Plans of Attack:
Using Topographic Maps to Understand, Create, and Analyze Battle Plans

Overview: This lesson challenges students to devise and evaluate their own Union and Confederate battle plans for various Civil War battles using given topographic maps of battle sites and given information regarding Confederate and Union positions and resources (e.g. number of troops, artillery, etc.) prior to learning about and then critiquing the actual battle plans that transpired.

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 15: How physical systems affect human systems
Geography Standard 17: How to apply geography to interpret the past

Oregon Geography Content Standards:
5. Apply geographic skills, concepts, and technologies (e.g., maps, GIS, Google Earth) to gather, display, and analyze spatial information.
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.

Oregon Social Science Analysis Content Standards:
8.27. Examine the various characteristics, causes, and effects of an event, issue, or problem.
8.28. Investigate a response or solution to an issue or problem and support or oppose, using research.

Connections to Common Core:
6-8.WH.1 Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content.
6-8.WH.2 Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes.
6-8.WH.9 Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
Objectives:
In completing this exercise, students should be able to:

• Analyze topographic maps and statistics to create their own battle plans
• Explain the topography of battle sites
• Evaluate battle plans in terms of strengths and weaknesses
• Evaluate battle plans in terms of the effects of the site's topography
• Compare their own group's battle plans to the actual battle plans

Grade Levels: 8-12

Time: Entire lesson is about 2-3 hours, which can be divided into three segments. The first segment and second segments are about 50 minutes each and the third segment can range from 20 minutes to 2 hours, depending on the number of activities undertaken. If divided into segments, be sure to begin each segment with an anticipatory set or warm-up and end each lesson with a short exit quiz or wrap-up.

Materials:
• Detailed topographic maps of Civil War battle sites at time of battle without battle plan information, preferably one map per student that can be drawn on
• Handouts of statistics regarding Union and Confederate positions and resources (e.g. number of troops, artillery, cavalry, etc.) for chosen battles
• Detailed maps of chosen Civil War battles
• Lined paper for students to describe their battle plans and analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the plans
• Pencils or pens for writing descriptions and analyses
• Colored pencils or markers for drawing battle plans on topographic maps of battle sites

Note: A fantastic website which provides Civil War statistics and battle maps fit for this lesson is the Civil War Trust at http://www.civilwar.org/

Background: This lesson can be used repeatedly as an introduction to any battle of the Civil War (provided that statistics, topographic maps, and battle plan maps of the battle are available) to help students understand and critically analyze battlefield topography, battle plans, and battle outcomes.

Procedures:
Segment 1:

1. Tell students that they are Union and Confederate commanders with the task of creating a battle plan for a particular battle site based on a topographic map of the site and information regarding Union and Confederate resources from the actual battle such as number and types of troops and artillery available to each side. (2-3 minutes)

2. Divide students into groups of 2-3.

3. Give each group the following:
   - A detailed topographic map of a Civil War battle site at the time of the battle without the battle plan information (preferably one map per student that can be drawn on; it's your choice as to whether students receive maps of the same battle or maps of different battles)
   - A handout with statistics regarding Union and Confederate positions and resources (e.g. number of troops, artillery, cavalry, etc.) for the group's particular battle
   - A piece of lined paper for each student to describe their battle plan and analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the plan
   - A pencil or pen for each student to write their description and analysis of the battle plan
   - Colored pencils or markers for drawing battle plans on the topographic maps of the battle site

4. Tell students to first study and discuss with their group members the various geographic features of their battle site and their relation to one another using the topographic map. Guide students in observing physical features such as hills, mountains, bodies of water, coastlines, relief, scale, and fall lines as well as human features such as buildings, dams, roads, population, canals, railways, and so forth. Encourage students to jot down notes. (5-7 minutes)

5. Tell students to work with their group to analyze how the geographic features found on their map might hinder, help, or affect people in battle. Could certain features act as a protective barrier? Could certain features slow the movement of troops? Would it be more beneficial to be on high ground or low ground? What particular obstacles might a certain feature present? Encourage students to jot down notes. (5-7 minutes)

6. Tell students to study and discuss with their group members the statistics regarding the Union and Confederate resources (number and types of troops, artillery, cavalry, etc.) and positions for their given battle using the handout. Based on numbers and types of resources, which side seems to have the overall advantage? Specific advantages? How might each side use each resource? What directions are each side coming from? Encourage students to jot down notes. (5-7 minutes)

7. Tell students to work in their groups to integrate the information they gathered from their topographic map with the information about the Union and Confederate resources and positions to analyze the interaction between the armies and the terrain. What terrain obstacles is each side encountering as they approach the battle site? How might the particular numbers and types of resources for each side be affected by each geographic feature of the battle site? Which geographic features are each side more likely to encounter based on their
approaching position? How might each side handle each geographic feature they encounter? Encourage students to jot down notes. (10-12 minutes)

8. Tell groups to use their maps, statistics handout, and notes to create Union and Confederate battle plans. Each member in each group needs to write out a detailed description of their battle plans and draw/label/color-code the battle plans on their topographic maps. (If group members are unable to agree on a battle plan, group members may create their own.) (15-20 minutes)

Segment 2:

9. Have groups present to the class their battle plans. They should first describe the topography of their battle site, then describe the statistics of each army in their battle, and then explain their battle plans using their drawn maps as visual aids. Students should answer any teacher or student questions regarding their battle plan. Give groups a few minutes to prepare their presentation at the beginning of this segment. (40-50 minutes)

Segment 3:

10. From here, you can have students do a variety of activities, each of which can be done individually, in groups, or as a class, and each of which can be done in verbal or written form as a summative assessment. (20 minutes each)

  ° Students can analyze their own group's battle plans, specifically explaining the effects of the topography of the area on the plans
  ° Students can analyze their own group's battle plans, specifically critiquing the strengths and weaknesses
  ° Students can analyze other groups' battle plans, specifically explaining the effects of the topography of the area on the plans
  ° Students can analyze other groups' battle plans, specifically critiquing the strengths and weaknesses
  ° Students can analyze the actual battle plans, specifically explaining the effects of the topography of the area on the plans
  ° Students can analyze the actual battle plans, specifically critiquing the strengths and weaknesses
  ° Students can compare their own group's battle plans to the actual battle plans

Assessment: The formative assessment will be teacher observation of students' critical thinking processes while they work in small groups analyzing their topographic maps and army statistics and creating their battle plans. The summative assessment will be teacher evaluation of individual students' written battle plan drawings and descriptions and students' written and/or verbal analyses as well as teacher evaluation of groups' battle plan presentations.

Extensions: Students could make educated guesses about the course of events and results of the actual battle plans. Additionally, students could analyze how changes in topography might affect
battle plans.

**Adaptations:** This lesson can be adapted to almost any battle of any war to better understand the battles and topography of battle sites. English language learners and struggling students could work together with other students on this lesson and will be aided in understanding via pictures and drawings.