga.; Union reconnaissance to; 32 Rebels killed; one company captured, Jan. 25
 Tunnel Hill, Ga., occupied after a sharp fight, Feb. 20
 Vallandigham advising riots and retaliation in case of drafting, March 7
 Virginia; battle at Smithfield; Union troops defeated, Jan. 12

December 12, 1865

Sherman's march; the whole army arrived at Savannah, having crossed 42 of the finest counties of Georgia, capturing or occupying 200 villages, destroying 300 miles of railroad, bringing in 7000 Negroes and 10,000 horses and mules, having burned all the bridges and a vast amount of property, capturing millions of rebel currency, 100,000 head of cattle, and 4000 prisoners, feeding the army for one month on the Rebels' supplies, with a total loss of less than 1000 men.

Source information: War Chronicle, being a record of battles, sieges, skirmishes, etc., from Jan. 1 to Dec. 31 1864. (1865, February 1). *The Soldier's Journal*. [Chronicling America](#), [Library of Congress](#). (Changed for easier reading.)

Document 10

Very early in the march, [African Americans] began to join our columns, and their number grew at every town and plantation. Their intense longing for freedom had become more than a passion; it seemed like an uncontrollable frenzy. Of all ages, and both sexes, some in health, but many bent with age or feeble with disease, they struggled on, burning to be free...

So large a group of refugees seriously hurt the movement of the soldiers, and our commanding officers tried everything they could think of to stop [those formerly enslaved] from joining us, but nothing worked. General Cox, in [an article] says: "Losing patience at the failure of all orders and requests to [those formerly enslaved] to stay at home, General Davis (commanding the Fourteenth Corps) ordered the pontoon bridge at Ebenezer Creek to be removed before the refugees who were following that corps had crossed, to leave them behind on the other bank of the uncrossable stream, to stop them from slowing the marching troops. It would be unfair to that officer to believe that the order would have been given if he would have known what would happen. The poor refugees had their heart so set on freedom, and the fear of being captured by the Confederate cavalry was so great, that, with wild weeping and cries, the great crowd rushed, like a stampeded herd of cattle into the water. Those who could not swim [ran into the water] as well as those who could, and many were drowned even though the [Union] soldiers tried to help them. As soon as we saw what was happening in the rush and panic, we did all that we could do to save them from the water. But the loss of life was still great enough to show that there were many unknowing, simple souls who would rather die as freemen than live as slaves."

Source information: Pages 26–27 from part of a memoir of Oscar Lapham, First Lieutenant of Company B of the Rhode Island Volunteers, (a Union soldier). Lapham, O. (1885). *Recollections of Service in the Twelfth Regiment, R. I. Volunteers*. Civil War Digital. (Changed for easier reading.)

Document 11

civilized nations. No inhabitant of either town was expelled from his home and fireards by the orders of either General Barbee or myself, and therefore your recent order can find no support from the conduct of either of us. I felt no other emotion than pain in reading that portion of your letter which attempts to justify your shelling Atlanta without notice, under the pretense that I defended Atlanta upon a line so close to town that every cannon shot and many musket balls from your line of investment, that overshoot their mark, went into the habitations of women and children. I make no complaint of your firing into Atlanta in any way you thought proper. I make none now, but there are a hundred thousand living witnesses that you fired into the habitations of women and children for weeks, firing far above and miles beyond my line of defense. I have no good in

opinion, founded both upon observation and inference, of the skill of your artillerists to credit the innuendoes that they for several weeks unintentionally fired too high for my modest field works, and slaughtered women and children by accident and want of skill.

The residue of your letter is rather discouraging. It opens a wide field for the discussion of questions which I do not feel are committed to me. I am only a general of one of the armies of the Confederate States, charged with military operations in the field, under the direction of my superior officers, and I am not called upon to discuss with you the causes of the present war, or the political questions which led to or resulted from it. These grave and important questions have been committed to far abler hands than mine, and I shall only refer to

for the peace and honor of the South, and refuse to be governed by your decision in regard to matters between myself, my country, and my God.

You say let us fight it out like men. To this my reply is, for myself, and I believe for all true men, men and women and children in my country, we will fight you to the death. Better die a thousand deaths than submit to live under you or your government, and your negro allies.

Having answered the points forced upon me by your letter of the 9th Septor, I close this correspondence with you, and notwithstanding your comments upon my appeal to God in the cause of humanity, I again humbly and reverently invoke his thoughts and in defense of justice and right.

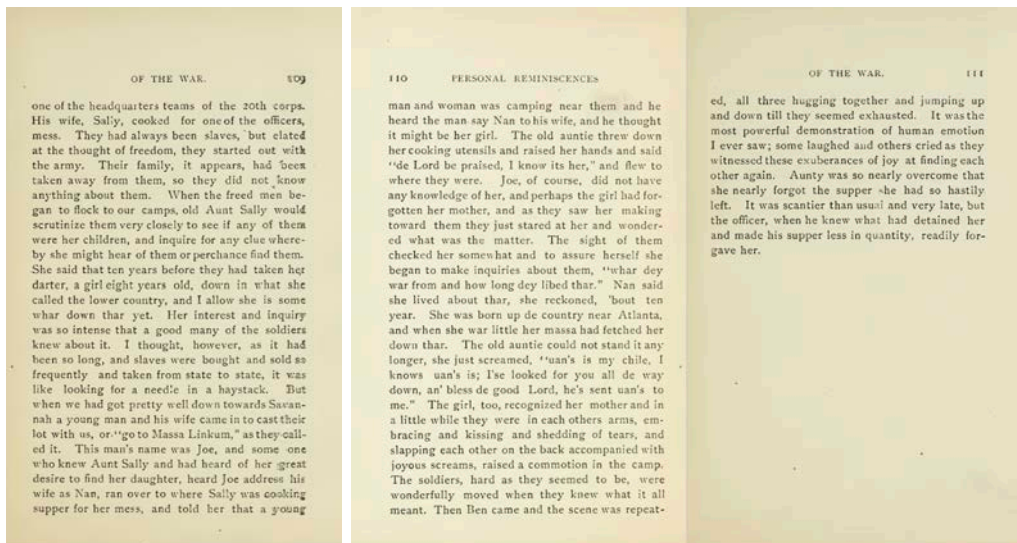
Respectfully, Your obd. servt.
(Signed) J. B. Hood
General

I felt no other emotion than pain when I read that part of your letter which tries to justify your bombing of Atlanta without warning by a lie. You pretend that I defended Atlanta with my line of soldiers so close to the city that every cannon shot and many musketballs from your soldiers that were aimed too high went into the homes of women and children. I did not complain about you firing into Atlanta any way you thought proper. I do not complain now. But there are a hundred thousand living witnesses that you fired into the homes of women and children for weeks, firing far above and miles past my line of defenses. From what I have seen and experienced, I have too good of an opinion of the skill of your artillerists [people who fired cannons] to think that for several weeks they mistakenly fired too high for my small defenses, and slaughtered women and children by accident and because they were not skilled....

You say “let us fight it out like men.” To this my reply is, for myself, and I believe, for all true men, and women and children in my country, we will fight you to the death. Better to die a thousand deaths than submit to live under you or your government and your [mild racial slur] allies.

Source information: Parts of a letter written by Confederate General J. B. Hood to William T. Sherman on September 12, 1864. (Changed for easier reading). From William T. Sherman Papers: General Correspondence 1837–1891; 1864, Apr 8-Oct. 11, images 225, 226, and 232, Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/item/mss398000017>

Document 12



There was another [African American] man named Ben, who came to us at Atlanta and drove one of the wagon teams of the 20th corps. His wife, Sally, cooked one of the officer's meals. They had always been slaves, but were happy about the thought of freedom, so they traveled with the army. Their family, it appears, had been taken away from them, so they did not know anything about them. When the freed men began to flock to our camps, old Aunt Sally would look at them very closely to see if any of them were her children. She would ask for any clue so she might hear of them or maybe find them. ... [One day a woman] ran over to where Sally was cooking supper for mess, and told her that a young man and woman were camping near them and he heard the man say he thought [he found Sally's daughter]. The old auntie threw down her cooking utensils and raised her hands and said, "the Lord be praised I know it's her," and flew to where they were. ... [Sally] began to ask about them, where they were from and how long they lived there. The girl said she thought she lived there about ten years. She was born up the country near Atlanta and when she was little her master had taken her down there. The old auntie could not stand it any longer. She just screamed, "You are my child! I know you are! I've looked for you all the way down and bless the good Lord he sent you to me!" The girl also recognized her mother and in a little while they were in each other's arms embracing and kissing and shedding tears and slapping each other on the back. Their joyous screams raised a commotion in the camp. The soldiers, hard as they seem to be, were wonderfully moved when they knew what it all meant. Then Ben came and the scene was repeated, all three hugging together and jumping up and down till they seemed exhausted. It was the most powerful demonstration of human emotion I ever saw. Some laughed and others cried as they witnessed the feelings of joy in finding each other again.

Source information: Story told by Reverend John Potter in his memoir, pages 109–111. Potter, J. (1897). *Reminiscences of the Civil War in the United States*. <https://archive.org/details/reminiscencesofc00pott/page/110/mode/2up> (Changed for easier reading.)

Slave Interview
James Johnson
Chaseville, Florida

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Thousands of Federal soldiers were in evidence. The Union Army was victorious and "Sherman's March" was a success. ^{Sherman} He states that when Jefferson Davis was captured he was disguised in women's clothes.

Sherman states that Florida had a reputation of having very cruel masters. He says that when slaves got very unruly, they were told that they were going to be sent to Florida so they could be handled. During the war thousands of slaves fled from Virginia into Connecticut and New Hampshire. In 1867 William Sherman left Beaufort and went to Mayport, Florida to live. He remained there until 1890, then moved to Azora, Florida, living there for awhile; he finally settled in Chaseville, Florida, where he now lives. During his many years of life he has been married twice and has been the father of sixteen children, all of whom are dead. He never received any formal education, but learned to read and studied taxidermy which he practiced for many years.

He was at one time Inspector of Elections at Mayport during Reconstruction Days. He recalled an incident that occurred during the performance of his duties there, which was as follows: Mr. John Doggett who was running for office on the Democratic ticket brought a number of colored people to Mayport by boat from Chaseville to vote. Mr. Doggett demanded that they should vote, but Will Sherman was equally insistent that they should not vote because they

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had not registered and were not qualified. After much arguing Mr. Doggett saw that Sherman could not be made "to see the light" and left with his prospective voters. William Sherman once served upon a United States Federal jury during his colorful life.

In appearance he could easily be regarded as a phenomenon. He is ninety-four years of age, though he appears to be only about fifty-five. His hair is black and not grey as would be expected; his face is round and unlined; he has dark piercing but kindly eyes. He is of medium stature. He has an exceptionally alert mind and recalls past events with the ease of a youth. The Indian blood that flows in his veins is plainly visible in his features, the color of his skin and the texture of his hair.

He gives as his reason for his lengthy life the Indian blood that is in him and says that he expects to live for ninety-four more years. Today he lives alone. He raises a few vegetables and is content in the memories of his past life which has been full. (2)

[Will] and his cousin who lived on the Davis' plantation slipped off and went to all the surrounding plantations spreading the news that the Yankees were in Robertsville and urging them to follow and join them. Soon the two had a following of about 500 slaves who abandoned their masters' plantations to meet the Yankees. They marched together breaking down fences that blocked their way, carefully avoiding Confederate guards who were placed throughout the countryside. ... The Federal officers told the slaves that they could go along with them to Savannah, a place that they had already captured. Will decided that it was best for him to go to Savannah. He left, but the majority of the slaves remained with the troops. ... As the Federal troops marched ahead, they were followed by the volunteer slaves. Most of these unfortunate slaves were slain by "bushwhackers" (Confederate snipers who fired upon them from ambush.) After being killed they were decapitated and their heads placed upon posts that lined the fields so that they could be seen by other slaves to warn them of what would happen to them if they attempted to escape.

Source information: Information gathered in a 1936 interview of a formerly enslaved individual, Will Sherman, conducted by J. M. Johnson, a White field worker, in Chaseville, Florida, as part of the Federal Writer's Project. (Changed for easier reading.) Johnson, J. M. (1936). [Interview of Will Sherman]. Federal Writer's Project, Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/resource/mesn.030/?sp=296>

Appendix C

An Annotated List of Selected Library of Congress Resources Related to Sherman’s March to the Sea for Extending Student Inquiry

1. Collection of William Tecumseh Sherman’s papers, with a link to military papers 1846–1883
<https://www.loc.gov/collections/william-t-sherman-papers/about-this-collection/>
2. Various versions of sheet music of the popular song, *Sherman’s March to the Sea or When Sherman Marched Down to the Sea* by various artists. A live performance can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9dvvUnTJh4g> or at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aCnvRt7FAw8>.
<https://www.loc.gov/item/ihas.200001299/>
<https://www.loc.gov/item/ihas.200000823/>
<https://www.loc.gov/item/ihas.200001301/>
<https://www.loc.gov/item/ihas.200001300/>
<https://www.loc.gov/item/ihas.200002202/>
<https://www.loc.gov/item/sm1876.00305/>
<https://www.loc.gov/item/ihas.200001622/>
3. A blog posted by Pat Padua titled “Sherman’s March to the Sea” citing Mark Zelesky who describes them performing the song.
<https://blogs.loc.gov/music/2010/08/sherman/>
4. Sheet music for the song *Ole Mose or Freedom is a Comin’* by Edwy Wells, published in 1865, referring to the hope of liberation by enslaved individuals with the approaching Union army.
<https://www.loc.gov/item/ihas.200001067/>
5. Image of General William Tecumseh Sherman in military uniform taken between 1860 and 1870 and various other photographs of the Georgia campaign.
<http://loc.gov/pictures/resource/cwpb.07130/>
<https://www.loc.gov/item/2018666997/>
<https://www.loc.gov/item/2011660475/>
<https://www.loc.gov/item/2011648035/>
<https://www.loc.gov/item/2004682784/>
<https://www.loc.gov/item/2011649190/>

6. Book published in 1865 titled *Sherman's March through the South with Sketches and Incidents of the Campaign* by Captain David Conyngham, a New York war correspondent who accompanied Sherman's army. The following passages (listed in the Table of Contents) are related to this inquiry:
 - The shelling of Atlanta pp. 192–193
 - The Union army's foraging pp. 243–247, 266
 - Refugees from slavery pp. 248–249, 275–278

<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gdc/scd0001.00137068710>

7. Various images, sketches, and engraving of Sherman's March to the Sea
 - <https://www.loc.gov/resource/ppmsca.09326/>
 - <https://www.loc.gov/resource/ppmsca.17654/>
 - <https://www.loc.gov/resource/ppmsca.20142/>
 - <https://www.loc.gov/item/2004661257/> (rough sketch)
 - <https://www.loc.gov/resource/ppmsca.21756/> (finished engraving)
 - <https://www.loc.gov/resource/cph.3c12169/>
 - <https://www.loc.gov/item/2004660904/>
 - <https://www.loc.gov/item/2004661240/>
 - <https://www.loc.gov/item/2004661261/>
 - <https://www.loc.gov/resource/ppmsca.17676/>

8. Collection of 28 maps of Sherman's March, including a map of Ebenezer Creek (Image 11), possibly created by Robert McDowell, Army engineer in 1865.

<https://www.loc.gov/item/2008626929/>

9. A book published in 1865 titled *Knapsack Notes of General Sherman's Grand Campaign through the Empire State of the South* by George Sharland, Private in the Illinois infantry who kept a daily journal during the March. Some of the things he describes include
 - refugees from enslavement on page 14.
 - foraging for supplies on pages 15–17.
 - destruction of railroads on pages 23–24

<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gdc/scd0001.00019280810>

10. Book published in 1887 titled *Marching through Georgia: Pen Pictures of Everyday Life in General Sherman's Army from the Beginning of the Atlanta Campaign until the Close of the War*, written by Fenwick Y. Hedley with a description of the March to the Sea starting on page 245, and a description of foraging starting on page 267.

<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gdc/scd0001.00019765568>