

BOLD, CAUTIOUS, TRUE:
Walt Whitman and American Art of the Civil War Era
at the Katonah Museum of Art October 18, 2009 – January 24, 2010

Dear Educator,

The Katonah Museum of Art is proud to present ***Bold, Cautious, True: Walt Whitman and American Art of the Civil War Era***, a major humanities exhibition which pairs the works of prominent 19th century American artists who create a window into this important period in our nation's history, with the words of Walt Whitman, renowned American poet, firsthand observer, and nurse during the Civil War.

Bold, Cautious, True does not graphically depict war; rather it reflects the mood, values, courage, sacrifices, and ideals of a young divided nation and its reconstruction. It celebrates the enduring American spirit and illuminates, visually and in poetry, the passionate themes that infused the social, political and natural landscape of the time. This exhibition provides dynamic entry points for a variety of subjects and is scalable for elementary and secondary grade levels and curricula.

How is our history told? Your students will be introduced to a variety of narrative works including: genre paintings, landscapes, visual allegories, caricatures in social/political cartoons, and portraits of important American figures. What visual messages can we interpret from these paintings? Our tours will focus on developing skills with which to respond to historical art as a means of communication.

In addition, the Learning Center exhibition, ***Brian Selznick: Walt Whitman Words of America*** presents an accessible, beautifully illustrated story about this poet and the Civil War era for K-6 students. The vibrant, engaging illustrations begin with young Whitman's apprenticeship to a Brooklyn printer and trace his life through his time as a nurse during the Civil War. The book offers an ideal introduction to Walt Whitman's poetry and to the Civil War for elementary grades.

The KMA education department welcomes collaborative planning for class visits to ensure the value, relevance, and enjoyment of your students. Let us know how you will be using your visit so that we may best serve you. We look forward to sharing this important exhibition with you and your students.



Karen R. Stein
Director of Education
914-232-9555 ext. 2969
kstein@katonahmuseum.org

To help prepare you and your students for your visit we have enclosed the following materials which you can adapt to the needs of your own students:

- Exhibition Overview: Text panel from the exhibition
- 3 images from the exhibition with discussion questions
- Pre-visit activity: From Words to Image
- Glossary of Terms: Language Arts, Visual Arts, and Historical
- Overview of the America Civil War
- Time line and United States map of the 1860s
- Name tags for students to wear during their visit

INTRODUCTION TEXT PANEL

The United States was a nation coming unraveled in the 1850s. A little-known Illinois lawyer and politician named Abraham Lincoln suggested in 1858 that America would not long survive as “a house divided” over the issue of slavery. Two years later, Lincoln was elected President of the United States, even though his name did not even appear on the ballot in ten southern states. Southerners howled that he was President of only half the country. South Carolina delegates voted almost immediately to secede from the Union and by February 1861 six other states had followed suit. The Confederacy was born.

Jefferson Davis, a former senator from Mississippi, became President of the Confederate States of America on February 9, 1861, and Lincoln was inaugurated on March 4. Even as both leaders urged restraint, the “inevitable conflict,” long predicted, seemed ready to erupt. Then, on April 14, 1861, Southern forces fired on a Federal garrison that refused to withdraw from Fort Sumter, in Charleston Harbor. America was suddenly at war with itself. North and South each called for militias and then great armies, launching what would become four years of bloody civil warfare.

No American lives went untouched by the Civil War, including those of its artists. A few, like Sanford R. Gifford, Jervis McEntee, David Johnson, and John S. Jameson in the North and Thomas Satterwhite Noble and William D. Washington in the South, signed on for service and saw the war up close. Others like Eastman Johnson, Alfred T. Bricher, George Cochran Lambdin, and Enoch Wood Perry watched brothers don uniforms. Winslow Homer became the great chronicler of the battlefields. But nearly every artist working in the 1860s either directly or indirectly saw the turbulent, violent, and heartbreaking age somehow expressed in their work.

Walt Whitman was forty-two years old when the Civil War started and *Leaves of Grass*, his poetic tour-de-force, had already been through three editions. He later claimed that his book and the Civil War were one, a puzzling comment given that so much of it had been written before the fighting ever started. But *Leaves of Grass* had been an appeal to American unity and a call for the country to resist sectional differences. His plea, however, went unheeded. Before the war ended in 1865, more than 620,000 Americans died and 470,000 more were wounded. And Whitman witnessed the war’s devastation firsthand as he tended sick, maimed, and dying soldiers in Washington hospitals.

The title of the exhibition is from Whitman’s poem “As Toilsome I Wander’d Virginia’s Woods,” first published in *Drum-Taps* in 1865. In the verse, the narrator finds a fallen soldier’s grave marker hastily inscribed “Bold, cautious, true, and my loving comrade,” words that haunt him long after he has left the battlefields of Virginia behind him.

*As toilsome I wander'd Virginia's woods,
To the music of rustling leaves kick'd by my feet,
 (for 'twas autumn,)
I mark'd at the foot of a tree the grave of a soldier;

Mortally wounded he and buried on the retreat,
 (easily all could understand,)
The halt of a mid-day hour, when up! no time to lose –
 yet this sign left,
On a tablet scrawl'd and nail'd on the tree by the grave,
Bold, cautious, true, and my loving comrade.*

Walt Whitman, 1865



THOMAS CANTWELL HEALY (1820-1873)
Major General Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard, 1861
Oil on canvas
37 ½ x 33 inches

PORTRAIT AND CHARACTER

Portrait:

A work of art that represents a specific person, a group of people, or an animal. Portraits usually show what a person looks like as well as revealing something about the subject's life or personality.

What do you notice about this man?

- What is he wearing?
- Describe his facial features.
- Describe his pose.
- How would you describe his character, mood or personality? What in the picture makes you say that?
- What symbols do you see that help to tell us about the man?
- What do you notice in the background?

Take the same pose as the Major General. How does it make you feel? Why do you think the artist painted with his arms closed?

About the artist:

The story of Thomas Cantwell Healy and his brother George Healy is a perfect embodiment of the larger story of the Civil War. Both brothers were artists born in Boston, Massachusetts but George Healy lived and worked in the Union states, painting a series of presidential portraits for the White House. Thomas Cantwell Healy, on the other hand, lived and worked in Mississippi. The brothers were on opposite sides of the issues that caused the Civil War and became separated as though they were at battle.

About Major General Beauregard:

Pierre Gustave Toutant de Beauregard (1818-1893), best known as a general for the Confederate States of America during the American Civil War, was also a writer, civil servant, and inventor. Beauregard was commander of the forces in Charleston, South Carolina, where on April 12, 1861, he opened fire on the Union held Fort Sumter. This was regarded as the start of the American Civil War. Beauregard successfully defended Charleston from repeated Union attacks. In 1864 he was appointed Commander of Confederate forces in the West, where he fought without success to halt the advances of Union forces under U. S. Grant and William T. Sherman. He surrendered to the Union in April, 1865.



WILLIAM DICKINSON WASHINGTON (1833-1870)

The Letter, ca. 1864

Oil on canvas

29 ¾ x 33 1/8 inches

PICTURES TELL A STORY

Pictures can tell us many things. We can learn about how people lived and what was important to them. Through pictures, we can imagine the stories of their lives.

Examine *The Letter* by William D. Washington. Through observation, inference, and your imagination, put into words what you think this painting is all about.

Look carefully at the figures in the painting:

Identify and describe each character.

What is each person doing? How do they relate to each other?

Describe the expression on each person's face. What might they be thinking, feeling, or saying?

Describe what each person is wearing. How does it differ from your own dress?

Look carefully at the setting of this painting:

Describe what objects you see.

How does it differ from our time?

Describe the color and light around the figures.

Story:

Write a story about this painting.

What happened before this scene?

What happened afterwards?

Getting information:

Learning information about the artist and his/her subject can be very helpful for understanding the artwork. This painting shows the moment when a mother receives a letter about the death of her son on the battlefield during the Civil War.

How does this information change the way you see the picture?

Where could you find information about a painting?



THOMAS SATTERWHITE NOBLE (1835-1907)

Fugitives in Flight, 1869

Oil on canvas

30 1/8 x 40 1/4 inches

MOOD AND FEELING

Use all of your senses as you look carefully at this work of art and think about what feelings the picture evokes.

- Describe the colors. Where do you see bright, strong, soft or dark colors?
- Describe the light and shadows. What time of day might it be? What would the air feel like?
- Describe the background. What would it smell like? What sounds might you hear?
- Describe the composition: Locate the position of all the main elements. How do they balance the painting?
- How do you think the characters in the painting might be feeling? What makes you say that?
- How do you think the artist felt about the scene? What makes you say that?

Questions:

What question would like to ask a person in the painting?

What question would like to ask the artist?

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Pre-Visit Activity: From Words to Art

Artists use imagery to convey their ideas, emotions, and stories. Words are especially wonderful when they bring images to our minds. The two activities below give you a chance to turn word images into art images. Use the backside of this page for your illustrations.

For K - grade 4

Read the description below of one of the paintings that you will see in our exhibition.
Create a picture of what you read. When you visit the Museum, see if you can find the painting!

Our horse is riding hard. It feels like we are flying! The night has finished and it is nearly dawn. A thin yellow light peeks out from behind the soft grey clouds that fill the sky. Mama sits on the rear of the horse, holding the baby tightly in her arms. Her dress billows out. She looks back to see if anyone is following. Papa leans forward with one hand on the reins and the other holding me. His floppy hat is pushed down on his head and his white shirt flaps in the wind. I am holding onto the horse's neck. The horse is carrying our whole family away.

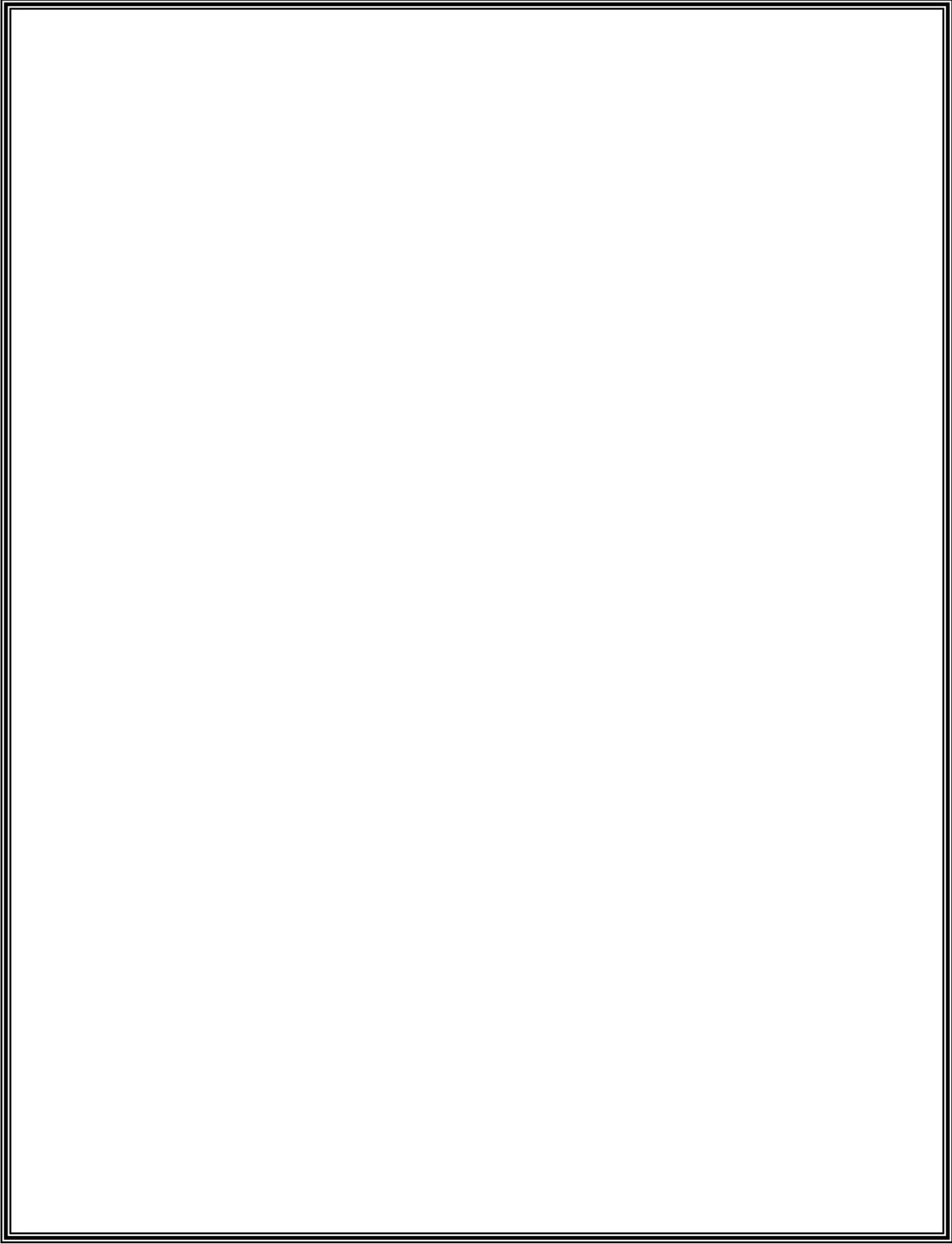
For grades 4 - 12

Walt Whitman was a master of written imagery. Carefully read the poem below.
Look up any words that are not familiar to you. Illustrate Whitman's poem.

PICTURES

By Walt Whitman

*In a little house pictures I keep,
Many pictures hang suspended-
It is not a fixed house,
It is round-it is but a few inches from one side of it to the
Other side . . .
And there, on the walls hanging, portraits of
Women and men, carefully kept . . .
This is a beautiful statue, long lost, dark buried,
But never destroyed-now found by me,
And restored to the light; . . .
For all those have I in a round house hanging-such pictures
Have I-and they are but little,
For wherever I have been, has afforded me superb pictures,
And whatever I have heard has given me perfect pictures,
And every hour of the day and night has given with me
Copious pictures,
And every rod of land or sea affords me,
As long as I live, inimitable pictures.*



Name _____ School _____

BOLD, CAUTIOUS, TRUE: Walt Whitman and American Art of the Civil War Era

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

LANGUAGE ARTS-RELATED:

Allegory - When the literal content of a work stands for abstract ideas, suggesting a symbolic meaning.

Poetics - Though the word poetics has a different meaning when referring to the structure of poetry, the curator of this exhibition describes his use of the word poetics in this way:

When I think of poetics, I look to the information I can glean from images, poems, and ideas that go beyond subject matter. It can be something like a mood or feeling or any kind of sensibility. A portrait of a man is a portrait of a man. The poetics may come from the weariness of his expression or the sadness in his eyes. A landscape may represent a specific stretch of Westchester County, but is that all it is. What if we see it in the mist, or at sunrise, or at sunset, or with a comet streaking across the sky? How does that alter what we are seeing? How does what we are seeing make us feel?

In BCT, we looked at the large poetics that come out of the war experience itself (House Divided, Service, Endings and Beginnings) and looked for ways in which those overarching, moving, and inspiring themes were captured in works of art.

We used poetics to get at why the pictures in BCT reflect the age in which they were made.

TYPES OF ART REPRESENTED IN EXHIBITION:

Genre painting - The depiction of subjects and scenes from everyday life, ordinary folk and common activities.

Hudson River School of painting - A group of American landscape painters of the mid-nineteenth century, whose chief subject matter was the scenery of the Hudson River valley and the Catskill Mountains. It was strongly nationalistic both in its proud celebration of the natural beauty of the American landscape and in the desire of its artists to become independent of European schools of painting.

Landscape - A work of art which depicts scenery such as mountains, valleys, trees, rivers, forests, and sky.

Lithograph - A type of print made by drawing with a greasy material onto a flat (usually limestone) surface. After being dampened with water, the stone is rolled with lithographic ink that adheres only to the greasy drawing, and is repelled by the damp areas. The stone is printed by running it through a lithography press with the paper laid on top. When printed, these images can look like charcoal or pencil drawing, or ink washes.

Luminism - The American landscape painting style of the 1850s-1870s, characterized by effects of light in landscapes, poetic atmosphere, often sublime, through the use of aerial perspective, and a hiding of visible brushstrokes. Leading American luminists included John F. Kensett (1816-1872), Martin J. Heade (1819-1904), Jasper Francis Cropsey (1823-1900), and Frederick E. Church (1826-1900).

Portrait - A work of art that represents a specific person, a group of people, or an animal. Portraits usually show what a person looks like as well as revealing something about the subject's personality.

Wood Engraving - A print that it is made by cutting (engraving) a design into a block of wood. It is the uncut surface that takes the ink and prints. Relief prints are characterized by bold dark-light contrasts.

ELEMENTS OF ART:

Composition - The plan, placement or arrangement of the elements of art in a work. The design of a composition should either be pleasing or it should be in some other way expressive.

Perspective - The technique artists use to project an illusion of the three-dimensional world onto a two-dimensional surface. Perspective helps to create a sense of depth – of receding space. Techniques used to achieve perspective are: controlling variation between sizes of objects, overlapping some of them, and placing those that are on the depicted ground as lower when nearer and higher when deeper.

HISTORICAL TERMS:

Abolitionism - A movement to end the slave trade and emancipate slaves in Western Europe and the Americas.

Abolitionist - Someone who wishes to abolish or get rid of slavery.

Confederacy - Also called the South or the Confederate States of America, the Confederacy incorporated the states that seceded from the United States of America to form their own nation. Confederate states were: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.

Contrabands - Escaped slaves who fled to the Union lines for protection.

Emancipation - Freedom from slavery. For a historical reference, see Emancipation Proclamation.

Liberia - is a country on the west coast of Africa. Founded as a colony in 1821-22, it was created as a place for slaves freed in the United States to emigrate to in Africa. Slaves freed from slave ships also were sent there instead of being repatriated to their countries of origin. These freed slaves formed an elite group in Liberian society, and, in 1847, they founded the Republic of Liberia, establishing a government modeled on that of the United States,

Mason-Dixon Line - A boundary surveyed in the 1760s that ran between Pennsylvania to the North and Delaware, Maryland and (West) Virginia to the South. It became a symbolic division between free states and slave states.

Reconstruction - A term used to describe the time in American history directly after the Civil War during which the South was “reconstructed” by the North after its loss in the war.

Secession - (pronounced *si-sesh-uh n*) Withdrawal from the Federal government of the United States. Southern states, feeling persecuted by the North, seceded by voting to separate from the Union. Southerners felt this was perfectly legal but Unionists saw it as rebellion.

Slavery - A state of bondage in which African Americans (and some Native Americans) were owned by other people, usually white, and forced to labor on their behalf.

Union - Also called the North or the United States, the Union was the portion of the country that remained loyal to the Federal government during the Civil War. Union states were: Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Wisconsin. West Virginia became a Northern state in 1863 and California and Oregon were also officially Northern but they had little direct involvement in the War.

THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR (1881-1865)

(adapted from: fredericksburg.com)

A civil war is fought between members of the same nation. The two sides have different views on the future of the country. This is what happened in the United States in 1860. America was divided into the North and the South. They were not the same for many reasons, but the rising tension was starting to tear the nation apart. No American lives went untouched by the Civil War.

A DIVIDED NATION

Since the beginning of the colonies more than 200 years earlier, two regions of the country had developed in very different ways. America was a land of bustling cities and industry in the North with plantations and agriculture in the South. The Mason-Dixon line (the line separating Pennsylvania from Maryland) and the Ohio River acted as the border between the North and South.

The North was mainly an urban society with a large population. Most people lived in cities and had jobs. These states believed in a strong central government, banned slavery, and earned most of their money through business and industry. The Northern states were generally referred to as free states because their men and women were free and would work for a wage.

The South had a much smaller population, and the people lived in small villages and on farms. The South's economy, how people made their living, was based on farming or agriculture. Large farms, called plantations, used slave labor to harvest abundant amounts of crops to sell, such as tobacco, cotton, and rice. The Southern states were called slave states because most black people in those areas were slaves who worked on farms or plantations. Slaves were considered property who could be bought and sold to other landowners. They would live on plantations and would be provided with what they needed to sustain a living.

Both the Northern and Southern regions thought their way of life, or culture, should be extended across the entire country. Northerners wanted the new states created out of the Western territories to be free states, while the Southern states wanted the new states to be slave states. By 1860, after years of compromise on several issues, war could no longer be avoided. The time of peace and unity would be shattered by the American Civil War.

SLAVERY

Slavery had been in the colonies since 1619 when captured Africans first arrived in Jamestown to work the large tobacco fields in Virginia. Slavery soon became a necessity in the Southern states as crops became extremely valuable and small farms grew into large plantations.

The writers of the Constitution did not approve of slavery, but knew it was necessary to the South's economy. So they decided to halt the slave trade in 1808, but leave the slavery issue up to the states. The idea of slavery was tolerated until Americans began to move westward, and by 1860 had claimed territory all the way to the Pacific Ocean. New territories were added, new states were formed, and the issue of slavery and states' rights came up again and again.

As America grew its divisions became deeper, its differences became more evident, and the time for compromise had come to an end. Slavery was dividing the nation.

More than 3.5 million African-Americans lived in the United States in the mid-1800s. Of those, 500,000 were free, with half living in the North and half in the South. In the North, most African-Americans were laborers, craftspeople, household servants, or had started their own businesses. Though they were free, they still faced discrimination, or unfair treatment, from whites in the North. The remainder of the African-Americans were slaves, mostly found in the South, with almost no chance to break away from the bonds of field labor.

ABOLITION

Abolition was the idea that slavery should be ended or abolished. Abolitionists felt that slavery was cruel and inhumane and needed to be done away with immediately because it was morally wrong.

Abolitionists felt slavery went against their values of equality and liberty, as written in the Declaration of Independence and Constitution. They demanded the immediate freeing of the slaves.

ELECTION OF 1860 AND SECESSION

In 1860 **Abraham Lincoln** was elected President of the United States on a platform pledging to keep slavery out of the territories. The election was the last straw for the pro-slavery states in the South.

Within weeks of the election, seven southern slave states, South Carolina, Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, Florida, Louisiana, and Texas, seceded, or left, the Union. Together they formed the **Confederate States of America** and elected **Jefferson Davis** as their President. Led by Jefferson Davis, they fought against the United States (the Union) which was loosely referred to as "the North." (**See map**)

The event that triggered war came at Fort Sumter in Charleston Bay on April 12, 1861. Claiming this United States fort as their own, the Confederate army opened fire on the federal garrison and forced it to lower the American flag in surrender. Lincoln called out the militia to suppress this "insurrection." Four more slave states, Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Arkansas seceded and joined the Confederacy.

In September 1862, Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation made ending slavery in the South a war goal.

The Civil War lasted for four years, devastated the country (especially the South), caused the death of more than 600,000 soldiers, and changed America forever. Its legacy includes ending slavery in the United States, restoring the Union, and strengthening the role of the federal government. But now that the war was over, there was peace, and all Americans would set to the task of rebuilding the shattered nation. There was a strong desire for healing and forgiveness, but it would be a long time of turmoil and transition as slavery was abolished and a new America was born.



HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL TIMELINE OF THE CIVIL WAR

JUNE 16

Abraham Lincoln delivers “A House Divided” campaign speech in Springfield, Illinois.



GEORGE P.A. HEALEY (1813-1894)
Abraham Lincoln, 1860.
Oil on canvas, 30 3/8 x 25 3/8 inches.
Collection of the Corcoran Gallery of Art,
Washington, D.C., Museum Purchase, Gallery Fund

APRIL 17

Virginia secedes from the Union. State offers Richmond as Confederate capital.



EASTMAN JOHNSON (1824-1906), *A Ride for Liberty—The Fugitive Slaves, March 2, 1862*, 1862.
Oil on board, 21 1/2 x 26 inches.
Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, The Paul Mellon Collection.

DECEMBER 18

The Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution is passed, abolishing slavery.

LATE FEBRUARY-MID MARCH

Eastman Johnson accompanies Gen. George B. McClellan’s army as civilian observer. Witnesses a scene that leads to painting *A Ride for Liberty—The Fugitive Slaves*.

APRIL 9

Grant accepts Lee’s surrender in home of Wilmer McLean at Appomattox Court House, Virginia. Lincoln returns to Washington.

NOVEMBER 6

Lincoln wins presidential election with less than 40% of popular vote. His name does not appear on ballot in ten Southern states.

NOVEMBER 19

Lincoln delivers Gettysburg Address.

1855

1856

1858

1860

1861

1862

1863

1864

1865

MAY 15

Walt Whitman copyrights first edition of *Leaves of Grass*, a volume of 12 poems.



CHARLES HINE (1827-1871), *Walt Whitman*, 1860.
Oil on canvas, 27 x 22 inches
Brooklyn College Library Archives and Special Collections

APRIL 12-13

First shots of Civil War fired at Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor.

JANUARY 1

Emancipation Proclamation takes effect.

APRIL 14

Actor John Wilkes Booth shoots Lincoln as he watches a play at Ford’s Theater in Washington. President dies the next morning.

SPRING

Whitman publishes his third edition of *Leaves of Grass*.

DECEMBER 16

Whitman reads his brother’s name among the list of wounded soldiers and boards a train for Virginia the same day to find him.

NOVEMBER 8

Lincoln is reelected president in landslide victory over Gen. McClellan.

APRIL 30

New York Post reports that artists David Johnson, Sanford R. Gifford, and Worthington Whittredge have enlisted in New York State Militia. Jervis McEntee also enlists. Whittredge is actually denied a place in the militia. Thomas Satterwhite Noble, Kentucky painter living in St. Louis, joins Confederate cavalry.

By end of Civil War, more than 620,000 on both sides killed and over 470,000 wounded.

Nametag Activity Sheet - *BOLD, CAUTIOUS, TRUE*

On your visit to the Katonah Museum of Art you will see works of art by important American artists of the 19th century.
Use the frames below to create nametags to wear on your visit to this exhibition.

