

Civil War Hospitals

SUBJECT

American Studies

Unit: Civil War

Lesson: Civil War Hospitals

TEACHER

NMCWM

GRADE

04

DATE

Drafted: 4-6-2020

OVERVIEW

Before the Civil War, hospitals were a last resort for someone who was sick. People thought of them as places of sickness and death. The Civil War changed that. Hospitals truly became places of healing where people went to get better, which is how we still think of them today. America's deadliest conflict demanded a much more elaborate hospital system than what existed prior to the start of the war. Tens of thousands of wounded and sick soldiers needed to be cared for, transported, and have beds to sleep in. Lots of innovative thinking was needed to get there.

Brand new permanent hospital structures were built in cities around the country, temporary field hospitals were established in barns near battlefields and trains and ships were converted to temporary hospitals to transport patients home from the front lines. At the start of the Civil War there were only 40 military hospital beds. By the end, there were over 300,000, and the United States had one of the most well-developed hospital system in the world.

One of the most important innovators behind the development of Civil War hospitals was Union surgeon Jonathan Letterman. His "Letterman Plan" ensured that wounded soldiers would be cared for from the moment they were injured all the way through long term recovery. If a soldier was wounded, they would be treated first just behind the front lines at a field dressing station. Once all bleeding was stopped, the soldier would be sent via ambulance to a field hospital set up a bit further behind the lines where major surgery took place if needed. Once the soldier was well enough to be moved, they would be [sent back](#) to [larger general hospitals](#) located in major cities for long term recovery.

This activity is designed to allow students to examine, identify, and reflect on the key components of Civil War medical care.

PHASES**4TH GRADE**

PHASES

4TH GRADE

<p>CURRICULAR STANDARDS</p>	<p>4th Grade Standard 5.0</p>
<p>OBJECTIVE(S)</p>	<p>Students will examine specific ideas, beliefs, and themes; organize patterns and events; and analyze how individuals and societies have changed over time in Maryland, the United States, and around the world.</p>
<p>INFORMATION REQUIRED</p>	<p>Information Required:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jonathan Letterman 2. Letterman Plan 3. Field Hospitals 4. General Hospitals
<p>ACTIVITY</p>	<p>Engage: Read the selection of Louisa May Alcott’s 1863 book <i>Hospital Sketches</i> in Appendix A. Based on what you read, what do you imagine it was like to be a patient or worker at a Civil War hospital?</p> <p>Explore: Civil War hospitals came in all shapes and sizes from barns established as temporary field hospitals, to churches, to state of the art facilities known as general hospitals built to house patients for long term care, and even trains and boats. Some were close to the front, and others were far behind the lines. There were very specific reasons each different type of hospital was chosen. The unprecedented circumstances of the Civil War demanded turning dozens of different places into hospitals that were not intended for that purpose, as well as safely moving injured soldiers to those designated places.</p> <p>Read about the plan developed by Union surgeon Jonathan Letterman. It ensured there would be care for wounded soldiers from the moment they were injured through long term recovery and utilized each type of hospital along the way.</p> <p>Read about a modern military field hospital in Appendix B.</p>

PHASES

4TH GRADE

	<p>Explain: Complete the Venn Diagram in Appendix C by comparing Civil War hospitals (Appendix A and other material in Explore) with modern military hospitals (Appendix B).</p> <p>Extend: Based on your Venn Diagram, write a paragraph comparing and contrasting Civil War hospitals with those of today. Based off your knowledge, add a short paragraph about what would be important in both modern and Civil War hospitals if you were a patient or a doctor.</p>
EVALUATION/ CLOSING	<p>Evaluate: What similarities stood out to you between Civil War hospitals? What differences stood out the most? Why?</p>

REQUIREMENTS

- Venn Diagram
- Short Answer
- Can be adapted based on student need

MATERIALS

- Appendix A
- Appendix B
- Venn Diagram Worksheet
- Linked articles and images (can be directly included in lesson plan if needed)

NOTES

This lesson can be done digitally in Microsoft Word or Google Docs. Students can use this same lesson to answer manually. This can be modified so that students can use creative writing techniques or answer and meet certain requirements.

Appendix A:

From Alcott's *Hospital Sketches*:

Now you will begin to see hospital life in earnest, for you won't probably find time to sit down all day, and may think yourself fortunate if you get to bed by midnight...

My three days' experiences had begun with a death, and, owing to the defalcation of another nurse, a somewhat abrupt plunge into the superintendence of a ward containing forty beds, where I spent my shining hours washing faces, serving rations, giving medicine, and sitting in a very hard chair, with pneumonia on one side, diphtheria on the other, five typhoids on the opposite, and a dozen dilapidated patriots, hopping, lying, and lounging about, all staring more or less at the new "nuss," who suffered untold agonies, but concealed them under as matronly an aspect as a spinster could assume, and blundered through her trying labors with a Spartan firmness, which I hope they appreciated, but am afraid they didn't...

The first thing I met was a regiment of the vilest odors that ever assaulted the human nose, and took it by storm...

There they were! "our brave boys," as the papers justly call them, for cowards could hardly have been so riddled with shot and shell, so torn and shattered, nor have borne suffering for which we have no name, with an uncomplaining fortitude, which made one glad to cherish each as a brother. In they came, some on stretchers, some in men's arms, some feebly staggering along propped on rude crutches, and one lay stark and still with covered face, as a comrade gave his name to be recorded before they carried him away to the dead house. All was hurry and confusion; the hall was full of these wrecks of humanity, for the most exhausted could not reach a bed till duly ticketed and registered; the walls were lined with rows of such as could sit, the floor covered with the more disabled, the steps and doorways filled with helpers and lookers on; the sound of many feet and voices made that usually quiet hour as noisy as noon; and, in the midst of it all, the matron's motherly face brought more comfort to many a poor soul, than the cordial draughts she administered, or the cheery words that welcomed all, making of the hospital a home.

The sight of several stretchers, each with its legless, armless, or desperately wounded occupant, entering my ward, admonished me that I was there to work, not to wonder or weep; so I corked up my feelings, and returned to the path of duty, which was rather "a hard road to travel" just then. The house had been a hotel before hospitals were needed, and many of the doors still bore their old names.

Appendix B:

From an article from StarsAndStripes.com written November 2, 2010:

KANDAHAR AIR FIELD, Afghanistan — The U.S. soldier arrived at NATO's Role 3 hospital here in dire shape. A homemade Taliban bomb had torn off both legs and an arm, and he had lost a tremendous amount of blood.

But he survived, and within 24 hours, was on his way through the military health-care pipeline back to the United States, thanks to the care he received at this state-of-the-art hospital.

Despite increasingly severe battlefield injuries, 98 percent of all patients who make it to NATO's Role 3 at Kandahar Air Field survive, military officials say.

"There's essentially nothing that can come in here that we can't handle," said U.S. Navy Dr. (Capt.) Michael McCarten, commander of the Role 3 hospital.

Opened in May, the \$60 million hospital is built to withstand direct hits from rockets and other high explosives. It replaced a ramshackle structure made primarily of plywood and protected by sandbags and concrete blast walls. The U.S. Navy took over hospital operations from Canadian forces in August 2009.

Its trauma bay can handle several dozen severely injured patients at any given time. During one recent week, nearly 100 trauma patients were treated — an all-time high. Increasing their odds: multiple operating rooms, a dozen ICU beds, clinics for traumatic brain injury and physical therapy, and access to specialists in neurosurgery and orthopedics.

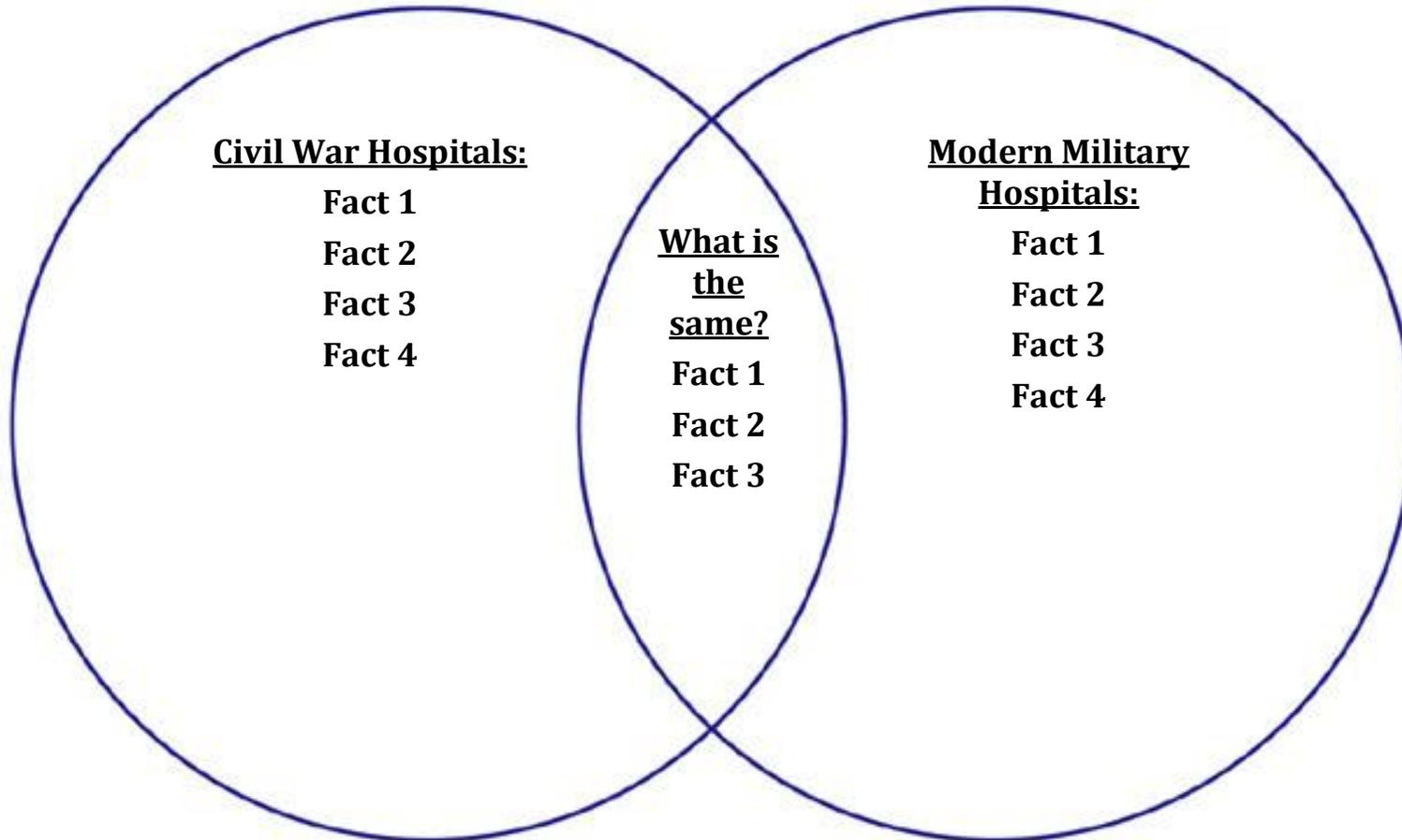
"If they come in with vital signs ... if they make it to the door alive, there's a 98 percent chance they're going to leave alive," McCarten said.

With U.S. and other NATO forces stepping up operations in southern Afghanistan since this summer, the Taliban have been fighting back with larger and more powerful bombs. The result: More soldiers and civilians losing limbs than at any other time since the war began in 2001.

According to hospital staff, at least 67 of the nearly 800 battlefield casualties treated at Kandahar Air Field's Role 3 from May through September — the traditional fighting season in Afghanistan — had lost at least one limb. Of the 432 battle casualties treated during the same period last year, only 28 suffered amputations, officials said.

Directions: Fill in the Venn Diagram after reading the articles attached. Use evidence from the articles in your answers.

Civil War and Modern Military Hospitals



Additional Resources from the National Museum of Civil War Medicine:

- [Virtual Q&A about Field Hospitals](#) - Director of Interpretation Jake Wynn talks about Civil War field hospitals while taking questions from the audience in this virtual Q&A session
- [Virtual Walking Tour of Frederick's Civil War Hospitals](#) - This playlist of videos includes stops at all of Frederick's Civil War hospitals after the Battle of Antietam
- [Presentation on Naval Hospitals](#) - Learn about what it was like to receive medical care on board a ship
- [General Hospital at the University of Virginia](#) - Discover how a university was transformed into a hospital during the war
- [Series of Blog Posts on Nurse Clara Jones](#) - Clara Jones spent time in several different hospitals. Read about her experiences
- [Celebrating Thanksgiving in a Civil War Hospital](#) - Find out what it was like to spend a holiday in a Civil War hospital
- [Field Hospital at the Battle of Cedar Creek](#) - By closely examining one artifact, we can learn a great deal about one field hospital

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