The Battle of Fisher’s Hill: 
The Gibraltar of the Valley

Overview: Many times when students learn about the Civil War in their history class, teachers focus on “big” battles of the war and many smaller battles get pushed to the side. The purpose of this lesson is for students to learn about the Battle of Fisher’s Hill and to understand how geography played an instrumental role. During this lesson, students will assume the role of either Gen. Jubal Early or Gen. Phillip Sheridan and decide their plan of action on the battlefield. The students will take a virtual field trip of the area and use primary source maps, such as an aerial map of the Battle of Fisher’s hill drawn by the Civil War cartographer Jedediah Hotchkiss.

National Geography Standards:
#1 How to use maps and other geographic representations, geospatial technologies, spatial thinking understand and communicate information

#2 How to use mental maps to organize information about people, places, and environments in a spatial context

#14 How human actions modify the physical environment

#17 How to apply geography to interpret the past

Oregon Geography Content Standards
HS.14. Create and use maps, technology, imagery and other geographical representations to extrapolate and interpret geographic data.

HS.16. Analyze the interconnectedness of physical and human regional systems (e.g., a river valley and culture, water rights/use in regions, choice/impact of settlement locations) and their interconnectedness to global communities.

HS.22. Analyze how humans have used technology to modify the physical environment (e.g., dams, tractor, housing types).

Connections to Common Core Standards
11-12.RH.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole

11-12.RH.9 Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

11-12.WHST.2 Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/ experiments, or technical processes.
   a. Introduce a topic and organize complex ideas, concepts, and information so that each new element builds on that which precedes it to create a unified whole; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
11-12.WHST.8 Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the specific task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.

11-12.WHST.9 Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

**Objectives:** After completing this lesson, students should be able to:

- Understand the significance and importance of having accurate maps during the Civil War.
- Create an aerial map of Fisher’s Hill during the Civil War.
- Analyze geographic features when creating a map.
- Discuss the terrain and understand the topography of Fisher’s Hill.
- Think objectively about Civil War battle tactics; such as where to place earthworks, where a Calvary should attack an enemy’s flank, and which position to lead a charge attack.
- Understand the effects of the Battle, such as Sheridan’s Burning of the Valley.

**Materials:**

1. No. 26. Map of the line of entrenchments at Fisher's Hill, Jedediah Hotchkiss (primary source)
2. Plan of the Battle of Fisher's Hill, Robert Knox Snead, (primary source)
3. The Battle of Fisher’s Hill Map
4. James Taylor’s Sketch of the Confederate Works (primary source)
5. Map of Vicinity of Fisher’s Hill (primary source)
6. Battle of Fisher’s Hill and Cedar Creek, G. L. Gillespie, (primary source)
7. Picture of Confederate Prisoners Captured at the Battle of Fisher’s Hill (primary source)
8. Position of Union Army at Fisher’s Hill and Plan of Battle (primary source)
9. computer paper, pencils, and color pencils.
10. Article from Blue & Gray
11. Brochures from Fisher’s Hill Battlefield
12. Social Studies Journals
13. Video Tour of Fisher’s Hill Battlefield

**Grade Levels:**

11th Grade

**Time:**
This lesson will take two days; each period is 55 minutes long.

**Background:**
This lesson takes place in the middle of a Civil War unit. The students have learned about the causes of the War. They have also learned about several major battles such as Antietam, Gettysburg, and both Bull Runs. This lesson will also tie into Sheridan’s “Burning of the Valley.” From previous lessons, the students have a strong understanding of primary source documents. They also have the ability to interpret troop movements and identify topography on Civil War battle maps.

**Procedure:**

**Day 1: Virtual Field Trip to Fisher’s Hill Battlefield**

- Show the students the video tour of Fisher’s Hill (40 mins)
- Give each student a brochure of the Battle of Fisher’s Hill while the students are watching the video tour. They will have to write at least a two sentence description of each of the 5 stops on the tour in their social studies journal.
  - The first stop the students will visit is the Confederate stand. This is the location of the Confederate lines.
  - The second stop on the tour is the Funkhouser House. The Funkhouser House sits adjacent to the battlefield and was present during the battle. Maj. Gen. Stephen Dodson Ramseur tried three times charging the hill behind the Funkhouser House.
    - Talk a few minutes about Mr. Gibson’s family connection to the Funkhouser house and property.
  - The third stop on the tour is the Union Flank March and the fourth stop is the flank attack. At both of these stops the students will see of remnants Confederate earthworks.
    - While the students are at stop 4 they will see a single old chestnut tree at the top of Ramseur Hill. The Confederates used the tree as a lookout post.
  - The Final stop on the tour is the Confederate Collapse. This is where Crook’s cavalry broke through the Confederate line. The students will learn about Gen. Jubal Early’s retreat along the Shenandoah River on Thursday after their map assignment.
- The students will break into their groups and discuss the terrain of Fisher’s Hill. (10 mins)
  - The students will discuss what they noticed about the geography of Fisher’s Hill. (hilly, tumbling run creek, confederate earthworks, narrow valley)

**Day 2: Plan of Attack or Defend**

- Show the students the James Taylor’s sketch of *Confederate Earthworks.* (5-7 mins)
Discuss the difficulties the Confederates had creating earthworks at the top of Ramseur’s Hill.

- Show the students the Plan of the Battle of Fisher’s Hill map by Robert Knox Snead. (5-7 mins)
  - Discuss the advantages the Confederates had at the Battle of Fisher’s Hill and the advantages the Union had at the Battle of Fisher’s Hill.
    - (Confederates position, Union number of soldiers)
- Show the students the Jedediah Hotchkiss of Map of Fisher’s Hill. (5-7 mins)
  - Discuss the location of each Army on the battlefield.

- The students will get into their groups and draw a plan of attack for either Gen. Jubal Early of the Confederates or Phillip H. Sheridan of the Union Army. (25-30 mins)

- Once the students have completed their plan of attack discuss the final events of the battle and Sheridan’s Burning of the Valley (10 mins).

Assessments:

**Formative Assessment:**

The students will be in groups of 3-4 people. Each group will be given a blank map and have to draw an aerial map of Fisher’s Hill. This map will be a plan of attack and be given to their general. On this map they should include landmarks (Funkhouser House, Fisher’s Hill, Tumbling Run Creek, etc.), the location of the town of Strasburg, the ridge line of both Massanutten Mountain and Little North Mountain, and finally they should also include the location of each corresponding army. If the students decide to be the Union they need to include how to attack the Confederates and if the students decide to be the Confederates they need to include where the best defensive position for an attack would be. The students will analyze the Battle of Fisher’s Hill map by Steven Stanley which shows Crook’s flanking attack. The students will compare their battle plan map with this map. Then they will discuss why this was best option for Sheridan.

**Summative Assessment:**

During the virtual field trip the students will have to write at least two sentence per stop describing the geography of the area. The students will also discuss what they noticed about the terrain of Fisher’s Hill.

**Vocabulary:**

earthworks, topography, cavalry, Shenandoah Valley, Shenandoah River, and total warfare

**Extension:** For ELL students and students with reading IEP’s they will be provided with a vocabulary flipbook. In their flipbook they will be provided with the definition to each word as well a picture that will help them identify with the meaning of each word.