

**The Impact of the Civil War  
Anne Stemmerman  
Westwood Middle School**

Suggested Grade Level: High School: American History

**“The Civil War: Prisoners of War and Families; their Viewpoints”**

**General Directions:**

The following question is based on the accompanying documents. Some of these documents have been edited for the purpose of this exercise. Study each document and answer the question(s) attached to each document. You will be using these documents and answers and your knowledge of the Civil War to write an essay pertaining to the topic.

**Assignment:**

You are required to compose a four to five paragraph essay based on the following question that incorporates facts from the documents in addition to your knowledge of the primary historical period (Civil War era).

**Question: The Civil War destroyed property, economies and lives both in the North as well as in the South. Based on the provided documents and your knowledge of the Civil War (1861-1865), discuss the impact of the Civil War from three points of view: Confederate and Union prisoners of war and from the non-combatants, the families.**

**Historical Overview:**

A prisoner of war is generally a soldier or sailor who is imprisoned by an enemy power during or immediately after an armed conflict. Andersonville (Camp Sumter), a Confederate prison camp outside of Macon, Georgia, and notorious for its deplorable conditions and extremely high death rate in its first six months of existence, was constructed in 1864 in order to alleviate overcrowding in other Southern prison camps located outside of Richmond, Virginia. However, its poor management and lack of supplies were direct causes of the deaths of thousands of captured Union soldiers during the Civil War. Nonetheless, Andersonville was not the only Southern prison camp and the North was not exempt of producing similar prison camps with names such as Point Lookout and Elmira Prison.

Other significant contributing causes of deaths in both Union and Confederate prison camps was the lack of medical knowledge and supplies, the overall physiological damage caused by the weaponry of the time, and the continuing presence of a multitude of diseases including typhoid, measles, and chicken pox.

Rachel Cormany was born in Canada and met her husband, Samuel, while attending Otterbein University in Ohio. They married and traveled abroad during the first two years of the war returning to Chambersburg, Pennsylvania in 1862. Samuel enlisted in the Union Army and Rachel, with their daughter, lodged with Mr. Jonathan Plough during the remaining war years. Both survived the war.

Sue Carter resided in Staunton, Virginia during the Civil War and maintained correspondence with family members in both the North and the South. After the Civil War, she married and moved to Marietta, Virginia.

## Document 1: Song lyrics written by a Civil War prisoner of war

### LYRICS

Starved in **Prison**.

George F. Root (1820-1895)

Had they fallen in the battle,  
With the old flag waving high,  
We should mourn, but not in anguish,  
For the soldier thus would die;  
But the dear boys starv'd in **prison**,  
Helpless, friendless and alone,  
While the haughty rebel leaders  
Heard unmov'd each dying groan.

Chorus:

Yes, they starved in pens, and **prisons**,  
Helpless, friendless and alone!  
And their woe can ne'er be spoken,  
Nor their agony be known.

Had they died in ward or sickroom,  
Nursed with but a soldier's care,  
We should grieve, but still be thankful  
That a human heart was there--  
But the dear boys starv'd in **prison**,  
Helpless, friendless and alone,  
While the heartless rebel leaders  
Heard unmov'd each dying groan.

Oh! the thought so sad comes o'er us,  
In this hour of joy and pride,  
That the hearts we loved so fondly  
Might be beating by our side;  
But the dear boys starv'd in **prison**,  
Helpless, friendless and alone,  
While the cruel rebel leaders  
Heard unmov'd each dying groan.

(Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Library of Congress: Collection: Sheet Music from the Alfred Whital Stern Collection of Lincolniana)

**Question 1:** According to the song, how did the prisoners die?

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**Question 2:** What is the "tone" of this song? What is the author feeling?

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**Document 2: The following excerpt is from a journal kept by Bartlett Yancey Malone, a Confederate soldier kept prisoner at Point Lookout, Maryland from November 1863 until February, 1865.**

B. Y. MALONE'S BOOK

FOR THE YEAR 1864

I spent the first day of January 64 at Point Lookout M. D. The morning was pleasant but toward evening the air changed and the night was very cool. It was so cool that five of our men froze to death before morning. We all suffered a great deal with coal and hunger too of our men was so hungry to day that they caught a Rat and cooked him and eat it. Their names was Sergt. N. W. Hester & I. C. Covington. The 6th was cool and cloudy and we had 9 men to die at the Hospital to day. Our beds at this place is composed of Sea feathers that is we gather the small stones from the Bay and lye on them

The 7th was very cool a small Snow fell after night The 10 was a nice day and I saw the man to day that makes Coffens at this place for the Rebels and he said that 12 men dies here every day that is averages 12

The Commander at this point is named Marsto

The 22th day of January 64 was a very pretty day And it was my birth day which made me 25 years of age I spent the day at Point Lookout. M. D. And I feasted on Crackers and Coffee The two last weeks of January was beautiful weather

The Month of June 1864

The first day of June was clear and hot

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The 4th We had Beef and Potato Soup for dinner the Yanks are not a going to give us no more Coffee and Sugar from this on

The 8th 6 hundred Prisoners arrived at this point from General Leas Army. The 10th we have Old Bacon to day for dinner for the first time since we have bin at P.t. Lookout.

The 11th 500 more prisoners arrived here.

The 18th of June which was three years from the time I volunteered was cloudy and cool. And we had Pork and Hominy for dinner There is some talk of moving the Prisoners from this point it is getting to be very sickly here 11 men died at the Hospital yesterday it is said that the water is not healthy

It is reported that General Grant and General Lea are fighting on the South of the James River

From the 20th of June until the last was very dry and dusty And we would hear good news every now and then from our Army Our Rations Still remain Small

(© This work is the property of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. It may be used freely by individuals for research, teaching and personal use as long as this statement of availability is included in the text. Call number E605 .M25 1919 (Davis Library, UNC-CH)

**Question 3:** According to this excerpt, what will Sgt. Malone remember most during his time as a prisoner at Point Lookout?

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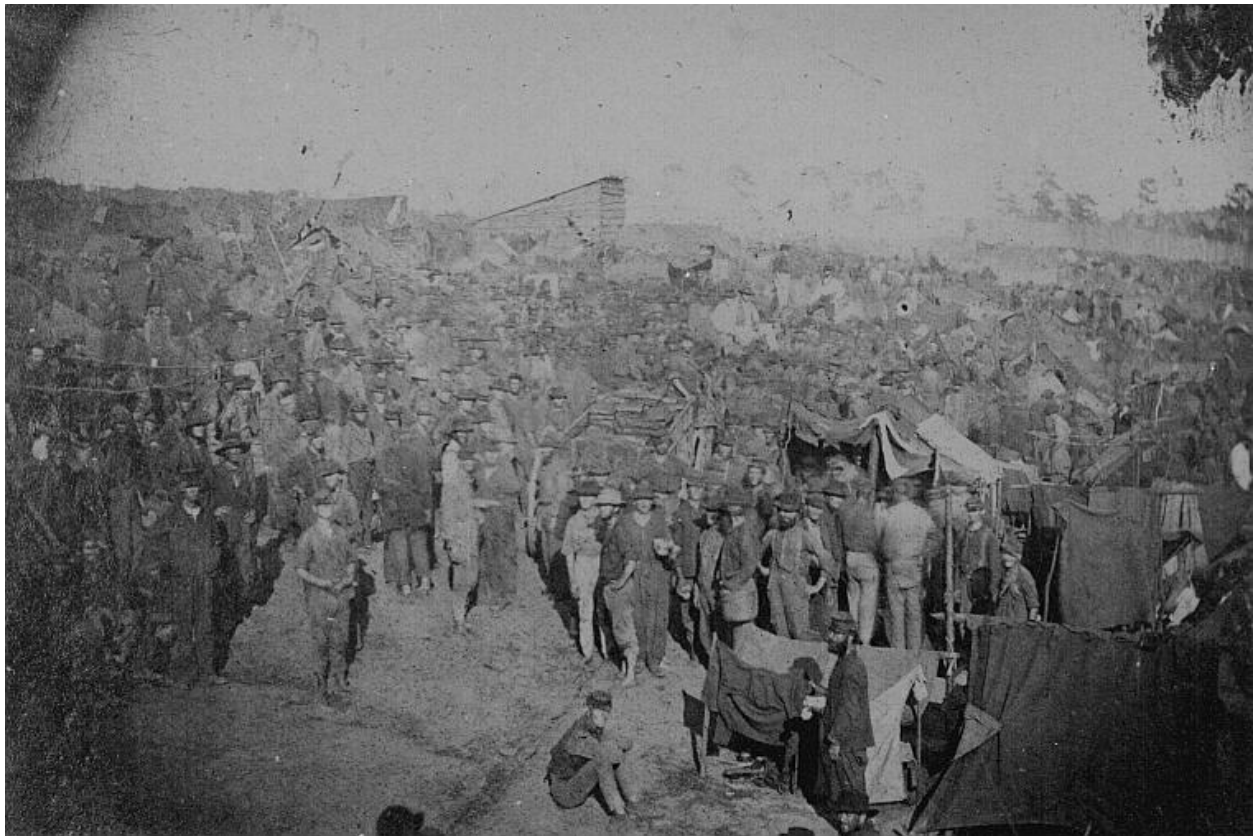
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**Question 4:** What seems to be the single most important continuous event in this excerpt?

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**Document 3: Issuing Rations at Andersonville Prison, Georgia—August 17, 1864**



([www.archives.gov/research/civil-war/photos/images](http://www.archives.gov/research/civil-war/photos/images))

**Question 5:** Based on this photograph, what were the conditions of the prison?

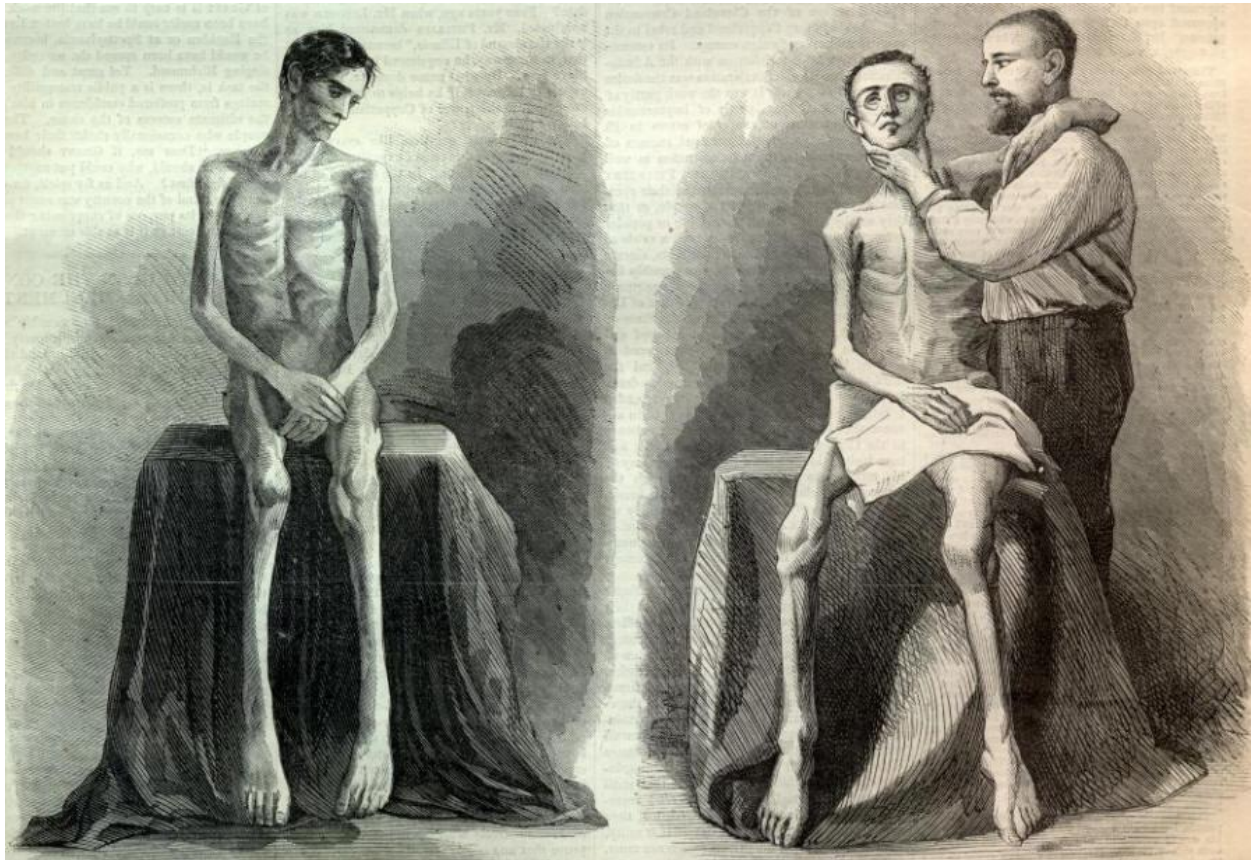
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**Document 4: Harper's Weekly**



***REBEL CRUELTY—OUR STARVED SOLDIERS.—FROM PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN AT UNITED STATES GENERAL HOSPITAL, ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND; [***

(Civil War Harper's Weekly, June 18, 1864)

**Question 6:** What experiences do you feel this soldier had while held prisoner during the Civil War?

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## Document 5: Harper's Weekly, January 18, 1862



**Question 7:** How does this picture of a baseball game at a prison camp differ from the other documents shown?

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## Document 6: Rachel Cormany Diary (North)

June 23, 1863

I packed my trunk last evening ready to start to Phil'dia not knowing whether I could get away or not-- went to bed at midnight & slept well till after six this morning. I expected to find the town full of rebels but not a rebel could I see--none had come--So after breakfast I took Cora on my arms & started out for a walk. met Mrs Clippinger at her door, asked her to go along for a walk, so we walked on until we saw where our men threw up breastworks but did not go near enough to examine them. Met quite a number of people (men & boys) going out as we came in<sup>o</sup>--we sat down by the roadside & rested a little while then started on. just as we got to the edge of town or near it--two men came riding in fast as their horses could go--one said "The d--d buggers fired on us. the other looked as pale as death his mouth wide open--his hat lost--he was too badly frightened to speak. They me a few of our Cavalry at the edge of town--they whirled & put off. I got a little frightened when those two men made so ugly & the cavalry men warned us to go into the houses, looking so fierce with their hands on the gun triggers ready to shoot--all at once I got so weak I could scarcely walk, but that was over in a few minutes & I could walk faster than before. The people were wonderfully frightened again, such a running. The streets were full--It was not long until the reb's really made their appearance--I do not think that they are Cav. but mounted infantry--they most of them have nothing but a musket to fight with. They rode in as leisurely as you please each one having his hand on the trigger though, to fire any minute--now I judge we are shut out again for awhile--I just wonder what they want this time. They are part of those that were here last week. P.M. just ate a piece &

fed my baby--both of us took a good nap after our walk. Evening--The Reb's have been cutting up high. Sawed down telegraph poles, destroyed the scotland bridge<sup>10</sup> again took possession of the warehouses & were dealing out flour by the barrel & mollasses by the bucket ful--They made people take them bread--meat--&c to eat--Some dumb fools carried them jellies & the like--Not a thing went from this place.<sup>11</sup> Three canno went through when they came--but just now they took them back. wonder what that means again. from 7 to 15 thousand infantry are expected on tonight. they are reported to be at Greencastle by a man just from there. Well whatever betides us the good Lord is able to protect us. And He will protect us. Old Plough wanted Annie to go with him to the country but she would not go & leave me here alone. That was mean in Plough. Annie told me herself--It shows what a great heart he has.

(Franklin County, Pennsylvania, Diary of Rachel Cormany (1863), Valley of the Shadow: June 23, 1863, Two Communities in the American Civil War, Virginia Center for Digital History, University of Virginia <http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/vshadow2/>)

**Question 8:** List some of the events noted in this diary entry

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**Question 9:** How does the author feel about the Rebel soldiers?

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## **DOCUMENT 7: Letter from Sue Carter to her cousin, Mary A. Heirs, (South)**

Staunton

Sabbath Eve, [*unclear*: 2] 'o'clock  
September, 15th 1861.

My darling Cousin:

It is with the most exquisite pleasure that I once more endeavor to pen you a few lines; although there is a probbability that you may never see these lines. But I have an opportunity to send a letter North by a gentleman who has been working here for some time, but is going home, & I sincerely hope he may be permitted to mail this letter to you.

Dear Mollie, there has been many sad changes since last I wrote you, my heart aches as I think of them, but I try to submit without murmuring, for I can not but feel that it is the Lord's will, that our once prosperous & happy nation must be divided; and where peace & happiness, once Shed their smile to gladen the hearts of the people, now civil war is devastating our land. It is very sad to think of, but you know, dear cousin, as well, perhaps better than I do, the state of our beloved country. But do not let us despair, we are in the hands of a merciful God, & he will surely work all things to-gether for our good, & his own glory. His ways are mysterious.

I suppose, dear Mollie, that you have not heard from Cousin Will since the war commenced. He is in Virginia, at Norfolk, a city about two hundred miles from here, I have not heard from him for some time, the last I heard of him, he was well. There has been no fighting where he is yet, & I hope there will be none. I wish I could see him, nothing would afford me more happiness. He has promised to come as soon as he can.

I know where Will is, and can hear from him some time; But where is cousin Tom? Oh! how unhappy I have been a bout him since I received his last letter, which was in May. If I could feel sure of his safety I would be so happy. I know where ever he is, & in what ever circumstance he may be placed, there is One who ever watches over him, when human friends are of no avail I have looked at his picture many, many times, since I heard from him, and read his letters again & again, while tears of anguish flowed from my eyes, as I thought of the probbability of never hearing from you all again. But I hope, dear Mary that there is a brighter day ahead, & the time may soon come when our correspondence will recommence not to be stopped by any national calamity. I wish you had sent me your picture I hope some day to see it, & not your shadow merely, but your own dear self. What a happy day that would be!

Tell dear Aunt not to be unhappy because Cousins Will & Tom are in opposite parties. Tell her, cousin Mollie, that I would try to console her but I know not how. I can only pray for her Her situation is one of peculiar Sadness, & I would that it were in my power to administer to her consolation, but I can not I am too weak & ignorant, I fear, to comfort her, but I pray the Lord my console her in her affliction. He is able & willing to comfort her. There has been some changes in our family since last I wrote. Sister was married the Fourth of July. She married Mr. Williams I beleive I wrote some thing about him to you or cousin Tom. He would say, "she did remarkably well." He is not very wealthy, but he is an honest & industrious man, esteemed by all. I know they would send you some message or perhaps write, if they had know that I intended to write to you, but I did not know it myself until nearly eleven o'clock to-night, & as their home is some distance from mine I could not go to see them. I will send their love to you (all) any how . Unfortunately mother is away from home to-night also. Give her love to Auntie & tell that she often talks

You wrote to me once a bout being a Christain . Do you still love Christ & his cause? Are you striving to please him? You have my prayers in your behalf.

Good bye dearest Mary, if- if I never hear from or see you while living, I hope to meet you with the redeemed & blessed above. Tears are blinding me, I am compelled to stop Remember me in your petitions, cousin.

I am, and ever shall be Your fond & loving cousin

*Sue.*

P.S.

Henry sends his love, and says that he is sorry that your picture did not come. Write to me if possible.

Good bye!

Monday Morn. 6 o'clock.

(Augusta County, Virginia, Letter, Sue Carter to Mary A. Heirs, September 15, 1861, Valley of the Shadow: Two Communities in the American Civil War, Virginia Center for Digital History, University of Virginia. <http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/vshadow2/>)

**Question 10:** The bulk of this letter is centered on family. What appears to be the overwhelming emotion experienced by this author?

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## Rubric:

### 406 Assessing Historical Knowledge

**Subjects:** Social studies # of scales 1

**Grade(s)** Not specified # **Scale length** 5

#### Holistic Scale

- 5 Offers accurate, comprehensive and complete analysis of the information and issues.  
Provides a variety of facts to explore major and minor issues.  
Extensively uses previous historical knowledge to provide an in-depth understanding of the problem and to relate it to past and future situations.
- 4 Concise, accurate analysis of the documents.  
Facts provided relate the major and minor issues involved.  
Recalls previous general historical knowledge to examine historical issues.
- 3 Relates only major facts to the basic issues with a fair degree of accuracy.  
Analyzes information to explain at least one issue with essential support.  
Uses general ideas from previous historical knowledge with a fair degree of accuracy.
- 2 Provides only basic facts with only some degree of accuracy.  
Refers to information to explain at least one issue or concept in general terms.  
Limited use of previous historical knowledge with only limited accuracy.  
Major reliance on the information provided from text.
- 1 Repeats one or two facts without complete accuracy.  
Deals only briefly and vaguely with concepts or issues.  
Indicates little or no previous historical knowledge.  
Relies heavily on the information provided