You Pick the Strategy: North vs. South at the Battle of Fredericksburg

Overview
This lesson will require students to assume the role of either a Confederate or Union strategist in the days preceding the Battle of Fredericksburg. It is intended for an 8th grade social studies class. Using maps, students will create a plan for troop movements, placements, offensives, and defenses, and justify the plan to the class.

National Geography Standards
- Geography Standard 1: How to use maps and other geographic representations, geospatial technologies, and spatial thinking to understand and communicate information.
- Geography Standard 2: How to use mental maps to organize information about people, places, and environments in spatial context.
- Geography Standard 4: The physical and human characteristics of a place.
- Geography Standard 15: How physical systems affect human systems.
- Geography Standard 17: How to apply geography to interpret the past.

Oregon Geography Content Standards

Common Core/Social Science Connections
6-8.RH.7 Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.
6-8.RH.10 By the end of grade 8, read and comprehend history/social studies texts in the grades 6–8
6-8.WHST.1 Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content.
   a. Introduce claim(s) about a topic or issue, acknowledge and distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically.
   b. Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant, accurate data and evidence that demonstrate an understanding of the topic or text, using credible sources.
   c. Use words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

Objectives
In completing this assignment, students should be able to:
- Analyze a map of the area around the town of Fredericksburg, Virginia.
- Use topographical data to make decisions related to troop movements and placements.
• Create and write a proposal (minimum three paragraphs) as to where troops (either Union or Confederate) should be placed, and in what direction they should move.
• Present the proposal to the class.
• Justify the proposal.

Grade Level: 8

Time: Five class periods of 50 minutes each.

Materials
Copies of a map of Fredericksburg and vicinity, 1862 (this will be the primary source)
http://www.loc.gov/item/2005625035/
Copies of a topographical map of Fredericksburg, Virginia.
http://www.loc.gov/resource/g3884f.cw0556000/
Blank map of Fredericksburg and vicinity.
A wider view map that includes Washington, D.C. and Richmond, Virginia.
http://www.smithfieldplantation.org/images/sol/Unit-1-Map-B-Virginia-&-Nei.jpg
Access to computer lab.
Colored pencils/markers.
Data sheets showing approximate strengths of Union and Confederate armies prior to December 1862.
Videos about the Battle of Fredericksburg.

Background
Students at this point should be familiar with the causes of the Civil War and the key events occurring between the attack on Fort Sumter and the Battle of Fredericksburg. They will know that the Battle of Antietam diminished southern hopes of foreign recognition and support; that the Emancipation Proclamation will go into effect January 1, 1863; that the Confederate army is outmanned by the Union; that previous Union incursions into Virginia have failed; that the primary goal of the Army of the Potomac is to capture the Confederate capital of Richmond; and that the goal of the Confederate army is to not only expel the Union from Virginia but also prove to European powers that it can defend itself. In addition, students will already be able to understand a topographical map, and explain the significance of high ground when developing battle plans.

Procedure
1. Students will be randomly placed into groups of 2-3, depending on the size of the class.
2. Groups will randomly be assigned a side. Half of the groups will be assigned to the Confederacy, half to the Union.
3. Each group will receive a copy of the 1862 map of Fredericksburg and Vicinity, 1862. Time will be given to analyze the map.

4. As students review the map they will, as a group, complete the following activity:
   a. Color the town of Fredericksburg in one color.
   b. Color the heights to the west of the town a second color.
   c. Color the heights to the east of the town a third color.
   d. Identify on the 1862 map the following places:
      i. Stafford Heights
      ii. Marye’s Heights
      iii. Rappahannock River
   e. On the wider-view map, identify the following places:
      i. Washington, D.C.
      ii. Richmond, Virginia
      iii. Potomac River

5. A whole-class discussion will be held. The 1862 map will be shown on the projector.

6. Students will be randomly called up to the front to show the rest of the class the highest elevations around the town of Fredericksburg.

7. Using the computer lab, students will identify the approximate strengths, in manpower, of the armies of Northern Virginia and the Potomac in the fall of 1862.

8. As a group, students will develop a plan for their army that addresses the following questions and instructions (note: these will be provided for the groups on their assignment sheet):
   a. Where will you position your army? Using the map of 1862, draw blue X’s (if you are Union) or red X’s (if you are Confederate) where your army will be positioned.
   b. Based on where you have positioned your army, where do you think the enemy will position their army? Place blue X’s (if your enemy is Union) or red X’s (if your enemy is Confederate) on the map.
   c. Will your army attack, or assume a defensive stance?
      i. If your army will attack, draw arrows (red if you are Confederate, blue if you are Union) showing which direction you will attack.
      ii. If your army will wait for the enemy to attack, draw arrows showing which direction from which you think the enemy will attack. Remember that if your enemy is Union, draw blue arrows showing their direction of attack. If your enemy is Confederate, use red arrows!
   d. Create a T chart. On one side, show the advantages of the decision you have made. Why will this help your side win? On the other side, show the possible disadvantages. Why might this be a bad idea, and how might it help your enemy?

(At this point students will have used a map to develop their own strategy, predict the strategy of the enemy, and think critically about the pros and cons of their own decision.)
9. Students will write a three-paragraph paper explaining their strategy.
   a. Paragraph one will describe the strategy they have chosen.
   b. Paragraph two will describe how they think the enemy will respond.
   c. Paragraph three will describe why the strategy they chose is correct, and why the strategy predicted by the enemy will fail.

Note: although each group will be required to submit one paper, each student will complete at least one paragraph to contribute to the paper. For this reason it will be important to make sure each group has no more than three members.

10. Students will present their strategy to the class, and justify their decision to a panel of military leaders.
    (The “military leaders” will consist of the classroom teacher and other staff members, assuming the roles of Union or Confederate leadership, depending on the presenting groups.)

11. Following presentations, students will watch videos showing the course of the Battle of Fredericksburg to see the actual choices made by the leaders of the time, and the outcome of the battle.

Videos will be from Youtube:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ji0AIKAgI7c
http://www.history.com/topics/american-civil-war/battle-of-fredericksburg/videos

**Assessment**
Assessments will be broken into five formative and one summative assessment. The formative assessments will be given as questions at the end of each period:

**Formative, Day 1:**
An exit question at the end of the period: On what river does the town of Fredericksburg sit? Between which heights does the town of Fredericksburg sit?

**Formative, Day 2:**
An exit question at the end of the period: In terms of manpower, which army had the advantage: the Army of the Potomac or the Army of Northern Virginia?

**Formative, Day 3:**
An exit question at the end of the period: Why did you decide to place your army in its current position?

**Formative, Day 4:**
Your army is going to a) attack or b) defend. In two sentences, explain why.

**Formative, Day 5:**
Based on the decision you made, and knowing what you now know about the Battle of Fredericksburg, would your side have won or lost? Why?

**Summative Assessment**
Students will now know the outcome of the Battle of Fredericksburg. They will write a letter to their president (Abraham Lincoln, if they are the Union army, or Jefferson Davis, if they are the Confederate army.) In their letter they will explain why they either won or lost the Battle of Fredericksburg, with special attention to the role that the layout of the terrain played in the outcome of the battle.

**Vocabulary:** (Note that much of this vocabulary would have appeared in previous lessons.) Union, Confederate, Army of the Potomac, Army of Northern Virginia, infantry, cavalry, artillery, high ground, entrenchment.

**Extension:** The concept of using the layout of the land for strategic purposes will extend through the remainder of the Civil War unit, most notably when discussing Gettysburg, Vicksburg, the Shenandoah campaigns, and Grant’s overland campaign.

**Adaptations:** Students with IEP’s for writing will be allowed to submit their summative assessments either as a written letter or in a conference with the teacher. Vocabulary, some of which may be challenging for ESOL students, will be heavily discussed and reviewed at the beginning of each period as part of the daily warm-ups. The teacher will check in regularly with each group to assess progress, answer questions, and deal with any problems that may arise.