

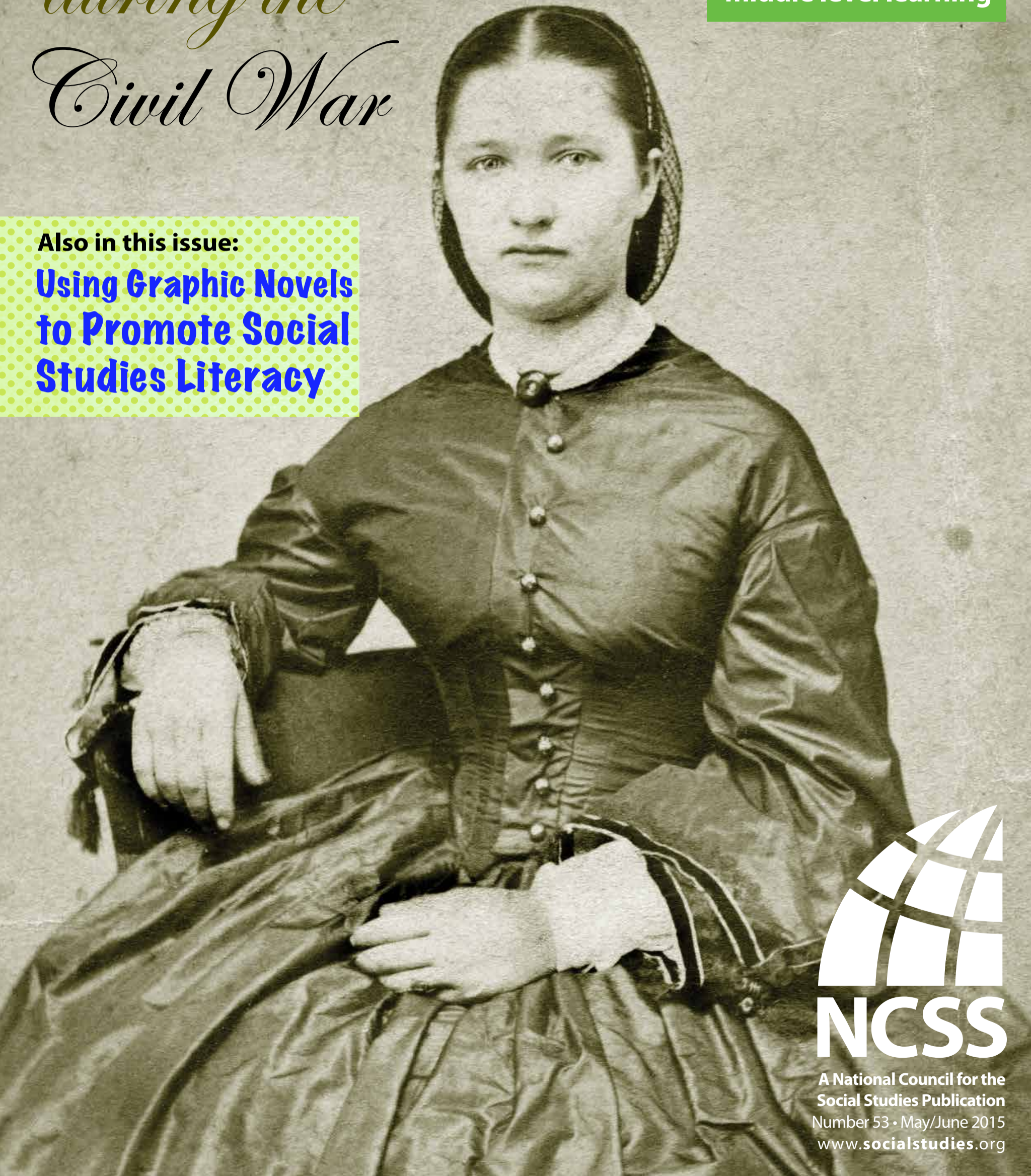
*The Home Front  
during the  
Civil War*

**mll**

middle level learning

Also in this issue:

**Using Graphic Novels  
to Promote Social  
Studies Literacy**



**NCSS**

A National Council for the  
Social Studies Publication  
Number 53 • May/June 2015  
[www.socialstudies.org](http://www.socialstudies.org)

# The Home Front during the Civil War: Embattled Lives and Endurance in Ohio

Stephen M. Charter

*Saturday April 1, 1865*

*"We remained quiet in camp all of today. I received a letter from Nellie. It bearing a date of March 24th informing that Tillie is very ill and cannot live but a few days at most. Which has made me feel very sad and lonely all day, yes sick at heart. I climbed to the top of the mountain in my solitude from which the surrounding country presents a grand and magnificent scenery. I find consolation alone in believing that all things work together for the good of those who love the Lord, and can say with a confiding heart not my will but thine Oh Lord be done."*

During the American Civil War, Francis (Frank) R. Stewart kept a journal that documented battle strategies and troop movements in great detail.<sup>1</sup> Written in the midst of "the War," this one journal entry provides a poignant glimpse of how a tragic home front event, the impending death of his fiancé, could also seize a soldier's attention.

Traditional research and writing on the American Civil War has focused primarily on military strategies, troop movements, and politics, as well as the economic and social aspects of the conflict. For instance, noted author and historian James McPherson produced a comprehensive history of the period in *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era*.<sup>2</sup> The experiences of women and children, however, have emerged to the forefront of scholarship more in recent years.

James Marten, in *The Children's Civil War*, provides a captivating glimpse of how northern and southern children were affected by the conflict.<sup>3</sup> He uses letters, diaries, and other primary sources to examine the childhoods of Theodore Roosevelt, Booker T. Washington, and others, revealing how children coped with the loss of relatives and other hardships. *Children and Youth of the Civil War Era*, edited by James Marten, includes 13 essays that focus on the personal experiences of youth.<sup>4</sup> The essays employ a diverse selection of primary sources and address topics such as slavery, sectionalism, war, emancipation, reconstruction, and memory from multiple points of view. *The*

*Civil War in the Great Interior*, edited by Martin J. Hershock and Christine Dee, is a series of nine state histories on the Civil War, with titles like *Ohio's War*; *Indiana's War*; etc.<sup>5</sup> The letters and diaries of Midwestern residents on the home front are included in each volume.

Nonfiction books for younger readers include *We Were There, Too! Young People in U.S. History* by Phillip Hoose, which includes six accounts from the Civil War era; *The Civil War for Kids: A History with 21 Activities* by Janis Herbert, which provides hands-on projects to engage the audience; and *Under Siege! Three Children at the Civil War Battle for Vicksburg* by Andrea Warren, which relates eye-witness accounts of three children who survived that battle.<sup>6</sup> In light of the sesquicentennial of the Civil War, numerous other works, including websites like that of the Civil War Trust ([www.civilwar.org](http://www.civilwar.org)), have emerged that contain both southern and northern home front experiences.

## Three Handouts: Primary Source Material

Even far from combat, the lives of many individuals and family dynamics were changed forever. Once "Johnny" went off to be a soldier, women left behind were burdened with the running of family farms and businesses, while children often took on added responsibilities. Many husbands and sons, fathers and brothers, never returned—or they came home injured. Diaries and letters that have survived create a tapestry of diverse home front experiences. The economic, political, and social climates of the local communities are reflected in these written records.

The following handouts for students offer a sampling of passages from letters written by northwest Ohio residents during the years of the Civil War. The original letters are in the collection of the Center for Archival Collections at Bowling Green State University.

Each correspondent provides personal glimpses of everyday home front activities, and each offers opinions and perspectives

### ON THE COVER:

Photograph of Tillie Foreman (ca. 1863) is from the Center for Archival Collections, Jerome Library, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, Ohio.

on the war. Family members encouraged their soldiers, sometimes giving them news of the victories and defeats from other battlefronts. While these letters generally convey optimism, sometimes there was no way to avoid relating unhappy news.

And unlike a novel, in which various threads of the narrative often come together in a neat conclusion, these letters simply end where they end. It is up to us, the students of history, to place them in a context and mine them for meaning. 🌐

### Notes

1. Papers of Francis R. Stewart, Center for Archival Collections, Jerome Library, Bowling Green State University. All of the letters excerpted here are from this collection.
2. James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

3. James Marten, ed., *The Children's Civil War* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).
4. James Marten, ed., *Children and Youth During the Civil War Era* (New York: New York University Press, 2012).
5. Christine Dee and Martin J. Hershock, eds., *The Civil War in the Great Interior* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2011).
6. Phillip Hoose, *We Were There, Too! Young People in U.S. History* (Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2001); Janis Herbert, *The Civil War for Kids: A History with 21 Activities* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 1999); Andrea Warren, *Under Siege! Three Children at the Civil War Battle for Vicksburg* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2009).

**STEPHEN M. CHARTER** is Head Librarian and University Archivist, Center for Archival Collections, Jerome Library, at Bowling Green State University in Bowling Green, Ohio

## Teaching Suggestions

Stephen M. Charter and Steven S. Lapham

Teachers can prepare for a lesson by creating vocabulary lists of words that will be unfamiliar to students. For example, Handout A contains the words “enlistment,” “sentiments,” “muslin,” “dear” (meaning “scarce”), and “tuberculosis.” Mention to students that, for the most part, errors in spelling and grammar were not corrected on these handouts.

Be prepared to answer student’s questions about aspects of these letters. For example, in Handout A, the “white dress” Tillie mentions was probably made of cotton, which was usually much cheaper than silk, but wars cause shortages and distort prices. Mention of the “Knights of the Golden Circle” in a letter reveals the presence of Confederate and racist opinions in her Ohio community, sentiments that fueled the growth of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) during Reconstruction. At the end of Tillie’s correspondence, we learn that she died of tuberculosis (called “consumption” at that time), and she did not or could not respond to questions in the last days of her illness (her sister writes that she “went deaf”). In the days before antibiotics, civilians and soldiers alike died of bacterial infections. Each handout presents interesting details like these that the teacher can prepare to discuss with the class.

After students have read over a vocabulary list, the teacher can divide the class into three groups, each receiving one of the handouts. Assign each group to study their document, write down any questions they have about it, and be prepared to read some passages aloud to the rest of the class.

Assess individual learning by asking each student to compare “then and now” by listing two aspects of life that are different, and two that are similar. Then each student writes down a question: If he or she could travel back in history to ask just one question of the author of the letters, what would that question be?

## From the Letters of **Tillie Foreman** of Ohio

In 1861, Tillie Foreman was a young, wealthy woman of 23 years, but her health was not the best. Her fiancé, Francis R. (Frank) Stewart, 26 years old, was a schoolteacher when he enlisted as a private in the Union Army. Tillie promised to write to Frank every two weeks while he was away.

Early in the war (October 12, 1861), Tillie discusses the eagerness of young men to join the Army:

*Wils Patterson and Till Drake were to be married on Thursday & he left on Wednesday. Till is almost crazy about it. I heard that she did not know until he bid her goodbye.*

*Mary Drake's husband left her and she did not know he was going until he was nearly at Cleveland. ... She has a young babe of 2 weeks old.*

*Our friend Asa Loman has enlisted & is in camp in Findlay. His wife made an awful fuss about his going. She said he never loved her as he should ... [She is not a] Sensible Wife to talk so when our country is in so great a Peril.*

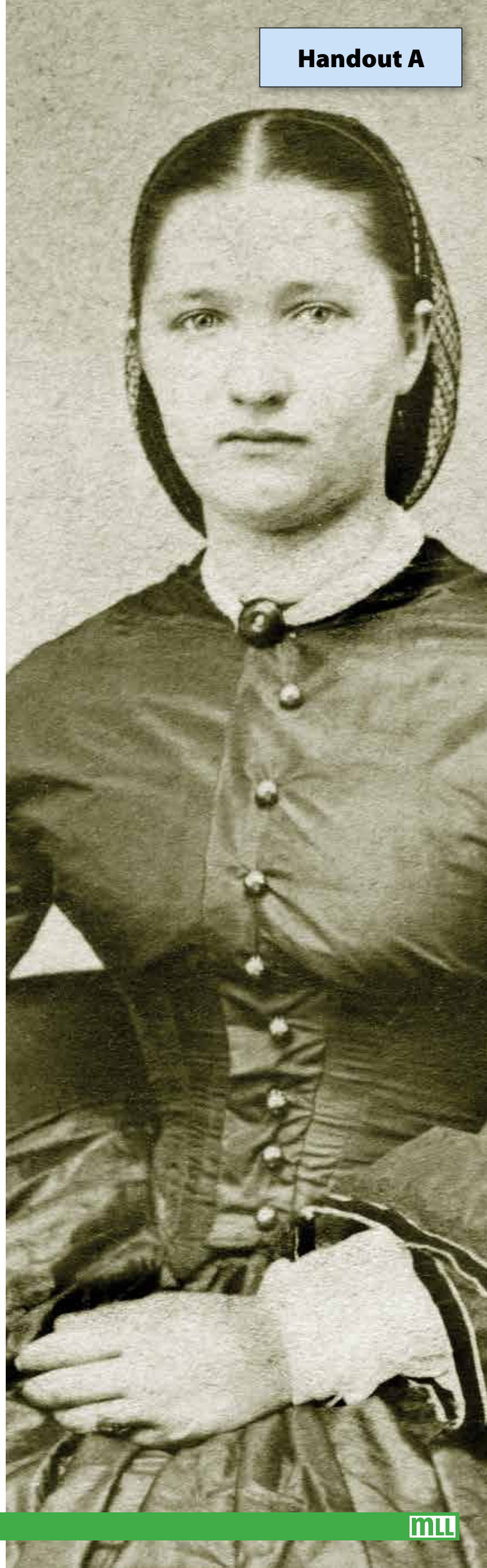
In response to Frank's request for local news, Tillie writes:

*All that is thought of & talked about is war & the boys that are gone. ...*

But then she adds:

*There is a society forming in Ohio called the Knights of the Golden Circle that are genuine Secessionists. If they are not abolished we will be in a greatest danger. Our men are nearly all gone & we will have no one to fight for us.*

*I had a quite a argument with a democratic Lady Friday. She hopes the slaves will not be freed. I told [her] I hoped they would God never allowed his people to be in bondage. She spit out a few more mouthfuls that did not suit me and I warned her against such sentiments in my presence [and] told her the consequence of so doing. She cooled off in a minute.*



Tillie's letter of June 2, 1862, reports a personal loss:

*I had almost forgotten to tell you that my cousin, William Calhoun, was killed at Battle of Pittsburgh Landing.<sup>10</sup> He was the only full cousin I had in the army that I know of.*

Only one letter discusses local economic conditions. On August 17, 1864, Tillie wrote:

*We have done our Threshing. Our wheat turned out very poor but the Oats were better than we expected. Farmers will make on their grain this year wheat is \$1.50 per bushel. Although everything else is dear, muslin that we used to buy for 8cts is 65 at Fosters and 60 at Jerries. Other things are as high accordingly. This reminds me of Mother's stories about goods at the time of the War in 1812. She bought a silk and a white dress before goods fell. She paid almost as much for her white as the silk.*

As her illness progresses, Tillie mentions related symptoms. On January 5, 1865, she wrote:

*My health is very poor this winter. Worse than when you left. I cannot stand the cold winters. Fire hurts me very much. seems to oppress me[.] rest better upstairs away from the stove than down. I believe your doctrine of sleeping in open air to be good. Nellie and I kept our door and window both open last summer felt the better for it.*

Nellie Foreman, Tillie's sister, wrote to Frank on March 24, 1865:

*As the family are all asleep except Till, I thought it [a] favorable time to acknowledge the receipt of yours of the 12th and also one of the 16th. It did Till so much good to hear from you as she had not heard for over a month. Why it was she knew not. You need not be afraid to write on the account of her illness. Your letters addressed shall remain sealed after her death. The day of it I think is not far distant. She is entirely deaf and has been since the 1st of Feb. she is very weak ... not able to sit up some days.*



Frank's letters to Tillie were burned (to respect his privacy) after her death on April 1, 1865, from tuberculosis. Her sister Nellie continued to correspond with Francis until the end of the War. Luckily for us, Tillie's and Nellie's letters were preserved.

# From the Letters of Nancy Brewster and her son **Sidney** Brewster of Ohio

Nancy Brewster, who was divorced from her husband, attempted to manage the financial and personal affairs of her son during his military service. Sidney Brewster was 17 years of age at the time of his enlistment, even though military records indicate that he was 18. He had three brothers and a sister. On June 25, 1862, the mother reported to her son:

*Your bees swarmed again last Sunday. Your hives are all full and workin nice. I hived them myself. The boys must make another hive. George Smith was here last Munday to look at your steers. He wants to trade you his yearling colt for them. He offers five dollars to boot. I think you had better keep the steer while you are in war. I sold your wool for thirty-five cents a pound.*

In the same letter, Nancy discusses the deaths of soldiers from nearby families. Some men who had been brought home to recover died from their injuries or infection:

*Brian Gagan is dead. He died a week ago last Sunday night about nine o'clock he was walking around outdoors at sundown. Dr. Peck was in the neighborhood that afternoon they [called] him in. He left Brian some powder to take he took one at six [and] one at nine [and then] died in less than five minutes. Gagans blame the powder. Brian had been at home five days... The Elders have not heard from Richard. Poor boy, I think he is drowned.*

Nancy's letters often repeat war news from local newspapers. On April 16, 1862, she wrote:

*The neighbors are in great excitement concerning the Pittsburgh battle. The 72nd Ohio Regiment was in it. The news is there is but a few of them left.*



And in her letter of October 11, 1862, she declared the following

*There is great excitement here over war news, I suppose there never was so much reading done as there is now. I never read so much in my life as this winter and done so little work. I read three daily papers through yesterday and one today. I suppose we know more war news than your soldiers. I keep track of your company by the papers.*

The enlistment of other local men is noted occasionally in Nancy's letters, as well as births, death and marriages of local community members. While minimizing her own health concerns, she expresses her concern for Sidney's well being in her letter of May 11, 1862:

*My health is not very good not so bad but I keep around to work I worry so much about these bloody battles and knowing I have a child in the army exposed to danger I am more thankful that that you have been blest with such good health and unfailing bravery.*

In a letter of December 8, 1861, Sydney asks for a report from his mother:

*When you write again, write how times is and how you all get along and how my steers and sheep and bees look...*

On November 18, 1862 Sidney instructs his mother to inquire about a possible land purchase:

*If Moyers has any land to sell reasonable, I would have no objection to buy. You can see, suit yourself and you will suit me. ... Don't let my cattle and sheep starve as long as money lasts.*

Sidney Brewster was captured during the Battle of Stones River and later paroled. He returned to his unit, but sadly, he was killed during the Battle of Chickamauga on September 19, 1863.



Photo of Sydney Brewster with Army-issued Colt revolving rifle (June 1863) and in cameo (ca. 1862). Letters and photographs are from the Center for Archival Collections, Jerome Library, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, Ohio

# From the Letters of Martha Jackson of Ohio

Martha was 17 years old at the start of the Civil War. She was an independent young woman. She wrote letters to her father Benjamin and brother Andrew, both serving in the Union Army. Sometimes added a few words to the end of her mother's (Lizzie's) letters.

Martha writes about her mother giving birth to a baby brother, Carlie, in a letter of February 25, 1862. The newborn was named after Carl Schurz, an influential anti-slavery and human rights advocate. In this letter she mentions Willie, a younger brother who stayed home.

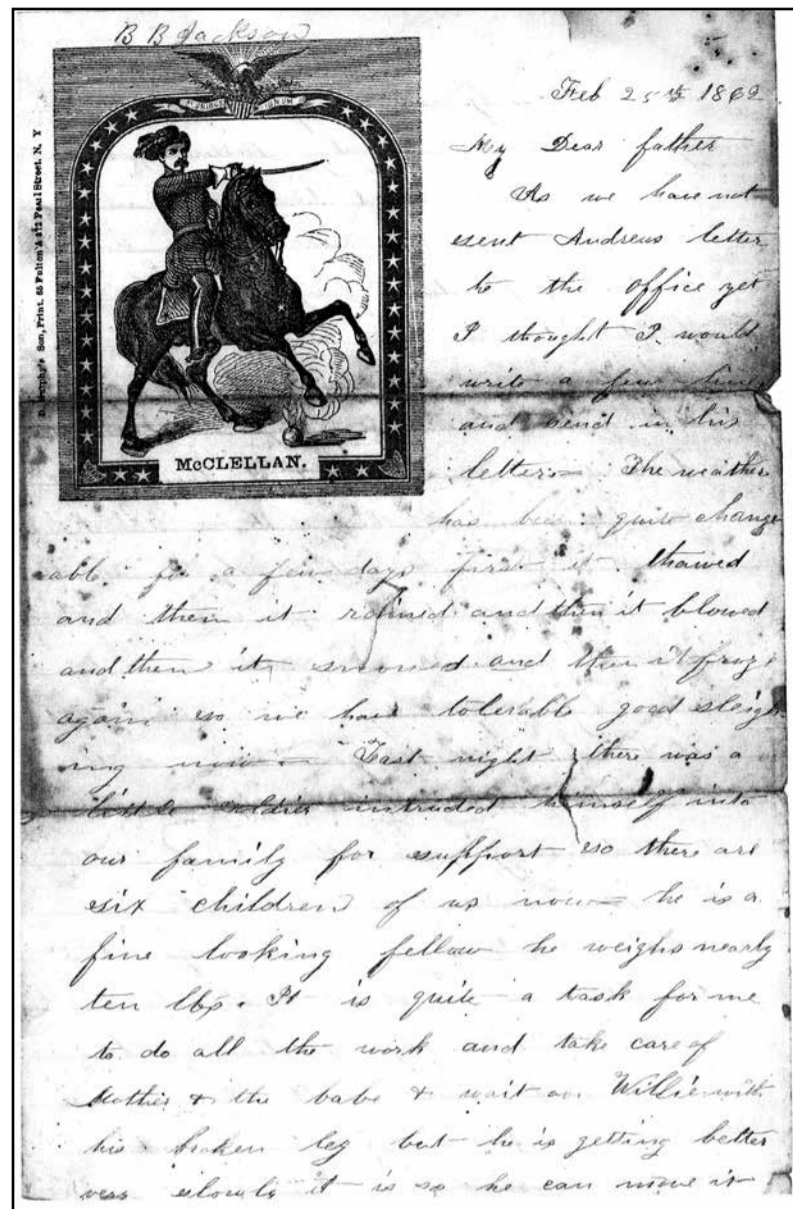
*Last night there was a little soldier intruded himself into our family for support...He is a fine looking fellow. He weighs nearly ten lbs. It was quite a task for me to do all the work and take care of mother & the babe & wait on Willie with his broken leg.*

Martha assures her father and brother that her added responsibilities were not a burden to her and her mother, Lizzie, despite having a new baby in the house

*We have all the corn gathered that was in the bottom field we built another crib some larger than the old one and they are both full we husked about half that was in the upper field and fed it to the hogs but we cannot gather the rest for we have no place to put it. ... Our hogs are fatter than any I have seen = ever body says they are very fat.*

In a mother-and-daughter letter to Andrew on March 23, 1862, Martha expresses her support for the idea of emancipation:

*I read a Speech the other day made by Carl Schurz on the war and the emancipation of the slaves which I think is about right. I wish you could read it I know that father would like to read it Mr. Schurz thinks that to end this rebellion and have a lasting peace we must entirely destroy the cause of the war emancipate the slaves and so wipe the blighting curse of slavery from the land forever more. ... I am in hopes that the war will be over some time this Spring. ...*



Stationery used by families and their soldiers during the early years of the Civil War often included images of important officers like General George B. McClellan. As the War progressed, when paper was a scarce commodity, any available scraps of paper were used for letter writing.



In a letter of May 3, 1862, Martha describes plans for plowing and planting that year, expressing the fact that she enjoys working outside more than in the house. She maintains a positive attitude and expresses her gratitude for the men who are fighting to preserve “the country” and “our liberties:”

*It is very pleasant here now the cherry and peach trees are just beginning to blossom. The farmers are ploughing and getting ready to sow oats. We are going to get the rest of our land ploughed and tend it our selves. I expect you will think we can not do it but we can for we will have to work for a living some way or another and we might as well [text missing]... the crops as any thing else. for I like to work out of doors and I think it is healthier than to work in the house all the time and we will work cheerfully for it is the only way we can serve our country is to stay at home and do the work while you are there fighting to preserve the liberties that we are now enjoying.*

After a brief report of excellent crop conditions, Martha’s letter of May 29, 1862, expresses again her steadfast support for the soldiers:

*But there can not be any thing accomplished without great labor. And I think we had ought to be contented to do what we have to do when I think of the brave soldiers how much harder they have to live and work. But still it is hard for us to give up our dearest and best friends to suffer so many privations and it must be still harder for the poor soldiers for they are parted from their friends and relations and are taken so far from home. while we are allowed the pleasure of staying at home. And even if we do have to work very hard I think we had ought not to complain of our lot when compared with that of the noble soldiers.*

Martha’s father, Benjamin, and brother Andrew (who served as a musician in the Army) survived the war. Martha’s mother, Lizzie, also wrote many letters that are preserved.



Martha Jackson, 1864

Letters and photographs are from the Center for Archival Collections, Jerome Library, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, Ohio

# Using Graphic Novels to Promote Social Studies Literacy

Jeremiah Clabough and Kenneth T. Carano

The current push in education reform for content-area literacy in the social studies makes graphic novels about historical events a valuable resource. Graphic novels (both fiction and nonfiction) are typically longer than comic books and tend to address more adult issues and settings, as opposed to pure fantasy. There are many graphic novels that focus on the impact of an historical event, provide a biography of a historical figure, or tackle a controversial issue.

The goal of this article is to explore how graphic novels can be used in the social studies. We begin by briefly exploring the promotion of literacy found in the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework.<sup>1</sup> We provide a brief overview of design elements used in graphic novels that help students engage with and understand the written text. We then suggest classroom activities using recent graphic novels, linking them to the C3 Framework literacy standards.

## The C3 Framework and Common Core

The C3 Framework is an effort led by social studies scholars, K-12 teachers, and curriculum specialists to provide guidance “on the concepts, skills, and disciplinary tools necessary to prepare students for college, career, and civic life.” The C3 Framework also links social studies disciplines to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for Literacy in the English Language Arts and History/Social Studies, which consists of a set of 26 Anchor Standards for College and Career Readiness in reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The CCSS lists “foundational literacies” that encourage depth of knowledge and higher-order thinking skills.<sup>2</sup>

The C3 Framework describes a general Inquiry Arc to guide the planning of curriculums and units of study (Figure 1).

Figure 1. **Dimensions of the C3 Framework’s Inquiry Arc**

1. Developing Questions and Planning Inquiries
2. Applying Disciplinary Concepts and Tools
3. Evaluating Sources and Using Evidence
4. Communicating Conclusions and Taking Informed Action.

Then there are more specific skills or “literacies” that fall into two broad categories. First, a person needs skills for inquiry in any discipline or situation, such as “questioning,” “evaluating evidence,” and “communicating conclusions.” Second, there are disciplinary skills that focus on the concepts and content of specific subject areas such as history (H), geography (G), civics (C), and economics (E). There is some overlap and interplay of items between those two sets. (Figure 2)

Figure 2 **Examples of Inquiry and Disciplinary Literacies (Skills)\***

<b>Inquiry Literacies</b>	<b>Disciplinary Literacies (and Areas of Study)**</b>
1. Questioning	1. Using deliberative processes (C)
2. Selecting sources	2. Participating in school settings (C)
3. Gathering information from sources	3. Creating, obeying, and amending rules (C)
4. Evaluating sources	4. Making decisions using economic data (E)
5. Using evidence to support or refute claims	5. Comparing costs and benefits (E)
6. Constructing arguments and explanations	6. Establishing prices in a competitive market (E)
7. Adapting arguments and explanations	7. Reasoning spatially (G)
8. Presenting arguments and explanations	8. Constructing maps (G)
9. Critiquing arguments and explanations	9. Making decisions using geographic data (G)
10. Analyzing social problems	10. Classifying historical sources (H)
11. Assessing options for action	11. Evaluating evidence & competing claims (H)
12. Taking informed action	12. Analyzing cause and effect (H)

\* Adapted from Lee and Swan, see note 2.

\*\* C, Civics; E, Economics; G, Geography, H, History.

## Benefits of Using Graphic Novels

Research shows that many students need multiple, meaningful encounters with a term to grasp its meaning.<sup>3</sup> Graphic novels use a variety of graphic features—such as zooming in close to a scene or far away from it; showing facial expressions of the characters; framing a scene in darkness or light; and altering the size and arrangement of panels on the page—that help students comprehend and interpret the printed text.<sup>4</sup> For example, graphic novels can provide students with visual representations of vocabulary terms. Artists sometimes draw a fanciful thing to represent an abstract concept, such as a flying vehicle with sails to represent “the ship of state.”

These features allow students to draw on different visual literacy skills (not just the reading of words) as they create meaning from the text, which can be very helpful to struggling readers and ESL students. The graphic design and details provide students with contextual clues to understand vocabulary terms, historical events, historical figures’ personalities, and abstract concepts.<sup>5</sup>

The design features in a drawing also invite students to make inferences, interpret symbols, and hypothesize about the author’s main themes.<sup>6</sup> Visual elements allow students to be more engaged in the reading of a text, and the skills they gain from reading and analyzing graphic novels reflect the goals for literacy found in the C3 Framework. Additionally, graphic novels serve multiple purposes. Some deal with historical events while others are about a person or group of people. One of the graphic novels we highlight, *The United States Constitution: A Graphic Adaptation* by Jonathan Hennessey, illustrated by Aaron McConnell, uses illustrated storytelling to detail facts.<sup>7</sup> This overview of the Constitution covers a huge swath of United States history, from pre-Revolution to the present, as it highlights each amendment, its meaning, background, and relevance. While the book’s text is dense, it has whimsical imagery. For example, the three government branches are represented as people with buildings as heads (the Capitol, the Supreme Court building; and the White House). It also uses deliberately anachronistic images, such as the founding fathers steering a robot vehicle along a tightrope.

## Analyzing Graphic Elements: How was the U.S. Constitution Created?

For struggling readers, the teacher should scaffold how to

work with graphic novels, as must be done with any medium or learning material. She could adapt the document analysis approach, often utilized with primary sources, to model working with and understanding the components of a graphic novel.<sup>8</sup> Students can use evidence found in the images and design elements (as well as the text) to support their interpretations of the events in the book and to generate new questions. This process supports the inquiry literacies of “making claims” and “supporting statements with evidence” described in the C3 Framework. Furthermore, using document analysis questions with graphic novels allows students to explore the motivations of historical figures. This reflects one of the disciplinary literacies for history, “determining the purpose of an historical source.”

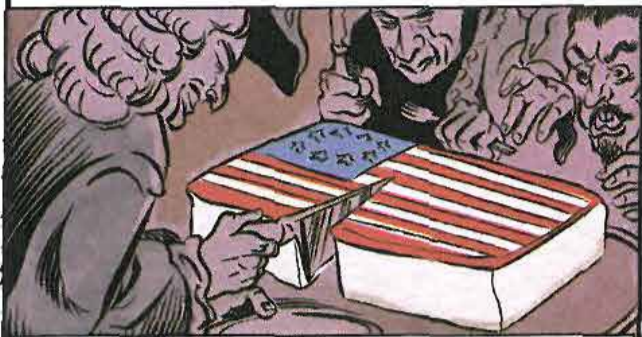
Document-analysis questions can be adapted for use with graphic novels. For example, the teacher might utilize the section featuring the debate between Federalists and Anti-Federalists over the ratification of the foundational law of the land. Illustrator McConnell employs historical as well as fanciful images, facial expressions of characters, and symbolism to enliven the text and portray the desires of the Federalists, who sought a strong central government.

Have students focus on a page in this book (p. 86, for example, seen below) and answer the following questions:

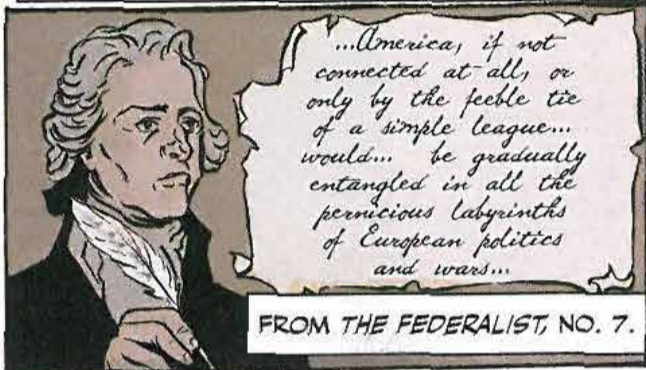
1. What does the image of the U.S. cake symbolize?
2. Why did the illustrator draw a group of men with ropes pulling at the “ship of state” above their heads? Are they helping to keep it balanced, or are they making it unsteady?
3. What graphic elements did the author and illustrator use on this page to convey the sentiments of those who supported the adoption of the U.S. Constitution?

Students can work in small groups to read the text and examine all of the graphic elements on page 86 and then share their responses with the class. There is room for different interpretations of the artwork, as the “machinery” of the “ship of state” is rather fanciful. In the process of discussing the drawings and what they might mean, the teacher can assure that students become familiar with some of the key concepts from the historical debate over the nature and extent of federal power (thus reinforcing students’ learning of the content of the text on page 86, which is reproduced with permission below).

"PUBLIUS" VIVIDLY POINTED OUT THE IMMINENT DANGER IF THE STATES FAILED TO JOIN IN A STRONG UNION.



ON THEIR OWN OR IN SMALL GROUPS, THE STATES COULD EASILY BE BROUGHT TO THEIR KNEES BY FOREIGN INVADERS...



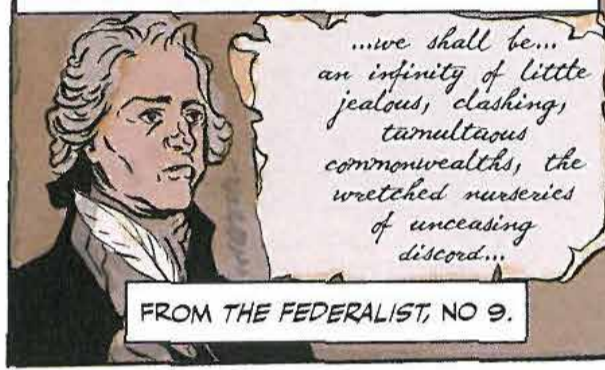
*...America, if not connected at all, or only by the feeble tie of a simple league... would... be gradually entangled in all the pernicious labyrinths of European politics and wars...*

FROM THE FEDERALIST, NO. 7.

...OR, GIVEN ALL THE FIERCE COMPETITION BETWEEN THEM, BY EACH OTHER.



OVER TIME BLOODSHED BETWEEN THEM COULD BECOME AS COMMON AS AMONG EUROPE'S MANY COUNTRIES IN THEIR CENTURIES OF ARMED CONFLICTS.

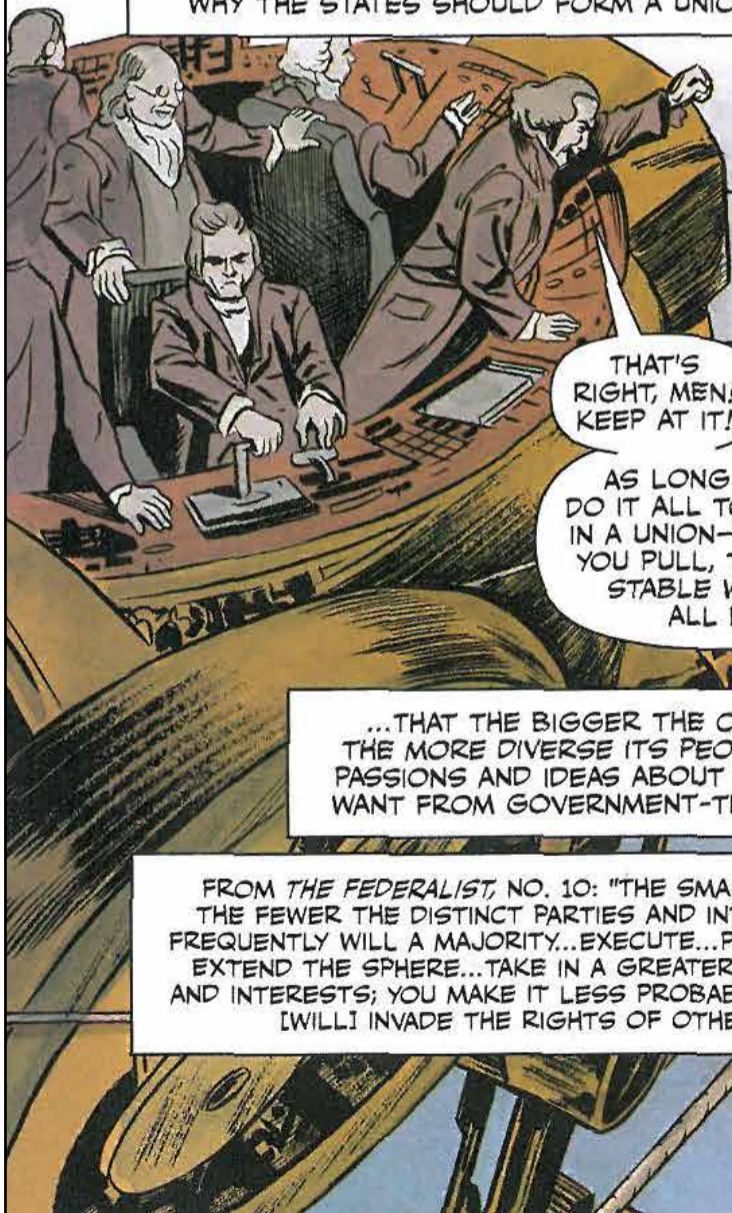


*...we shall be... an infinity of little jealous, clashing, tumultuous commonwealths, the wretched nurseries of unceasing discord...*

FROM THE FEDERALIST, NO 9.

AND JUST AS IMPORTANT, "PUBLIUS" SET FORTH WHY THE STATES SHOULD FORM A UNION.

ONE PIVOTAL REASON...



THAT'S RIGHT, MEN! KEEP AT IT!

AS LONG AS YOU DO IT ALL TOGETHER- IN A UNION-THE MORE YOU PULL, THE MORE STABLE WE WILL ALL BE!

...THAT THE BIGGER THE COUNTRY- THE MORE DIVERSE ITS PEOPLE, THEIR PASSIONS AND IDEAS ABOUT WHAT THEY WANT FROM GOVERNMENT-THE BETTER.

FROM THE FEDERALIST, NO. 10: "THE SMALLER THE SOCIETY... THE FEWER THE DISTINCT PARTIES AND INTERESTS, THE MORE FREQUENTLY WILL A MAJORITY... EXECUTE... PLANS OF OPPRESSION. EXTEND THE SPHERE... TAKE IN A GREATER VARIETY OF PARTIES AND INTERESTS; YOU MAKE IT LESS PROBABLE THAT A MAJORITY... [WILL] INVADE THE RIGHTS OF OTHER CITIZENS..."

Ask students: “Do you think that the illustrator of this book did a good job at portraying historical events from the past? Why, or why not? If you wanted to create drawings for a book about a historical period, where could you look to find source material to make the illustrations accurate and the dialog authentic for that period? Would you add into your drawing things that were fanciful or anachronistic?” Such discussions will teach content and will also prepare students to think critically about other graphic novels.

### **Discovering Motivations: How Do We Become Agents of Change?**

If social studies teachers are going to meet the literacy standards found in the C3 Framework, they should utilize texts that bring historical figures to life in captivating ways. Students need to be able to grasp a historical figure’s hopes, dreams, and values, as well as shortcomings—not merely read a list of accomplishments. Another graphic novel we recommend is *March: Book One*, which chronicles John Lewis’ childhood and experiences as a young man in the civil rights movement.<sup>9</sup> While the previous graphic novel we discussed was rich in textual facts, *March: Book One* is an autobiography with fewer words per page. Unlike *The United States Constitution: A Graphic Adaptation*, which uses fanciful and dream sequences, this graphic novel exclusively utilizes real-life imagery when sharing Lewis’ endeavors.

The second book in this three-part biography has just appeared in bookstores. Lewis, who is today a Congressman from Georgia, and Andrew Ayden are co-authors of the book, which was a Notable Social Studies Book in 2013. Nate Powell is the book’s illustrator.

*March* can be used to meet the C3 Framework inquiry literacies “analyzing social problems” and “constructing arguments and explanations.” It may also be used to meet the disciplinary literacy of “following rules.” Citizens ought to obey the laws, but what happens if a law is unjust, or if a majority has created a system of oppression against a religious, ethnic, or cultural minority? Jim Crow laws in the South had the approval of the white majority, as expressed by a decision of the U.S. Supreme Court (*Plessy v. Ferguson*, 1896). That’s the world that John Lewis grew up in. How did he, and fellow reformers, think and work in creative ways to challenge those entrenched laws?

Students need the opportunity to explore the motivations of reformers like Lewis, who was in his early twenties when he became a civil rights leader. One way to do this is for students to complete a character profile (**Handout A**, page 16) as they read this graphic autobiography.

Students can answer the questions in the character profile chart, and similar ones the teacher might deploy, to explore John Lewis’ beliefs and values. Using these types of questions helps students focus on key content material in the book. The teacher can guide a discussion where students share and elaborate on their responses to these questions. This process will give students a better understanding of John Lewis’ values and personality.

For example, John Lewis’ commitment to being a voice for change in society can be seen throughout the book especially on page 65, seen below. On this page, Lewis is discussing his passion and love of learning while attending the American Baptist Theological Seminary, but he could not shake his sense of duty to contribute in being a part of the change needed in American society. He made a commitment to be an active member of the civil rights movement and be a change agent in American society. This graphic novel does an excellent job of capturing the strong emotions and values of John Lewis through the realistic black and white drawings.

## **Background**

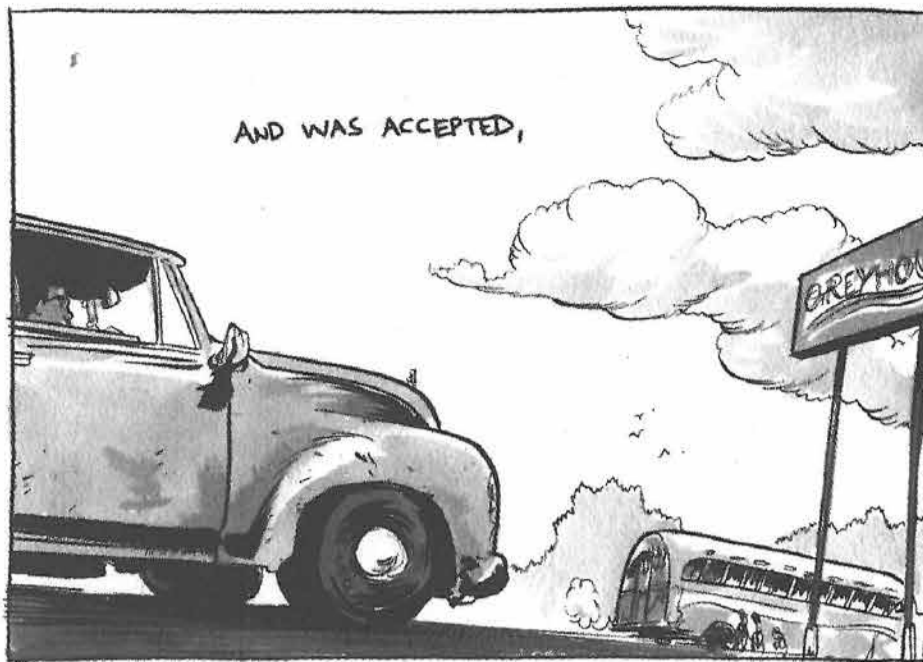
Here are two insightful, free websites for teachers (that include lists of recommended graphic novels for youth):

- \* The Ocean County Library, “Learning History through Graphic Books” (Toms River: NJ, 2014), [theoceancountylibrary.org/Educators/ce\\_files/Learn%20History%20through%20GN.pdf](http://theoceancountylibrary.org/Educators/ce_files/Learn%20History%20through%20GN.pdf).
- \* Getting Graphic: Using Graphic Books in the Language Arts Classroom, “Graphic Books for Middle and High School Students” (Edmonton, Alberta, 2012), [gettinggraphic.weebly.com/graphic-book-list.html](http://gettinggraphic.weebly.com/graphic-book-list.html).

SO I APPLIED TO  
GO TO SCHOOL THERE,



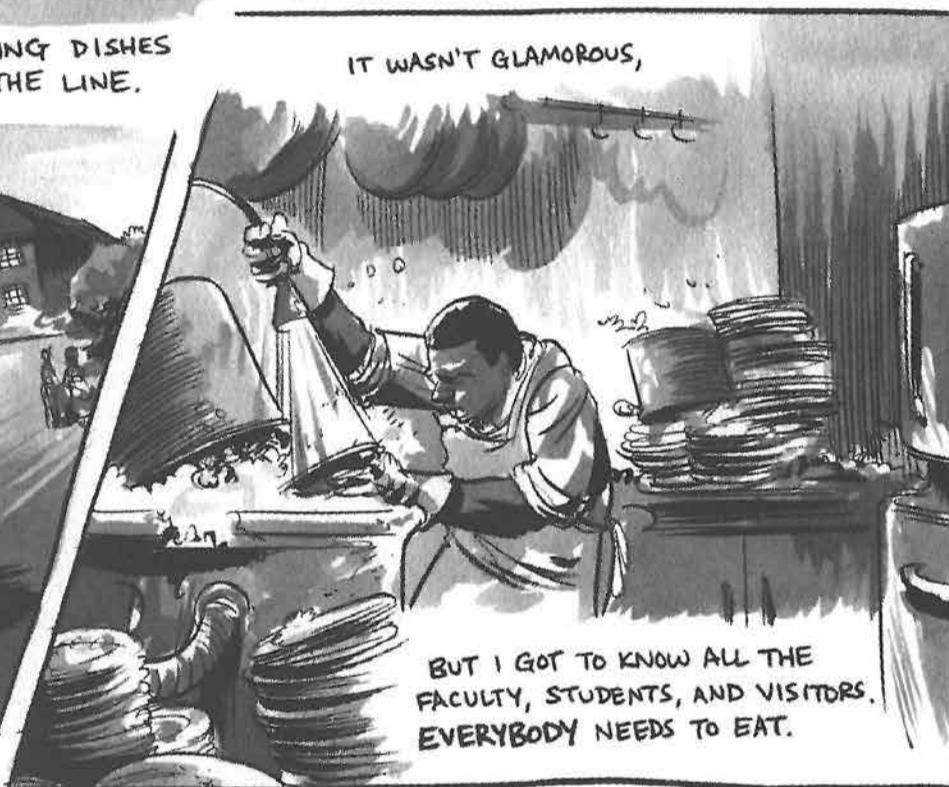
AND WAS ACCEPTED,



AND I GOT A JOB WASHING DISHES  
AND SERVING FOOD ON THE LINE.



IT WASN'T GLAMOROUS,



BUT I GOT TO KNOW ALL THE  
FACULTY, STUDENTS, AND VISITORS.  
EVERYBODY NEEDS TO EAT.

I LOVED THE NEW IDEAS COLLEGE  
WAS INTRODUCING ME TO, IN  
RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY--  
BUT I COULDN'T STOP THINKING  
ABOUT THE SOCIAL GOSPEL.

HERE I WAS READING ABOUT  
JUSTICE, WHEN THERE WERE  
BRAVE PEOPLE OUT THERE  
WORKING TO MAKE IT HAPPEN.



I STARTED TO FEEL GUILTY  
FOR NOT DOING MORE.  
I BECAME RESTLESS.

After students discuss *March*, the teacher can assess their understanding of Lewis and his role in the struggle through a perspective writing activity. Students assume the role of John Lewis at specific time points during the years covered in *March, Book 1* and write a brief summary on his views about segregation. Such point-of-view creative writings by students might include a brief op-ed piece addressed to the citizens of Nashville (ca. 1962) about segregation, a passage from a Sunday sermon (such as Lewis might have written as a young man) addressing the ills of segregation, or a letter for a school paper about what John Lewis wants to be when he grows up.


The teacher can adjust the length of this perspective piece based on students' writing ability and grade level. Such perspective writing allows students to empathize with historical figures' beliefs and values and gain a better understanding of the historical context of that time and place.<sup>10</sup> Through such an activity, students might better be able to articulate their understanding of why civil rights activists felt justified in challenging restrictions that were well established in social practice and in law.

As an extension activity, the teacher could invite students to investigate what Congressman Lewis is concerned about today. If students could ask the congressman two questions, what would they be? Students can, in fact, visit Rep. Lewis' website and write to his office any time they wish.

## Conclusion

Using illustrations as a source of information can encourage students to draw inferences about events, people, and concepts, and then test those inferences against other sources and reasoned discussion with other students.<sup>11</sup> As we lead students through inquiry activities, they are learning vocabulary and analyzing cause and effect in history, which is a C3 Framework disciplinary literacy.

The goals of the C3 Framework and the CCSS call for us to teach both inquiry (general) and disciplinary (content-specific) literacies in the social studies classroom. Graphic novels are a resource that can be used to meet many of these standards. We hope that K-12 social studies teachers, program coordinators, and instructors of social studies methods courses will put aside any possible pre-conceptions about graphic novels and instead, consider these books as a valuable learning tool for the advancement of literacy. Graphic novels can promote

student engagement and interest in reading and the world around them. Let's put them to good use. 

## Notes

1. NCSS, *Social Studies for the Next Generation: Purposes, Practices, and Implications of the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards* (Bulletin 113, Silver Spring, MD: NCSS, 2013), 5-68. A free PDF of the C3 Framework is at [www.socialstudies.org/c3](http://www.socialstudies.org/c3). Or buy the paperback book (with explanatory essays) at [www.socialstudies.org/store](http://www.socialstudies.org/store).
2. John Lee and Kathy Swan, "Is the Common Core Good for Social Studies? Yes, but..." *Social Education* 77, no. 6 (November/December 2013): 327-330.
3. Michael Graves, "Building a Comprehensive Vocabulary Program," *New England Reading Association Journal* 42, no. 2 (2006): 1-7.
4. Stergios Botzakis, "Graphic Novels in Education: Cartoons, Comprehension, and Content Knowledge," in Deborah Wooten and Bernice Cullinan, eds., *Children's Literature in the Reading Program: An Invitation to Read* (Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 2009), 15-23.
5. William Brozo and Melissa Mayville, "Reforming Secondary Disciplinary Instruction with Graphic Novels," *New England Reading Association Journal* 48, no.1 (2012):11-20.
6. Dale Jacobs, "More than Words: Comics as a Means of Teaching Multiple Literacies," *English Journal* 96, no.3 (January 2007): 19-25.
7. Jonathan Hennessey, illustrated by Aaron McConnell, *The United States Constitution: A Graphic Adaptation* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2008), 85-86.
8. Library of Congress, "Primary Source Analysis Tool," [www.loc.gov/teachers/primary-source-analysis-tool](http://www.loc.gov/teachers/primary-source-analysis-tool); Lee Ann Potter, "Prompting Students to Contemplate Effective Communication with a Visible Speech Chart from the 1870s," *Social Education* 78, no. 2 (March/April 2014): 53-56.
9. John Lewis and Andrew Aydin, illustrated by Nate Powell, *March: Book One* (Atlanta, GA: Top Shelf Productions, 2013), 5-121. *March: Book Two* was just published in early 2015.
10. Jason Endacott and Sarah Brooks, "An Updated Theoretical and Practical Model for Promoting Historical Empathy," *Social Studies Research and Practice* 8, no. 1 (2013): 41-57.
11. Judith Irvin, John Lunstrum, Carol Lynch-Brown, and Mary Friend Shepard, *Enhancing Social Studies Through Literacy Strategies* (Washington, DC: NCSS, 1995), 11-15.

The May/June 2015 issue of *Social Education* includes an article that complements this one. See: "More than Superheroes and Villains: Graphic Novels and Multimodal Literacy in Social Studies Education" by Caroline C. Sheffield, James S. Chisholm, and Penny B. Howell.

**JEREMIAH CLABOUGH** is an Assistant Professor at The University of Alabama at Birmingham in Birmingham, Alabama

**KENNETH T. CARANO** is an Assistant Professor and Coordinator of the Master of Arts in Teaching Program at Western Oregon University, Monmouth, Oregon

# John Lewis: A Character Profile

Question	Your Response	Source (page #)
What role did education play in bringing John Lewis to the Civil Rights Movement?		
For John Lewis, what role did religion play in his reform efforts?		
Why did John Lewis believe in nonviolent civil disobedience?		
What were John Lewis' views about racial segregation?		
What were John Lewis' personal qualities that helped propel him into leadership?		