

# Road to Recovery- Hospital Meals

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**SUBJECT**

American Studies

Unit: Civil War

Lesson: Civil War Hospital  
Meals

**TEACHER**

NMCWM

**GRADE**

04/08

**DATE**

Drafted: 5/4/2020

**TIME REQUIRED**

45/60 Minutes

**OVERVIEW**

Rations, the allotted food and supplies given during wartime and other crises, were important to the health and general wellbeing of the soldiers during the Civil War. The rations would have given soldiers a consistent source of food, despite their lack of holistic nutrition. For example, the rations were typically distributed without fresh vegetables. Non-perishables, such as flour, rice, dried fruit, and hardtack, were more conducive for travel and long-term use. Soldiers would also forage for food and provisions while on duty. Foraging was a way for soldiers to supplement their rations, which aided in providing a more varied diet and possibly more nutritious options.

Hospital meals and allotted rations were similar in the limited holistic nutrition provided by the food. Both rationed meals and hospital fare consisted heavily of bread, meat, and coffee. At hospitals, the proportions and types of food distributed were based on a soldier's level of illness or injury. Soldiers that were on the mend were given "full diets" consisting of heartier meals with meat and bread. In contrast, those that were considered in dire condition were given "low diets" which included bread and gruel. While the distribution of food at hospitals was more regulated based on these diets, there was still a general lack of nutrition in the provided meals. The absence of fresh fruit and vegetables, along with other nourishing provisions, was detrimental to the soldiers attempting to recover.

This activity is designed to allow students to explore the food and supplies distributed to Civil War soldiers being cared for at hospitals. In order to better understand Civil War nutrition and resources, the students will use this knowledge to compare and contrast the rations provided to enlisted soldiers and the food given at hospital sites.

PHASES	4 <sup>TH</sup> GRADE	SECONDARY
CURRICULAR STANDARDS	SS.400.50.03.c Analyze regional differences in the Civil War and its effects on people in Maryland.	SS.AS1.80.02 Compare and contrast the goals, resources, key figures, and strategies of the North and South.
OBJECTIVE (S)	Students will be able to identify and explain the types of food distributed in Civil War hospitals and the impact of the limited diet on the health of recovering soldiers.	Students will be able to identify and explain the types of food distributed in Civil War hospitals and the impact of the limited diet on the health of recovering soldiers. Students will also be able to use what they have learned to compare and contrast the rations of enlisted soldiers to the food provided in Civil War hospitals.
INFORMATION REQUIRED	Civil War rations Hospital diets Principles of a healthy diet	Civil War rations Hospital diets Principles of a healthy diet
ACTIVITY	<p><b>Engage:</b> Soldiers recovering from illnesses and injuries spent time in hospitals. What kinds of food do you think the soldiers ate while being cared for?</p> <p><b>Explore: Distribute readings from Appendix A.</b> Based on the readings, how nutritious do you think the soldiers' meals were? How do you think that impacted the soldiers' ability to recover?</p> <p><b>Explain: Distribute Venn Diagram from Appendix B.</b> Using the previous readings, fill out the diagram provided with at least three bullet points for each section. You could include types of food soldiers ate, amount of nutrition contained in the food, and/or</p>	<p><b>Engage:</b> Soldiers recovering from illnesses and injuries spent time in hospitals. What kinds of food do you think the soldiers ate while being cared for?</p> <p><b>Explore: Distribute readings from Appendix A.1.</b> Based on the readings, how nutritious do you think the soldiers' meals were? How do you think that impacted the soldiers' ability to recover? When compared to the rations, do the hospital meals appear more, less, or equal in nutrition?</p> <p><b>Explain: Distribute Venn Diagram from Appendix B.</b> Using the previous readings, fill out the diagram with three to five bullet points for each section. You could include types of food soldiers ate, amount of nutrition contained in</p>

PHASES	4 <sup>TH</sup> GRADE	SECONDARY
	<p>ways food was distributed.</p> <p><b>Elaborate:</b> Imagine you were a Civil War surgeon or nurse caring for soldiers at a hospital. Create a short journal entry describing what types of food you would supply for the soldiers under your care. Think about nutrition and proportions.</p>	<p>the food, and/or ways food was distributed.</p> <p><b>Elaborate:</b> Imagine you were a Civil War surgeon or nurse caring for soldiers at a hospital. Create a short journal entry describing what types of food you would supply for the soldiers under your care. Think about nutrition and proportions. Is there a type of food or meal the soldiers would benefit from eating? If so, what kind and why?</p>
EVALUATION/ CLOSING	When you feel sick, what kind of food do you eat to help recover? How does that compare to the food that soldiers ate in Civil War hospitals?	When you feel sick, what kind of food do you eat to help recover? How does that compare to the food that soldiers ate in Civil War hospitals?

**REQUIREMENTS**

- This can be adapted to students needs as necessary.

**MATERIALS**

- Worksheets attached

**NOTES**

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

## Appendix A- Explore (4<sup>th</sup> Grade)

### Reading: Ration Meals

“Active armies oftentimes went without vegetable issues for weeks or months. For practical purposes, the field ration of the Union army was pork, beans, hardtack [hardened bread], and coffee. Since difficulties of transportation and preserving made even potatoes a luxury, the Western armies, with their long communication lines, were forced to endure more frequent and longer periods on ‘iron rations.’ In both East and West, soldiers developed a yearning for vegetables which sometimes amount almost to mania. The lucky ones were those who garrisoned quiet spots, in undevastated country, where a well-supplied local market provided good food for all soldiers who cared to buy” (209). Adams, George Worthington. *Doctors in Blue: The Medical History of the Union Army in the Civil War*. OH: Morningside House, Inc., 1985.

### Reading: Hospital Meals

“Standard diets would be prepared for men suffering from various complaints or in different states of recovery... A common arrangement was ‘low diet,’ ‘half diet,’ and ‘full diet,’ to meet the respective needs of the very sick, the sick, and the convalescent [recovering] patient” (164). Adams, George Worthington. *Doctors in Blue: The Medical History of the Union Army in the Civil War*. OH: Morningside House, Inc., 1985. Typical menu was as follows:

Full Diet (Recovering Patient)	Half Diet (Sick Patient)	Low Diet (Very Sick Patient)
Breakfast: Coffee Cold meat Bread	Breakfast: Coffee Bread Butter	Breakfast: Coffee or tea Bread or toast Butter
Dinner: Pork and beans Bread pudding	Dinner: Mutton soup and meat Boiled potatoes Bread	Dinner: Farina gruel [wheat porridge] Bread
Supper: Tea with milk Bread and butter	Supper: Tea with milk Bread and butter	Supper: Tea or cocoa Bread or toast Butter

(Adams, 165)

## Appendix A.1- Explore (8<sup>th</sup> Grade)

### Readings: Ration Meals

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“The commonest and best way of supplementing the ration was foraging- in civilian language, ‘stealing.’ It might mean stripping a Southern family of all its foodstuffs, or it might involve only the surreptitious [secretive] milking of cows, carried on at considerable risk to the foragers...Moral and legal considerations aside, foraging was no cure-all for the Army’s vegetable deficiencies” (210). Adams, George Worthington. *Doctors in Blue*. OH: Morningside House, Inc., 1985.

### Reading: Hospital Meals

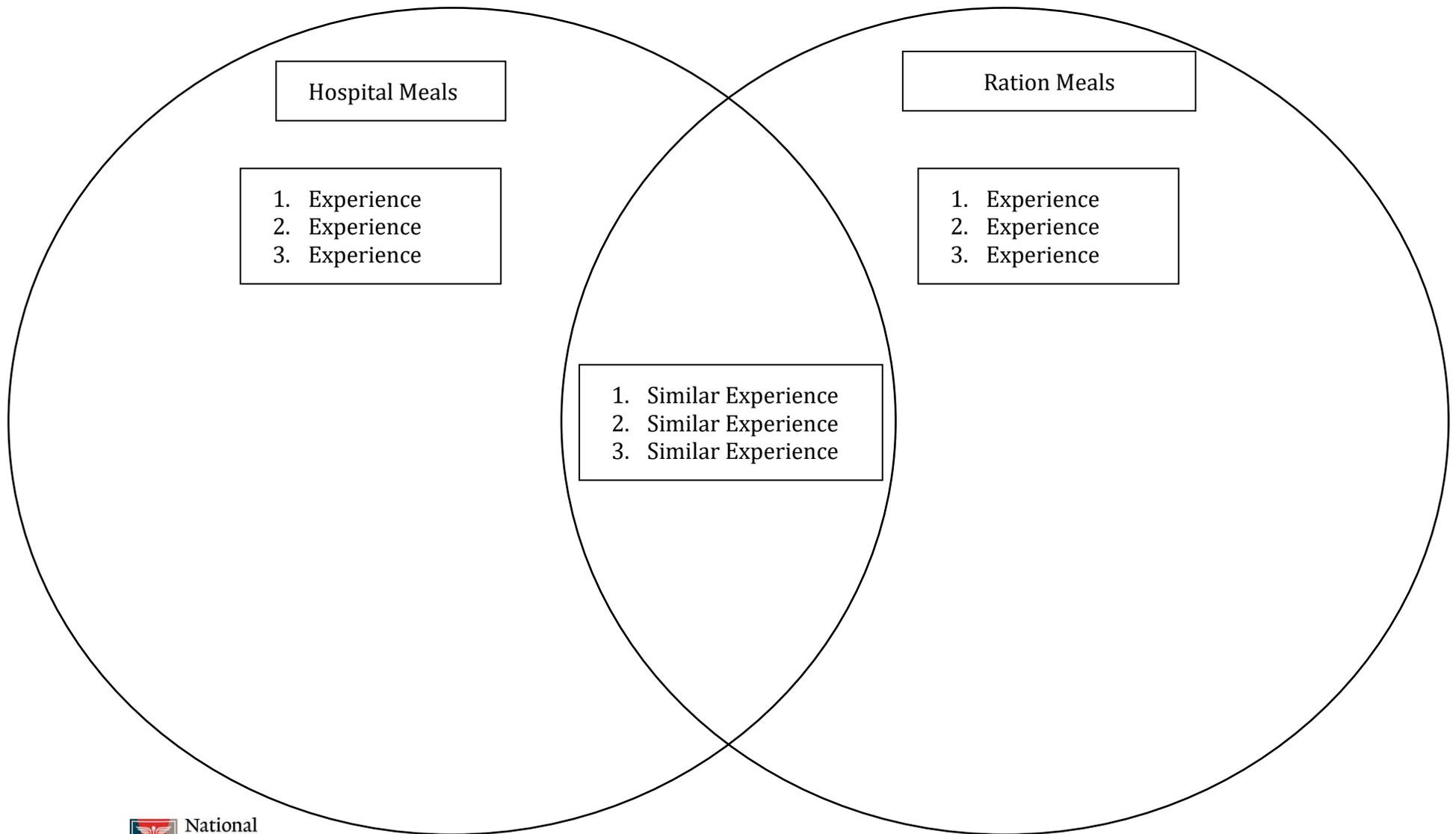
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(Adams, 165)

## Appendix B – Explain

Based on the previous activity, fill out the Venn Diagram with similarities and differences between the rations provided to on-duty soldiers and the food given to soldiers recovering at Civil War hospitals. For example: you could include types of food the soldiers ate, nutrition contained in the food, and/or ways food was distributed.



## Additional Resources from the National Museum of Civil War Medicine:

- [Eat Your \(Desiccated\) Vegetables](#)- A blog post containing information about Civil War rations.
- [The United States Sanitary and Christian Commissions and the Union War Effort](#)- A blog post containing information about the roles and responsibilities of the USSC and USCC, including efforts to provide food and supplies.
- [Coffee and the Civil War](#)- Director of Interpretation Jake Wynn and Membership and Development Coordinator Kyle Dalton talk about a soldier's favorite beverage – coffee.

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