

## INTERVIEWING MONUMENTS

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This lesson asks students to think about what it means to commemorate and remember the past with memorials. Inspired by the Antietam National Battlefield's "Interview a Monument" lesson plan, this activity can be applied to many different settings. This lesson will likely take one to two class sessions.

## STANDARDS

- United States History National Standards: Era 5, Civil War and Reconstruction (1850 – 1877); Standards 2 and 3 (depending on the student choice of statue)
- Common Core State Standards: English Language Arts, grade 8: Writing, 9; Speaking and Listening 1, 2, 4; Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies 2

**Note to teachers:** If you are planning to visit Antietam National Battlefield, look at the Teaching Materials available on the park's website. There are many lesson plans, primary source materials and activities to choose from. If you are not studying the Civil War, use this lesson plan as an exercise in creative writing and close looking. Additionally, check the **Content Resources** for links to films, background information and historical context. Please note that there are two worksheets from which to choose.

## PROCEDURE

1. Define the term monument. What does it mean to memorialize something or someone with a monument? At Antietam National Battlefield, for example, a concerted effort was made to remember specific groups of soldiers through the construction of monuments. Some people say there are two stories at Antietam: the story of the battle itself and the story of how that battle has been remembered and memorialized.
2. Explore some of the information and images in the **Content Resources**. After the Civil War, how did people honor veterans and the victims of war, publicly? Who is “Old Simon”? Ask students to consider the location, size, and inscription (“not for themselves but for their country”) as well as the design (pose) of this statue. Do these factors convey a meaning or a feeling? In what way?
3. Explain that students will “interview” a monument (a local statue, memorial, or cemetery). Note: you will need to identify monument(s) or statue(s) in advance. Students can visit in person or, if this is not possible, they can also work with images.
4. Individually, students complete the Interview worksheet. There are two versions of this worksheet, one for in-person and one for virtual interviews. Leave time for sketching.
5. Have students share their completed worksheets. Did any other questions arise? What kinds of modern statues or memorials exist? Are there any in your hometown?

## EXTENSIONS

Consider using this exercise when you take a field trip to a site in the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area, such as Antietam National Battlefield. If possible, ask students to add to the information captured in the worksheet with images, photos, notes, and even social media posts.

## CONTENT RESOURCES

- Images of [veterans and memorials at Antietam](#)
- Background information related to [remembrance and memorialization](#)
- Video about [Antietam National Cemetery](#)
- Antietam National Battlefield's [“Interview a Monument” lesson plan](#)
- Clip from *Maryland’s Heart of the Civil War* film: [44:35 - 45:40](#)
- Text from *A Collection of Commentaries* flipbook: [chapter 12, pages 290 - 293](#)
- Video clip from flipbook about [creation of Antietam National Cemetery](#)
- Video clip from flipbook about [funding Civil War monuments and cemeteries](#)

### **Additional information in the flipbook regarding other sites of memorialization:**

- Video clip from flipbook about [Maryland’s Union & Confederate Monument at Antietam](#)
- Video clip about [Civil War burial grounds](#)
- Video clip about [missing soldiers](#)
- Video clip about [Confederate Soldiers Cemetery at Rose Hill](#)

- Video clip about War Correspondents Memorial
- Video clip about Reno Monument at Fox's Gap

## INTERVIEW A MONUMENT IN PERSON

Use this worksheet and set of interview questions to start looking closely at a statue, monument or gravestone (the worksheet uses the term “monument,” but it can be adapted). Be sure to allow time for additional sketching or take a photo of your statue in case you want to present it or share with classmates. *\*Several questions here are taken from the Antietam National Battlefield "Interview a Monument" lesson.*

1. What year was this monument built? Does anything surprise you about the date of its construction?
2. What kind of environment or habitat surrounds your monument? Why do you think your monument was placed in this particular location?
3. From what you see in the photograph or image of the monument, can you estimate its size? Would you be able to fit your arms around it? If it seems too big for one person, how many people would it take to make a circle around your monument? Do you think there is a reason the monument is the size it is?
4. Zoom into the image as much as you can. What do you notice? For example:
  - Is there any evidence that the weather has affected your monument? What about vandalism? Time?
  - Can you tell what material your monument is made of? (i.e. stone, metal) What do you see that makes you say that?

5. Based on information available, who or what do you think monument honors? Why do you think this may have been created, and by whom? For what purpose?
6. What do you think your monument represents, today?
7. How does the monument make you feel? Why?
8. Take a moment to sketch or draw your monument. What visual aspects stand out? Does anything in particular strike you?
9. If you are looking at your monument online, try doing a Google image search to see what other images you can see of your monument. Does examining these additional images make you change your answers to any of the above questions?

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