Julie Johnson

Topography of the Wilderness Battlefield

Overview:
This lesson provides students with the opportunity to evaluate a historical battlefield to gain perspective on command and practical decision-making factors. Students will have opportunity to learn a strategy for evaluating a geography-based perspective on history. Extension: By comparing the assigned battlefield with similar local areas, students will have opportunity to gain additional perspective on the importance of geographic factors.

National Geography Standards:

NGS 1: How to use maps and other geographic representations, geospatial technologies, and spatial thinking to understand and communicate information

NGS 17: How to apply geography to interpret the past

Oregon Geography (Social Sciences) Content Standards for High School:

HS 14: Create and use maps, technology, imagery and other geographical representations to extrapolate and interpret geographic data.

HS.15. Analyze and illustrate geographic issues by synthesizing data derived from geographic representations.

Connections to Common Core Literacy Standards in History/Social Sciences:

11-12.RH.7: Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

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

Objectives:
In completing this exercise, students should be able to gain a geographical-based perspective on the complexity of military troop movement and artillery decisions during the Civil War battle of The Wilderness.

Grade Levels: 9-12  Time: 45 minutes for each of 2-3 class periods.

Materials:

Photos of the Wilderness Battlefield provided by National Park Service:
http://www.nps.gov/media/photo/gallery.htm?id=EE97CC1F-155D-451F-6716B125BC5E1DB5
Summary of The Wilderness Battle provided by the National Park Service:
http://www.nps.gov/frsp/wildspot.htm (Note: For variety in student projects, use the embedded links to access specific portions of the campaign.)

Blank paper for cross-section drawings

Blank paper for bird’s-eye-view drawings

Colored pencils

Extension activity: Topographic maps of the local area

Background:
Prior to this lesson, students will have studied the basic command structures and troop movements during the Civil War. This lesson may be situated in a high school history or geography class.

Procedures:

1. Provide students with copy of the National Park Service summary of the Battle of the Wilderness.

2. To help students visualize, view a sampling of Wilderness Battlefield photos (from National Park Service site or other sources).

3. Provide students with a copy (digital or paper) of the USGS map of Spotsylvania (outside of Fredericksburg), VA. Note: It may be necessary to review the format and legend information for topographical maps with students.

4. Using the battle summary, review the locations of the Union and Confederate forces.

5. Divide the students into groups of 2 or 3.

6. Assign each student group a section of the summary.

7. Have students draw a cross-section of the battlefield area referenced in the assigned section.

8. Have students draw a labeled bird’s-eye-view of the assigned section – using appropriate geographic terms, and indicating topographical factors, troop locations, and direction of movement.
**Assessment:**

**Formative assessment:**

Visually review group work to determine student understanding of the battlefield topography and troop placement and/or movement.

**Summative assessment:**

Using geographic terms, students will write two 5+ sentence paragraphs describing the positional advantages and disadvantages of the assigned section of the battlefield for both Union and Confederate Armies. (15 points possible)

**Grading:**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student described both advantages and disadvantages for both armies</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Student used more than three appropriate geographic terms</strong></td>
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<td>Student used 1 appropriate geographic term</td>
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<td><strong>Student wrote two paragraphs of the assigned length</strong></td>
<td>Student wrote two paragraphs</td>
<td>Student wrote one paragraph of the assigned length</td>
<td>Student wrote one paragraph</td>
<td>Student wrote some relevant information</td>
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**Extensions and/or Adaptations:**

1. Provide students with topographic maps of the local area (or state, etc.).

2. Using the local maps, students will locate an area with a similar topographical structure as the Wilderness (or other battlefields) section that they were evaluating.

3. Students will evaluate the additional factors (waterways, railroads, etc.) that may affect troop placement, supply, and movement if the battle were to take place in that location.