

TEACHING WITH FILM

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This lesson asks students to watch the Emmy-award winning film, *Maryland's Heart of the Civil War*, and then reflect on the film's main points as a springboard for deeper exploration. This lesson may take two to three sessions.

STANDARDS

- United States History National Standards: Era 5, Civil War and Reconstruction (1850 – 1877); Standard 2
- Common Core State Standards: English Language Arts, grade 8: Reading Informational text 7; Writing 7; Speaking and Listening 1, 2, 4

Note to teachers: If you are studying the Civil War, take advantage of this premier film as a complement to your curricula—an introduction, a “deep dive,” or a wrap up experience. If you are not studying the Civil War, consider this film as secondary, informational text for students to analyze. Take advantage of this opportunity to build media literacy and an understanding of documentary films.

PROCEDURE

1. *Maryland's Heart of the Civil War* is an hour-long documentary film based on the true stories of people and places in one specific area of Maryland during the Civil War. Students may watch the Maryland Public Television

- film in class or at home on their own. Encourage them to take notes on points in the film when they have questions.
2. After students have seen the film, pair up and use the discussion guide. As they engage in discussion, students make note of evidence in the film that supports their discussion points.
 3. As a whole class, share reflections and answers from discussion guide. Promote deeper engagement with open-ended questions. Record student findings in three different columns: What do we know? What do we want to know? How can we find out more?
 4. Have students choose one of the points in the “What do we know” or “What do we want to know” columns to guide a research project (i.e. the story of one incident, or one site in the film). Use crossroadsofwar.org and the [film’s companion flipbook](#) as resources.
 5. After the students have researched topics more fully, they should choose a method for sharing (report, exhibition poster, blog, five minute film/interview/dramatic reenactment) and present their research to the whole group, engaging in questions and feedback.

EXTENSIONS

Use the film or [specific clips](#) as a tool for students to prepare to visit one of the sites in the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area.

CONTENT RESOURCES

- [Maryland’s Heart of the Civil War film](#)
- [A Collection of Commentaries companion flipbook](#)
- [Crossroads of War website](#)

- [Building media literacy](#)
- [Understanding documentary films](#)

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Take the time to carefully watch *Maryland's Heart of the Civil War* documentary film and use the following questions in your small group to guide your discussion.

1. What is the main message of this film? What evidence in the film supports your opinion about what the main message is (i.e., moments in narration, topics covered, quotes, photographs)?
2. What was the most emotionally moving moment or story in the film? Why?
3. Was anything surprising to you in the film? Describe a moment when you learned something totally new.
4. This film explores the ways Marylanders were affected by the Civil War. What are some of the ways war impacted the people who lived in this region? What about in your community?
5. What was the long-term effect of the Civil War on this region of Maryland, according to the film?
6. Which topics, places, or people in the film inspired you to explore more? What questions did you have after watching the film?

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