The Civil War Brought to Life: Civil War re-enactments and their use in the classroom

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The History of re-enactments

From spring to fall, in state and national parks the Civil War wages on. Even though the war ended a long time ago, Union and Confederate soldiers can be still be found in their traditional uniforms. These soldiers are re-enactors. Re-enactments are recreations of battles and the daily life of the soldiers. From its crude beginnings in the 1960’s, the Civil War re-enactments have become more and more authentic through research and an increase in an industry to create replicas. Re-enactments are not just limited to the Civil War even though that is what most people believe. These events take place all over the world and focus on time periods ranging from the early roman empires to the Second World War. When people think of re-enactments, many will think of the battles of the American Civil War being played out in local, State and National parks. Some people might think of the museums or historical villages that have workers dressed in period clothing. All of these are correct. Re-enactments are also known as Living History. It is a recreation of the past that allows the re-enactors to grow, viewers to learn and both parties to experience first-hand what the past has to offer. Though Living History and Re-enactments strive to be authentic, one must keep in mind that they are limited in their experience and that what the viewer sees is an interpretation of the times.

Re-enactments have opened up young people to history. The recent publishing of books like Confederates in the Attic have created a new found interest in the Civil War among today’s youth. This version of popular history, rather than academic history, has put “history back on the map”.¹ Scholarly works, though they excel in knowledge and information, lack in the ease of reading and accessibility to the general public. That is why recent works by the likes of Ken Burns and Tony Horwitz, neither of which are considered professional historians, have become

¹ "Why reenactors are important." America's Civil War 21, no. 1 (March 2008): 25.
so popular. There is so much competing for the attention of the next generation. Re-enacting can help capture their attention, even if re-enactors aren’t professional historians.²

With the popularity of re-enactment on the rise, Historians are being examined with compromised authority. Re-enactments are being appropriated as historiographical tools that further historical knowledge.³ Vanessa Agnew says in her article, “Introduction: What is Reenactment?” that there is a lot of other speakers in the realm of history that are compromising the authority of academic historians. Agnew claims that “historians must justify their interpretations, and history writing and teaching must meet the needs of the marketplace.”⁴ Re-enactments are helping to fill a void left by traditional historians that doesn’t allow for ease of reading.⁵ In other words, re-enacting is bringing history to life and making it more accessible to the general public that would not necessarily pick up a book written by a historian.

Re-enactments focus their attention on the daily life of a soldier. They look at what the soldiers wore or looked like and how they spent their day rather than the why of history.⁶ Re-enactors tend to shy away from why wars like the Civil War took place as they don’t look to make these re-enactments ideological. As re-enactments grow in size, the voice of the historical interpretations grows stronger. Re-enactors are gaining the authority, once reserved for historians, to speak on interpretations. Within the re-enactment community there is a hierarchy. Veteran re-enactors carry a greater weight in the authority of historical interpretation whereas newer re-enactors carry little to no weight in this conversation. The conversation of interpretation

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is all then tied back to authenticity. As stated previously, the levels of authenticity come with the amount of studying and knowledge that a re-enactor has acquired.

Historians are being challenged by re-enactors for the right to speak about historical events. With this being said, there are some historians who are also re-enactors. Stephen Gapps is a historian who also enjoys re-enacting historical events. Being that he has received an education in history, he has a compelling voice to critique both sides of the arguments. Gapps does state, in his article “Mobile Monuments,” that he does not like the “close enough” thought process that sometimes occurs in the re-enactment field. He does acknowledge the fact that he does not want to be “an authenticity fetishist.” Though Gapps does not like the “close enough” thought process he does say that authenticity can never be reached. Re-enactors will attempt to create an authentic scene while still possessing some of their modern day equipment. For instance, when the camps are open to the public, re-enactors will hide their cellphones, coolers and other modern day items from the public view to create the facade that the camp is completely authentic.

Authenticity, Gapps agrees, is something that re-enactors have to actively decide to what extent they wish to achieve. It is one of the most critical pieces of the re-enactment community. Re-enactors uniforms and tools, though recreated, are the equivalent to historian’s use of footnote. Re-enactors use these recreations to cite the evidence of their research. Where historians write papers and articles, re-enactors use authentic props and costumes to “craft a theater of history.”

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7 Vanessa Agnew, "Introduction,” 331.
8 Stephen Gapps, "Mobile monuments: A view of historical reenactment and authenticity from inside the costume cupboard of history,” Rethinking History 13, no. 3 (September 2009): 396.
9 Stephen Gapps, 396.
10 Stephen Gapps, 397.
11 Stephen Gapps, 398.
12 Stephen Gapps, 399.
Gapps also touches on the term “farb.” According to Gapps, the term “farb” has evolved. In the 1980’s, “farb” was used to describe someone who claimed to be a living historian but did not dress or act in a manner that would match the time period of the re-enactment. Now-a-days, it refers to someone who is relatively new to re-enacting and who is learning the art of re-enacting.¹³ Gapps also characterizes “hardcore” re-enactors as those who would go as far as possible to be authentic. This includes winter marches with sleeping outside in order to experience what the soldier would have experienced.¹⁴ Sometimes these re-enactors will push their own bodies to the physical limit. Most re-enactors put limits on how authentic they will be. When it comes to health and safety, many re-enactors refuse to push themselves past modern day health standards.¹⁵ In other words, they are not willing to push themselves to the point of severe injury or even death to achieve authenticity. As for hardcore re-enactors, this is not the case. There are groups of re-enactors that will attempt to maintain a certain weight that would match that of a soldier from that time period. This also includes rejecting the knowledge of personal hygiene that is in common practice today. Yet most re-enactors realize that they can never truly duplicate the situations that occurred during the time periods.¹⁶ The only way for re-enactments to be recreated in the most authentic way is to actually restart the war that is trying to be remembered.

Recalling the past through re-enactments has opened up the experiences to a wide array of people. The original re-enactments of the Civil War came about just years after its end. Some veterans would get out their old gear and meet up to stage encampments on the anniversaries of

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¹³ Stephen Gapps, 399-400.
¹⁴ Stephen Gapps, 400.
¹⁵ Stephen Gapps, 400.
¹⁶ Stephen Gapps, 401.
battles, according to Rory Turner in his article “Bloodless Battle.”

Re-enactment of the Civil War started around the 1950’s. When the 1960’s rolled around and the centennial of the Civil War came about, re-enactments started becoming a true activity. At the centennial, re-enactments occurred at major battle fields like Manassas, Sharpsburg and Gettysburg. According to Turner, living history is a “broad label for mimetic performance of past events in the contemporary world.”

Living history is a way for social history to be carried out. Along with re-enactments of battles comes the need for the gear to stage these performances in. The Sutlers are a group that appear at re-enactments to sell their goods or re-enactment gear. These Sutlers have made an industry by recreating authentic supplies. Foundries have begun making cannons for groups to purchase. These props are needed to create the feeling that the viewer is looking back in time at the actual event.

Each item a re-enactor uses has two different kinds of histories attached to it.

Figure 1 This picture is of modern day cookware that is similar to what would have been carried during the war. Items like these can be found at Sutlers shops.

18 Rory Turner, 123.
19 Rory Turner, 123.
20 Rory Turner, 124.
21 Rory Turner, 124.
22 Rory Turner, 125.
First is the history that would be expected, the history of how it was used during the actual war. The second history is the personal history of how the re-enactor has used it during the different re-enactments that they have participated in.\textsuperscript{23} These kinds of history are essential to understanding the purpose of each tool and the relationship of understanding history and living history.

Though re-enactments started as rough and highly inaccurate battle scenes, it has evolved into events that strive to be accurate. When it comes to uniforms, Turner points to the uniforms of the re-enactors as a way to measure authenticity. Union soldiers of the American Civil War have an easier time being authentic because they had a set uniform whereas the Rebel Confederates did not have a set uniform and little knowledge is known about what the proper uniform is. Many southern re-enactors use a sense of poetic license to create what the confederate armies might have worn throughout the war.\textsuperscript{24} Re-enactments lend themselves to learning through experiencing history rather than just hearing about history.\textsuperscript{25} Re-enactors come in all shapes and sizes. Some of the re-enactors are actual actors who portray certain generals, officers, political figures or spies while most re-enactors are amateurs who have a love for the war in which they re-enact. People of all different ages participate in these re-enactments. There is no political, class or cultural restraint on being a re-enactor. People from all different walks of life participate in re-enactments.\textsuperscript{26} Some people want to use re-enactments as a way to teach, others do it to fulfill personal satisfaction of getting in touch with the past.\textsuperscript{27} As far as demographic, re-enactors of the Civil War are predominately white as the Civil War means

\textsuperscript{23} Rory Turner, 127.
\textsuperscript{24} Rory Turner, 128.
\textsuperscript{25} Rory Turner, 126.
\textsuperscript{26} Rory Turner, 133.
\textsuperscript{27} Rory Turner, 128.
different things to the black and white population of the United States. Though there are a few black union re-enactors there is not a large population that participates in re-enactments.28 Rory Turner calls re-enactment a bloodless war saying:

They have created a bloodless war, a war within which they can have a good time and learn something about themselves. The pain, violence, and misery of war have been extracted, leaving camaraderie, exhilaration, and a certain beauty. This playful war becomes a place where reenactors can move away from their everyday life identities by becoming someone else for a brief period. This is a process of self-exploration and confirmation. What the Civil War was about—the issues it raised, the world it encapsulated, and the sense people have made of that world—form the themes of this self-examination.29

Re-enactors have many reasons, according to Rory Turner, for re-enacting. People get to learn about themselves as much as the history that they are portraying.

Re-enactments are great teaching tools. According to R. Lee Hadden, many people still “learn things ‘manually,’ by seeing a physical demonstration, or ‘reenactment’ of a special technique or skill.”30 Re-enactments are as old as human society because most plays are re-enactments.31 It is a teaching tool that helps people understand what happened by seeing the demonstrations. Re-enactments become more than a hobby for many of the re-enactors. It becomes a way of life. That is why it is not surprising that some re-enactors are buried in their uniforms.32 Re-enactments of the civil war became popular around the hundredth anniversary of the Civil War.33 With the rise of re-enactments has come the debate between the historians writing about the topics and the re-enactors that are portraying the events. Where historians focus on the big picture, re-enactors focus on the little details of the everyday life and materials of the

28 Rory Turner, 129.
29 Rory Turner, 134.
31 R. Lee Hadden, 1.
32 R. Lee Hadden, 2.
33 R. Lee Hadden, 3.
people that they wish to portray. Historians started to lose their monopoly on interpretations through different publications, like Ken Burn’s documentaries, that made history more available to the public. Though re-enactments aren’t always the most accurate, they help bring history to life. They are recreations of historical events that are interpretive and factually sound. They combine acting and historical interpretation to help teach the public about the time period in which they are portraying. Historians do have the upper hand as their works last for generations and re-enactors only last for as long as they are remembered by those who have witnessed the events. What the re-enactors have going for them is that what they do evokes a sense of emotion as well as plays into the audience’s sense. For instance, the audience will remember the smells of sulfur, the sound of the guns and the sights that they see. Thus, playing on emotions can better teach more so than reading written words alone. Re-enactments aren’t just events on the weekends; they have also been used in movies like Glory. Re-enactments are great teaching tools that can help reach the public in ways that written historical works are not always able to.

Re-enactments are great teaching tools. Some re-enactment groups have teamed up with schools as Laurie Weaver examined in her article “The Living Classroom.” Weaver looks at Eric Marshall, a re-enactor that has set up a camp at an elementary school to teach the students about the Civil War. The students for a weekend get to experience the life of a soldier in the 26th North Carolina. The 5th graders live the life of a soldier as they are outfitted with gear. The middle school shop class even gets to take part as they build wooden cut outs of rifles for the 5th

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34 R. Lee Hadden, 4.
35 R. Lee Hadden, 5.
36 R. Lee Hadden, 13.
37 R. Lee Hadden, 5.
38 R. Lee Hadden, 7.
39 R. Lee Hadden, 21.
40 R. Lee Hadden, 6.
41 Laurie Weaver, "The Living Classroom," Saturday Evening Post 285, no. 5 (September 2013): 45.
graders to carry. The 5th graders make their own hardtack to eat during this adventure. Marshall sees “…Reenacting as an extension of teaching…and fifth grade is the perfect age for this. They are old enough to understand the lesson, but still have enough imagination to make it work.” The students go through a mock battle in which they march toward an enemy. When they have been wounded, Marshall taps them on the shoulder to let them know to lie down. The big teaching moment comes when the “soldiers” make it to their enemies. Marshall has the students that have survived the push forward turn around and look at all the bodies that scattered the grounds. They see the hospital staff attempting to get to all of the wounded soldiers. It’s then when the students can truly appreciate the horrors of the Civil War. Marshall concludes by telling the students that this was the scene on both sides, and that “regardless of the politics…these were all Americans, and the tragedy is that what they saw as they left the battlefield was the same, North or South.” This is just one example of the teaching that re-enactors engage in with the future generations. When teaching situations like this occur, there is not as much of an emphasis on authenticity as there would be in an actual re-enactment.

Re-enactors play a wide variety of roles in society. For instance, re-enactors are sometimes used as movie extras. Movies such as Glory used re-enactors to serve as extras while others even played some bigger roles. Even the audience that attended the movie was made up primarily of re-enactors and Civil War enthusiasts. Not only are there movies made for the entertainment of people who love the Civil War, there are a constant stream of publications that

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42 Laurie Weaver, 45.
43 Laurie Weaver, 46.
44 Laurie Weaver, 46.
45 Laurie Weaver, 46.
46 Laurie Weaver, 47.
47 Laurie Weaver, 47.
are solely devoted to the Civil War. From books to magazines, the publications can seem endless. Several of the magazines that are aimed at re-enactors contain lists and calendars of events. Re-enacting events of all different kinds take place almost every weekend of the year.\footnote{Dennis Hall, 7.}

These weekends are family events in which spectators can visit the camps of the re-enactors and see what the soldiers experienced during the war. Crowds of spectators come to see the soldier’s life, the uniforms and gear, and just experience the past.\footnote{Dennis Hall, 8.}

As for the Re-enactors, the reasons for re-enacting often start through an interest in the Civil War. This interest can also be expressed in a desire to preserve the history. Some re-enactors want to learn about the past through reliving the experience.\footnote{Dennis Hall, 8.} The gear serves as a way to learn about the past but it also serves as a personal tie to the past. The re-enactors create an identity of their own which will tie them to the past. These identities are based heavy in the knowledge of the gear that has a history of how they were used in the Civil War and how the gear has been personally used by the re-enactor at events.\footnote{Dennis Hall, 10.} Re-enacting has a wide variety of publication and social media for Civil War buffs.

People choose to start re-enacting for two main reasons, to educate and to entertain. As Leigh Clemons claims, in Enacting History, these re-enactors are not trying to be characters but rather giving impressions of how the soldiers would have lived.\footnote{Leigh Clemons, "Present Enacting Past: The functions of Battle Reenacting in Historical Representation," Enacting History, ed. Scott Magelssen and Rhonda Justice-Malloy (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2011), 10.} The general theme Enacting History focuses on authenticity.\footnote{Brian J Mast, "Enacting History," Alabama Review 66, no. 1 (January 2013): 70.} The impressions that the re-enactors are trying for is as authentic of a representation as possible. For some re-enactors the need to teach is more
important than the need to perform. These re-enactors can be found communicating with the audience rather than being in character.\textsuperscript{55} Re-enactors that teach explain what is happening and why it is happening. For those who strive for authenticity, a barrier is built that prevents interactions with the audience. The re-enactors that perform realize that the audience will not understand their commitment for authenticity.\textsuperscript{56} As it goes, there is a need for balance in the re-enactment world. If a re-enactor focuses solely on teaching, they lose focus on authenticity. On the other side, if the re-enactor only focuses on being authentic, they lose the audience and the ability to teach.

Although there are always arguments about representations and how to interpret history, re-enactors are often judged based on the amount of available information.\textsuperscript{57} In the world of re-enactors, there are two types of people, farbs and hardcore. A farb is someone who hasn’t established a legitimate link to history, meaning that they haven’t done the appropriate research that would allow them to be authentic as possible. Leigh Clemons would consider a farb as an amateur that “conveys not a sense of inadequacy but a unique knowledge gained from self-study, accumulation of materials for impression…”\textsuperscript{58} A hard core re-enactor is someone who goes to great length to be as authentic as possible. This can include losing an extreme amount of weight to appear as a hunger-stricken soldier.\textsuperscript{59} The hardcore re-enactors go to great lengths, yet Leigh Clemons asks “how far is far enough where authenticity is concerned.”\textsuperscript{60} Some hardcore re-enactors have stopped participating in re-enactment battles “because they cannot experience the

\textsuperscript{55} Leigh Clemons, 14.  
\textsuperscript{56} Leigh Clemons, 14.  
\textsuperscript{57} Leigh Clemons, 11.  
\textsuperscript{58} Leigh Clemons, 12.  
\textsuperscript{59} Leigh Clemons, 11.  
\textsuperscript{60} Leigh Clemons, 11.
ultimate ‘period rush’: live gunfire.”61 Leigh Clemons says that it severs links to the past its trying to represent because information that hardcore re-enactors have learned is thus not shared and passed on to the re-enacting farbs that are trying to learn.62 Again, re-enactors have a lot to learn from each other and needs to balance the struggles for authenticity and teaching the audience.

While being authentic is very important to re-enactors, there are discussions on what it means to be authentic. Another way re-enactors describe being authentic is by calling something period, meaning that something is authentic to a certain time period.63 Yet being authentic or period can mean different things to people in the same group. This is what Stephanie Decker describes as bridging discourse.64 Re-enactors within a group or unit will disagree on what is period, what is important to when it comes to be authentic. Does it mean just dressing the part, or does the group need to talk like they would have in that time period? The group also has to decide which is more important to the group, being authentic or just having fun. When it comes down to it, everyone will have a different view.66 According to Decker, bridging discourse allows groups to maintain membership and a diverse group.67 Re-enactors have different points of views on what they wear or what they do. Bridging discourse allows authenticity to become an ever changing concept.68 Being period is based on research and knowledge of history. According to Decker, “being period means replicating objects and reenacting behaviors that

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61 Leigh Clemons, 11.
62 Leigh Clemons, 12.
64 Stephanie K. Decker, 274.
65 Stephanie K. Decker, 274.
66 Stephanie K. Decker, 275.
67 Stephanie K. Decker, 275.
68 Stephanie K. Decker, 278.
exists during the time period in question.”\textsuperscript{69} Re-enacting groups show their approval towards authenticity through praises and disapprovals. “Members praise others who put a lot of time and energy into re-creating authentic dress and behavior… members often criticize those who make poor attempts to be authentic or who do not seem to care about authenticity.”\textsuperscript{70} It is through this form of peer pressure that groups teach its new members the way that the group wants to be period. Bridging discourse allows the lines of authenticity to become blurred and for there to be a wide range of interpretations.

Re-enactments of the Civil War began around the centennial anniversary. In the early Sixties John F Kennedy attended a Civil War re-enactment and became a fan of them. When he inquired if there would be any more major re-enactments, he was told no. At that point Kennedy said that it was a shame. At that point many more re-enactments were scheduled.\textsuperscript{71} Though after his assassination the national parks did not want the re-enactments to happen on the battlefields because they had turned in to beer fests. Yet at the Bicentennial of the American Revolution, serious re-enactors came forward and redesigned the re-enactments to be more historical and less of a drinking party.\textsuperscript{72} Though there are still alcoholic drinks consumed during re-enactments, the re-enactments today focus more on the historical accuracy.

Tony Horwitz brought to life the Civil War with his book “Confederates in the Attic.” The book is about his travels through the South researching how the Civil War is still unfinished and how many of the problems of old are still being fought in different ways today. Re-enacting, Horwitz says, started out as “encampment” in 1913 when veterans met at a battlefield and

\textsuperscript{69} Stephanie K. Decker, 281.  
\textsuperscript{70} Stephanie K. Decker, 282.  
\textsuperscript{72} Jay Anderson, 143.
charged across the field. Though instead of weapons many of the veterans were carrying canes. When they met at the center of the field, they shook hands. This reunion, Horwitz says, was the beginning of re-enactments. He also introduces many re-enactors that he encounters and begins to travel with. Rob Hodge is one of the “hardcore” re-enactors who Horwitz meets and ends up going on a Civil Wargasm, a trip visiting many Civil War landmarks, with. Rob Hodge is a re-enactor that is part of the Southern Guard, a “hardcore” re-enactment group. The group performs marches and drills to keep “sharp during the long winter layoff.” During the re-enactments the group chooses to only eat what the soldiers would have eaten, hardtack and salt pork. During the drills the men sleep in the outdoors just like the soldiers of old. To avoid hypothermia, the men would “spoon” in order to retain heat. To some hardcore re-enactors, the term re-enactor is distasteful as they prefer living historians. These Guardsmen strive to be as authentic as possible. In order to create the patina on the jacket buttons, one man even soaked them in his own urine. Others try to lose weight to look more like the soldiers that they are portraying. According to the records most soldiers weighed one hundred thirty-five pounds and that’s the goal which the hardcore Guardsmen attempt to reach. The feeling of wanting to be as authentic as possible has left one Guardsmen, Fred Rickard, wishing for bullets to be flying during the re-enactments. If there was a chance of dying, the sense of what it was actually like during the War would be accomplished in his mind.

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74 Tony Horwitz, 209.
75 Tony Horwitz, 9.
76 Tony Horwitz, 7.
77 Tony Horwitz, 13.
78 Tony Horwitz, 10.
79 Tony Horwitz, 7.
80 Tony Horwitz, 12.
81 Tony Horwitz, 16.
When Horwitz started reading up on re-enactments, he found that it was not what he had assumed, it was not “a weekend hobby for gun-toting good ol’ boys – with an emphasis on boys,” but “the most popular vehicle of Civil War remembrance.” Horwitz attended a re-enactment, he found that it was no longer just battles. Though the battles were the core of the re-enactments, there was a more to the re-enactments. Civilian re-enactors began playing roles such as nurses, embalmers, preachers, journalist, laundresses, and surgeons. Along with the re-enactors, an industry was created to recreate the “props” used during re-enactments. Tailors, weavers and other merchants set up shop at the re-enactments to sell goods to re-enactors and the general public.

During the battles there are different ways for one to be “killed.” There was either different colored cartridges to signify a kill shot, or before the battle, deaths can be decided by birthdays or other personal information that could group the re-enactors together. Though no one wants to be the first to “die.” How death is decided really depends on the size of the event. Horwitz’s book can best be summed up in one sentence. For re-enactors like Hodge, re-enacting is not a hobby but a way of life. It is a way to remember and a way to live out the days of old.

During a re-enactment there are more than just soldiers. When the term “battle re-enactments” is used the first thought is of soldiers. Yet as Matthew Brady points out in the introduction of “Battlefields of Honor,” re-enactors take the form of soldiers, generals, nurses, and newspaper reporters. As it was during the time of the Civil war, there are many jobs to keep the re-enactments accurate and authentic. During larger re-enactments, there are more than

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82 Tony Horwitz, 126.
83 Tony Horwitz, 126.
84 Tony Horwitz, 126.
85 Tony Horwitz, 131.
86 Tony Horwitz, 8
just battles, there are army camps, civilian quarters for those women who traveled with the army, medical tents, and even some political camps which could include the Anti-Slavery movement. Women also play a role in re-enactments, doing the chores while the men are off fighting as well as playing the roles of nurses. They can be found cleaning up the camps as well as washing clothes and preparing the meals for the soldiers. This is an attempt to recreate the past and place all who attend back into the lives of those who lived and died in the Civil War. What is also interesting to note, is that re-enactments of the American Civil War also take place in other countries like Britain, Sweden, Australia, France and Germany. Though this may seem abnormal to some, it has to do with the fact that many people who fought in the war had just arrived in the United States from Europe. Also, there is a kind of romance that lives with the memory of the Civil War.

For some people, picking a unit has all to do with the history behind the unit. Patrick Schroeder chose to join the Zouaves because of their reputation and the flashy uniforms that they wore. Schroeder claims that Civil War re-enacting has a long history. He says that some of the Civil War veterans would put on their old uniforms and grab their old guns and go out to the battlefields to re-enact the battles in which they served. Reenacting, now-a-days, has turned into a family event in which every part of the family can be involved in some way. It is a chance for people to escape from their jobs or home life and live, for a weekend, in a different time. Schroeder also points out that re-enacting is a way to teach the younger generations. It is a way to go farther than what is taught in the classroom. ‘’The belief that ‘history is boring’ quickly
fades on the re-enactment battlefield or amidst a living history demonstration.”

The younger generations have the ability to learn in ways other than lecture. Schroeder also says that re-enacting is a way to pay homage to those who fought in the Civil War and a way to remember the countries bloody past.

Contrary to popular belief in the United States, re-enactments are not limited to the Civil War or to America. In fact, battle re-enactments have been going on in Britain for a while. Neil Bell discusses one major event that takes place in Northamptonshire, England that is a weekend full of battle re-enactments, in his article “History and Recreation.” These re-enactments aren’t just limited to recent wars. These demonstrations range from early Roman legions to the most recent World War.

In the 2002 event, the World War II re-enactment was the main attraction. The World War II re-enactments use a mix of replicas and original weapons and uniforms. Real veterans have helped to train the re-enactors run drills and exercises. Roughly three thousand re-enactors participated in the long weekend. These groups are very diverse yet the drive for authenticity unites all of the different groups. From the outfits to the traders selling their goods, all parts of the re-enactments show the constant effort to make the Living History as authentic as possible. The traders have gone as far as to recreate the need to establish apprenticeship. Education on how to create authentic replication of armor, weapons, shelters and accessories have made it an art form. From this, apprentices are needed to keep the tradition alive.

Using World War II veterans to help create drills shows the drive for authenticity.
When it comes to re-enacting, emotions can run high. There are not always resolved problems and politics aren’t always separated out from war. This is best exemplified in Robert Slayton’s article, “Reenacting Evil.” Slayton looks at a republican nominee in Ohio who was part of a re-enactment group that focused on the Second World War. The uproar that was created from the nominee’s hobby was not that he was a re-enactor, but that he played the part of a Nazi.\textsuperscript{101} Slayton states that “reenactors produce exquisitely detailed battle facsimiles that are (in their mind) divorced entirely from politics, ideology, and the larger currents of history.”\textsuperscript{102} Though re-enactors attempt to separate ideology, there has to be some connection to the cause in which the re-enactor is tied too. This is a double edged sword as someone has to play the enemy. But can this be done without actually becoming the enemy? Few of the Nazi re-enactors are actually neo-Nazi. Most re-enactors of the Nazi party condemn Hitler and his actions.\textsuperscript{103} As an attempt to separate them from the Nazi ideology, most re-enactors refer to themselves as the common foot soldier and do not attempt to portray any famous generals.\textsuperscript{104} This, according to Slayton, is the greatest offense. Slayton argues that when it comes to re-enacting the Second World War there is no separation of ideology because even the average man and foot soldier bought in to the evil and ideology of the Nazi Party.\textsuperscript{105} Ideology and politics do play a part in re-enactments, yet for some wars like World War II there are higher tensions and emotions towards those politics and ideologies.

As one can see from the various authors, much of what has been written about re-enactments are the same. The only major difference is when the re-enactments of the Civil War

\textsuperscript{101} Robert A Slayton, "Reenacting Evil," \textit{Commentary} 132, no. 3 (October 2011): 43.
\textsuperscript{102} Robert A Slayton, 43.
\textsuperscript{103} Robert A Slayton, 44.
\textsuperscript{104} Robert A Slayton, 44.
\textsuperscript{105} Robert A Slayton, 45.
began. Some sources say it started in 1913, others claim not until the 1960’s. Yet the 1913 re-enactment was not the same as the re-enactment that came about in the 1960’s. Besides the date of conception, there is not a lot of debate on the topic. Authenticity is a huge factor in the world of re-enactment though it is a broad term with a countless number of interpretations. Also, re-enactors chose to re-enact for a plethora of reasons. Some want to educate others, whereas some do it for their own enjoyment. Though re-enactments might not be the most factually correct they are a good way to share knowledge and allow the general public to experience the sights, smells and sounds of history.
History of the 1st New York Light Artillery, Battery L- “Reynolds Battery”

The history of the Reynolds Battery starts after the Union loss at the first Manassas.\textsuperscript{106} President Lincoln put out a call for an increase in troop numbers. In Rochester NY, three men were recruiting men for an artillery unit. These men, John A. Reynolds, Edwin Loder, and Charles Anderson, recruited 81 men from the Rochester area. John A Reynolds was the Captain of the local militia the Rochester Union Grays. From the Rochester recruiting office the group moved to Elmira, NY. While stationed at Elmira, the unit had reached the number of men that it needed. It was mustered into service in Albany on November 17, 1861 and was given the official name, Company L. While at Elmira, Reynolds, who was named Captain of Company L, placed an order with the Phoenix Iron Works for six 3” Ordinance Rifles. Reynolds used his own money to pay for the guns. According to one account, this is why the battery was nicknamed “Reynolds” battery. Though another account says that the name came about because the men held Captain Reynolds in such high esteem.

The 3” Ordinance Rifle was a new series. The barrel was made of wrought iron with a rifled barrel, making it more accurate. The gun came with the limbers. Though the range was said to be in the neighborhood of 4000-5000 yards, it was most effective at 1800-2800 yards. These guns cost between $330-$350 dollars apiece.\textsuperscript{107} It was because of these ordinance rifles that the Reynolds battery would gain recognition. The Reynolds Battery was the only battery to

\textsuperscript{106} This summary of the history of the Reynolds Battery is part of a Personal Collection put together by David Suhr. He spent the last two years of his life putting together the information that includes an in depth description of the history of the Reynolds Battery, along with a partial list of all the men who would be part of the Reynolds Battery and pictures of the tombstones that can be found at local cemeteries in Western New York. The following summary is based on David’s research, unless otherwise noted.

\textsuperscript{107} Phoenix Iron and Phoenix Steel Co., Historical Society of the Phoenixville Area, http://www.hspa-pa.org/iron_works.html
have the first six consecutive guns in a series in their unit. These guns would not arrive to the Battery until May of 1862.

Figure 2 This is a full working replica of a traditional 3” ordinance rifle which belongs to the Reynolds Battery. The box behind the gun is called the Limber, which carries the rounds, powder and other essential supplies.

In November of 1861, the Battery was then called upon to set up a line of defense around Washington DC. They spent their time in DC drilling and training, preparing for their time to be called into action. They would defend the capital until February when the Battery moved to Baltimore on another defense assignment. Like in DC, the men spent their days training and preparing. While in Baltimore, they were treated well as they were able to stay in the mansion of Confederate General Stewart rather than staying in the military issued tents.
It was only when General Stonewall Jackson was threatening to attack Harpers ferry, that the Battery was called into action. The Battery did not see any fighting while camped on Boliver Heights, overlooking Harpers Ferry. From May until August, the Battery moved its way through the Shenandoah Valley. It was at Cedar Mountain, in Culpeper, Virginia, that the Battery would see its next chance at action. The Battery sat and watched as the battle raged on as it was on the reserves waiting to be called forward. Over the next few days the Battery would be called to help drive the Confederates back across the Rappahannock River. Though no real damage was done to the Battery, Orderly Sergeant William H. Bower was the first soldier to be wounded in action. He was hit by a fragment of a shell in the arm. His arm would have to be amputated.

Ten days later, Reynolds Battery would be tested again at White Sulpher Springs, Virginia. Reynolds Battery began exchanging shells with a Confederate battery. This volley of shells would last for some six hours. The Reynolds Battery would be the only federal unit to engage the Confederate batteries at this time. Though greatly outnumber, Reynolds Battery held their own and only sustained one injury as Private John F. Dietz received a leg wound. At a similar engagement at Groveton, by the old Manassas battlefield, two more men were injured and later died. John Smith received a swift amputation of his leg by a Confederate shell and John VanZandt suffered a life ending head wound.

When the Second battle at Manassas, the Battery did not join into the fight as they had no orders to. Yet as the Battery was sitting in the reserves, it began to receive fire. Captain Reynolds then gave the order to return fire, as the Confederate troops moved in as close as a few hundred yards at one point. The Battery lost a few more soldiers as Corporal Mellville Buell

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108 Many of the battles have two names. The North usually named the battle after the closest town or river where as the South named the battle after what the locals would call the place.
turned up missing after carrying the wounded Private Abner O. Ganyard off the battlefield. Ganyard, along with a few other soldiers also turned up missing after the battle. After the Battle the Battery returned to Washington in order to refill their rooster as they had lost many men to sickness also. This stay would not be long as they were called to Sharpsburg for what would become the Battle of Antietam.

Reynolds Battery became heavily involved in the Battle of Antietam very early on in the battle. The Battery began supporting the infantry at dawn on the morning of September 17th. Their position would change several times as the infantry moved. Their position supported the fighting in the famous cornfield and the West Woods of Antietam. Throughout the battle, the Battery lost several men to death and injury. Along with the men, the Battery also lost several horses need for pulling the limbers and cannons. It was after the battle that Captain Reynolds received word that the men that he had lost at Manassas had been taken prisoner.

It was during this time that the Union Army went through some changes in leadership. Captain Reynolds was promoted to Chief of Artillery. Lieutenant Gilbert Reynolds became acting commander of the Battery. In early November General Ambrose Burnside took over command of the Army of the Potomac from General McClelland. General Burnside ordered a march to Richmond rather than setting up camp for the winter.

On the path to Richmond, the Army became engaged in a battle at Fredericksburg. While crossing the Rappahannock River, the Battery was ordered to set up on top of a hill at Pollock’s Mill. The order was to set up in order to lay down cover fire if Lee’s army attempted to flank the Union Army. After the Union Army successfully crossed the river, the two Armies did engage there at Fredericksburg. The battery was ordered to move positions several times during the
battle. Yet the Union Army would retreat back across the river and the Battery would be repositioned back on the hill that they were placed prior to the battle.

After a long winter, and a failed march to Richmond, General Burnside was replaced by General Joseph Hooker. General Hooker brought changes to the Army that were much needed. He helped improve the moral of the men as well as instituted more drilling in order to prevent the men from thinking about previous mistakes and to sharpen their skills. Hooker helped to reinvigorate the men for the coming battles.

In February of 1863, the Battery was returned to a six gun battery. As before the Battery set about to drilling and training as the winter wore on. In April, orders came to pack up the camp and move out for the season. The battery along with the rest of the Army of the Potomac, was headed back to Fredericksburg. Once at Fredericksburg, the Battery set back up at the same position as they did before they camped for the winter. They were met by a small group of Rebels who were silenced after a few rounds were fired. From there, the battery was ordered to Chancellorsville.

The battery made it to Chancellorsville in the first few days of May. They were positioned in the field just outside of town. When the battle began in the early hours, Reynolds battery was the only battery to have made it to Chancellorsville. The battery would face off against a well-placed Rebel battery. The Confederates were placed just in the woods with the better lie of ground. This gave them the advantage. Reynolds battery sustained a good amount of damage as they could not find the edge. After a day of fighting, the battery was ordered up river yet they quickly found themselves back at the town. Though this time the Battery was ordered to
The army had again retreated back across the river. General Hooker would be replaced as General George Meade was charged with ridding Pennsylvania of Lee’s Army.

It was June of 1863, when Lee’s Army made its march in to Pennsylvania. The Army of the Potomac was ordered to head north and stop Lee. The armies met at Gettysburg. Reynolds battery would arrive at the battle on the first of July and set up their position on McPherson Ridge. The battery would set up the cannons in different locations to best cover the Union forces. When the order came to retreat back to cemetery ridge, the battery would be split up. During the retreat, one of the cannons was abandoned because all of the horses had been killed and the soldiers were unable to move it.

On the second day of the battle, Reynolds battery would be involved in a deadly exchange with Confederate battery at Brenner’s Hill. Reynolds would not only hold their position, they would force the rebels to stop firing and abandon their position. This forced the Confederate infantry to fall back as well.

Figure 3 This picture was taken at Gettysburg. This was the spot that Reynolds Battery fought from on the second day of battle.
The third day of fighting brought much of the same actions and results as the second day. The Confederates attacked and the Battery held them off and forced them to fall back.

After Gettysburg, the Battery was ordered to pursue the Army of Virginia. Though they did pursue, there was not much action to be found for the battery for the rest of that year. The battery first set up winter camp near Kelly’s Ford but was soon relocated to Culpepper, VA. During the winter season authority changed hands again. First off, General Ulysses S. Grant would take over for General Meade as the commander of the Union Army. In May of 1864, Captain Gilbert Reynolds would resign due to the loss of his eye at Gettysburg. Lieutenant Breck would become the new commander of Reynolds Battery with the promotion to Captain.

Under the command of newly appointed Captain Breck, the Battery became involved in the battle at the Wilderness. At first the battery was held in the reserves, yet they would become involved in the battle on May 9th. The Battery would move several times during this battle to support the infantry’s attacks. As the Army made its way farther south, the Battery would be fully put into action at Cold Harbor. At Cold Harbor the Battery would fire roughly 350 rounds over a three day battle. This was done even though they were under heavy artillery fire and were being sniped by sharp shooters.

After the Battle at the Wilderness, the Battery would find itself protecting Weldon railroad for the rest of 1864. The battery would be stationed at Fort Keane which was located close to the railroad. It was at Fort Keane that the Battery would stay for the winter. In the spring the battery would see their last engagement at City Point, Virginia as they defended four different forts in the area.
In May of 1865, after City Point, the Battery would be ordered back to Alexandria
Virginia, near Washington DC. It was the end of the road for the Battery, as the battery returned
to Elmira, New York in the beginning of June. The Battery was officially mustered out of service
on June 17th, 1865. Out of all the men in the Battery that were mustered out of service, only 25 of
these men were a part of the battery when it had been mustered into service.

Re-enactment of Reynolds Battery

The Reynolds Battery re-enactment group was established in 1982. It is chartered by the
New York State Board of Education. Their goal is to educate the public to the ways of life of the
soldiers and about artillery in the Civil War. As previously stated, there are a few points that
bring all re-enactors together while making them different at the same time. Authenticity is very
important to re-enactors, though there are a wide variation to what this actually means. Also,
why the re-enactors join re-enacting groups is a very different. There are two main reasons to
join, some people like to re-enact for their own enjoyment and others join to educate others.
After spending several weekends with the Reynolds Battery, and talking to several re-enactors,
the findings of countless authors runs true with the Battery.

When it comes to authenticity, it really depends on who you talk to. Each person who re-
enacts decides what they feel is authentic and how far they will go to be authentic. According to
re-enactor 1st Lieutenant John Beatty, “Being authentic is almost impossible. It requires eating,
dressing, living and speaking exactly as people did during the 1860’s.” As far as the unit
considers there are “81 members with 81 levels of being in period.” There is no set standard
for being authentic. Private Gary Coon points out that the reason why it’s almost impossible to

http://www.reynoldsbattery.org/unit.html
110 John Beatty, emailed questionnaire to author, 4/26/2014.
be authentic is because “some items are not available or are limited by finances.”  

Private Jeff Dennis was asked about what being authentic means he responded,

Some people are extremely literal in the sense of the word. These folks go so far as to reenact without footwear at times, like some soldiers had to experience during the war. They will also eat traditional foods throughout the weekend. Some folks will even go to the extremes of making sure all of their clothes are hand sewn, even the button holes. This can get VERY expensive. Others, like myself, try to be as authentic as possible, within reason. I’ll wear the traditional uniform, eyewear and footwear. However, we tend to eat modern meals and will use modern comforts hidden in our tents such as coolers and air mattresses. On the field, we use the same commands and techniques used during the war. We try our best to hide modern amenities from the public. These things are considered by everyone “Farby”.  

As for Private Wendi Parisi, being authentic is difficult. Some hardcore re-enactors would shun Wendi for being a female military re-enactor. Parisi originally started re-enacting as a civilian but after a few years decided to go military instead. She still attempts her best to be as authentic as possible. When asked, Parisi stated that she felt like there is some poetic license given to re-enactors because no one know for sure everything that happened all the time.

The other major part of re-enacting is the why. Authors of re-enactments say that people generally re-enact for either education purposes or self-enjoyment. As for the people interviewed from the Reynolds battery, many do it to teach but also for their own personal enjoyment. For Parisi, re-enacting is about honoring the men and women who fought. Though, she also says that she likes to help educate people and that working the cannon is a great stress reliever. For Jeff Dennis, re-enacting is about education. He wants to help educate the general public about the Civil War and the lives of the soldiers in the camps. He also does it for his own enjoyment as his

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two sons also re-enact.\textsuperscript{115} As for John Beatty, he re-enacts as a means to help bring history to life for the general public.\textsuperscript{116} Gary Coon sees his re-enacting as an extra tool for teachers as he feels that educators “do not have the time to teach the era as well as they would like to.”\textsuperscript{117}

When asked why the re-enactors choose to join the Reynolds Battery the answers seemed to come back to friends or family. John Chapman and Rick Lake both talked about how the group was great for their young kids. They could go to the events and the kids would have other kids to play with. Also they felt that the Reynolds battery was more family friendly than some other groups.\textsuperscript{118} Parisi and Coon both echoed the family friend aspect as well as saying that the unit was more of a family and that the group cares for each other.\textsuperscript{119} The group does not leave an event until every member of that group is packed up and ready to leave. This is not always common as some re-enactors leave as soon as they are packed up.\textsuperscript{120} The Reynolds battery is more than just a group that gets together and shoots a cannon, they are truly a family.\textsuperscript{121}

For the Reynolds battery, safety is of the up most importance. Every year the group attends Fort Niagara for a safety training course. Re-enactors who join the Battery must be trained and attend the safety course. The course was designed by “the National Civil War Artillery Association (NCWAA) which is good for 2 years.”\textsuperscript{122} The event is usually a two day event as the battery sets up camp in the Fort on Friday night. Saturday morning the re-enactors are up early for roll call, then breakfast, then the drilling begins. Drilling lasts from 9am until noon. Re-enactors who are getting recertified go through the same course as those who are brand

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\textsuperscript{115} Jeff Dennis, emailed questionnaire to author, 4/29/2014.
\textsuperscript{116} John Beatty, emailed questionnaire to author, 4/26/2014.
\textsuperscript{117} Gary Coon, emailed questionnaire to author, 5/4/2014.
\textsuperscript{118} Interview, 5/10/14.
\textsuperscript{119} Wendi Parisi, emailed questionnaire to author, 8/15/2014. And Gary Coon, emailed questionnaire to author, 5/4/2014.
\textsuperscript{120} Wendi Parisi, emailed questionnaire to author, 8/15/2014.
\textsuperscript{121} Jeff Dennis, emailed questionnaire to author, 4/29/2014.
\textsuperscript{122} Wendi Parisi, emailed questionnaire to author, 8/15/2014.
\end{flushright}
new. No powder is used until the operators have all passed the drills and are cleared by the instructor. The instructor for the course was Major Richard Henderson who is a part of the Reynolds Battery. After a group is certified, and usually after the noon time meal, the group fires off a round out over the water of the Niagara River. Like the soldiers during the Civil War, the re-enactors continue to drill. At every event, before a battle takes place, the re-enactors of the Reynolds Battery drill. This is part for show and part for safety precautions. The drills occur and the public are able to watch the drills. Yet this also allows the re-enactors to touch up their skills and remind them of all the rules are regulations as it is better to be scolded on an empty gun then to make a mistake and potentially injure yourself or other people.

The Reynolds battery re-enactment group is a close-knit group that works hard to educate the public to the ways of an artillery battery of the Civil War. Though they strive to be authentic, they understand that they will never be completely authentic. They place a heavy emphasis on safety and show a real love of the Civil War. As one author said, some re-enactors have even been buried in their uniform. This is true as the Reynolds Battery lost Private Mark Handley in the summer of 2013. He loved the Civil War and the battery. He was not a man to wear suits, and so it was fitting that he was laid to rest in his re-enactment uniform.

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123 Major Henderson was appointed to Major by the National Artillery Association for major events. Thought at the other events, Henderson takes on the role of Captain, which is the highest rank in the Battery. Interview, May 10th, 2014.
Questionnaire used in original research

Hello all,

My name is Joshua Coon, son of Gary and Wanda Coon, and I am a graduate student at the College of Brockport. I am currently writing my thesis on Re-enactments with a focus on the Civil War. I have currently completed a historiography on Re-enactments and what has been written about in the past. As for my original research I am looking to do an in-depth study on the Reynolds Battery. After I have completed my original research I must create a teaching guide that other teachers could potentially use to teach my topic. For that section I plan on doing video interviews as well as taking videos of re-enactments.

For my original research, and the reason why I am writing this to you is, I am looking to have as many people answer a questionnaire. This questionnaire is below. I would have loved to do this in live interviews but time is not always the greatest of friends and the winter has been a harsh one. I would ask, if you choose to participate, that you answer each question with as much detail as possible. I would also ask that the questionnaire to be emailed back as soon as possible either to my parents emails or to mine which is jcoon4@u.brockport.edu.

Thank you again for all your help,

Joshua Coon
Name:          Rank:

Are you a civilian or military re-enactor?

What is your historical education background? In other words, to what degree have you studied history and or the Civil War? (I.e. High School, College, Majoring in history, professional historian, amateur historian, self-taught, “history buff,” never really studied history)

How did you first become interested in Civil War Re-enacting? How did you choose to join Reynolds Battery?

What role does safety play in Re-enacting? Is there a certification process you must go through first? If so, is there a local, state or national association that authorizes the certification?

In my research I have come across the word “authentic” and the term “being period,” what do these terms mean to you? How do you personally try to be authentic? What does the group consider to “be period”? Is there anything that you feel as a re-enactor you have a sense of poetic license to?

Also in my research I have come across different reasons why people re-enact. Two main reasons that I found were first to educate others, and the other is to perform the acts of the war in which they portray. Why do you re-enact? What is your goal for re-enacting?
What is it about the Reynolds Battery that is different from other re-enactment groups?

Do you still believe that the Civil War is still taking place? If so to what extent? If not why/how so?

Describe the gear you own and use. Do you have personal attachments to any piece in particular?

I know that with in the Battery you have ranks, how does one earn rank? Or how does the group decide rank? What are the levels of rank with in the Battery?

How many event does the group participate in each year? Any national events?

Is there anything else about re-enacting, the Civil War or Reynolds Battery that I did not ask about but you wish to include in this interview?

Thank you for your participation in this written interview. I will use the information gathered here in my paper and may even use direct quotes from this form. Thank you again.

Joshua
Re-enactments as an educational tool

When the Civil War is taught in many schools today, it is taught like most history lessons. Though many teachers attempt to bring history to life for their students, they run into challenges of figuring out new ways to present the information. When teaching recent history, it is easier because there are a lot of resources to choose from. With older history, there is not as many resources to choose from. There are a lot of iconic photographs of the Civil War but it is hard to bring the Civil War to life. This is where re-enactments come into the education landscape. The website, re-enactments.weebly.com, has been created as a first step to introducing teachers, students and the general public to re-enactments and the roles it can play in education.

Re-enactments are great tools in the classroom. They help bring the history of the Civil War to life to the public today. Though they have limitations for teachers, there are alternatives that allow all schools to be able to incorporate re-enactments into their curriculum. No matter where the school is, the students are able to experience re-enactments, whether it be in the form of a field trip, a re-enactment group coming to the school or watching videos of re-enactments. Many re-enactment groups put on school events where they will put on a demonstration as well as set up camp in order to allow students to walk through and ask questions. Reynolds Battery does several school programs. One brings in multiple schools that are then able to experience what the life of a soldier was like in the Civil War as well as get to see the responsibilities and what the soldiers carried with them. The ability to experience re-enactments can be very influential to bringing to students. It can help tie all of the learned knowledge together with the sights, sounds and smells of the Civil War. One or the arguments against taking a field trip to see a re-enactment is that students will have to miss important times in class. There is a decision on
if going to a re-enactment is as important as missing a day of school. This is a decision that every school must make for themselves.

Though field trips can be expensive and in some cases frowned upon by a school's policies, there are other ways to learn through re-enactments. There are many re-enactors that will volunteer to come to a school and bring a few of their belongings. These re-enactors will give talks and allow the students to ask them questions that can help to expand knowledge. By sharing stories and information about the item that the re-enactor brought, memories can be formed through interaction and the use of senses. Though these in-classroom talks don’t have the same effect as experiencing a full re-enactment, it is an easier way for students to still receive some interaction with the world of re-enactments and living history. In some cases the re-enactors will bring the re-enactments to a school. This allows the students to really be able to experience the Civil War and re-enactments without having to take a field trip and miss a day of school.

Another way to bring re-enactments into the classroom is through the use of the internet. When field trips and school visitors aren’t available, the internet is a great source of information that can bring history to life. While recent wars have actually film footage that can be shown, wars like the Civil war only have photographs and the Revolutionary War has depictions. This is where re-enactments step in. There are vast amounts of videos on the internet of re-enacted battles that can be shown in a classroom to help bring the war to life. Seeing how the battles were carried out and the technology of its time can help students connect what they learned to the visual depictions that they are viewing. As with any video shown in a school, educators should always preview to scan for anything they wish not to show.
For students, re-enactments have the ability to help students connect to what they see, feel and experience to what they have learned in the classroom. For some students, this will not be as effective because of the different learning styles. Though for students who are audio visual learners, re-enactments will help make the connections that may not have been made in a traditional classroom. Re-enactments should not be how the Civil War is taught but should be the reinforcement of what has already been taught.

Re-enactments are a nonlinguistic representation. It allows students to experience “physical sensations, such as smell, taste, touch, kinesthetic association, and sound.”124 When students visit a re-enactment, they are able to draw connections to what they have learned about the Civil War by tying knowledge to these physical sensations. These sensations can include the smell of the wood fire, or the sulfur from the gunpowder. They students could have the chance to try hardtack, a traditional snack eaten by the soldier. Being able to view a re-enacted battle can help tie together the anguish that the soldiers went through and how destructive the battles truly were. By a group of students having to move the cannons, they can experience how hard it was for soldiers to have to quickly set up the cannons under fire during a battle. Also by participating in the drills that the soldiers had to go though, they will learn the movements and the style of warfare that was used during the Civil War.

Another way the re-enactments can be used to teach is through cooperative learning. This is where students must work together effectively in order to complete a task or reach a goal. One element of cooperative learning that can be exemplified through the teaching of the Civil war through re-enactments is positive interdependence. This is when students learn that in order to

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124 Ceri B. Dean, Elizabeth Ross Hubbell, Howard Pitler, and Bj Stone, Classroom Instruction the Works: Research-Based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement. 2nd ed (Alexandria, Virginia: ASCD, 2012), 63.
thrive as a group, everyone in that group must do their part. The goal of positive interdependence is to “help students develop a senses that they ‘sink or swim’ together.”¹²⁵ This element is exemplified through activities that ask students to problem solve. Cooperative learning gives students the opportunity to take hold of their own learning. It helps build responsibility for the education of everyone in their group.¹²⁶ One activity, for example, would be to set up a scenario of a battle plan. Students will be put into small groups and given roles as captains of different regiments. They will be given their resources, of how many men, they types and amount of weapons, and the amount of food that they have in their regiments. Then they will be given a map of an approaching army which they will have to figure out how to set up their army in order to stop the advance. When they have it set up, they will inform the instructor who will then tell them what the approaching army’s next move is. This will continue until the advance has either been stopped or the army is forced to surrender. This form of roleplaying and problem solving allows the students to examine how each general was forced to look at the battles and figure out how to win. It also works on student participation and on cooperative learning skills.

In the world of education there are many different teaching tools. One style is nonlinguistic representation. This means that the teacher is presenting information in images rather than words. Another is teaching though the use of cooperative learning. This is making students responsible for their own education through the creation of small groups. These groups are meant to be kept small in order to be more effective. Re-enactments can be used to help teach historical topics in order to reach students would learn better by seeing and experiencing the events. They bring history to life and allow students to interact with the past. These nonlinguistic representations help students connect what they have learned in the class room to what they see

¹²⁵ Ceri B. Dean, 36.
¹²⁶ Ceri B. Dean, 39.
and experience with re-enactment. There are many ways to teach the Civil War and bring students closer to the history of the United States. Through cooperative learning, and nonlinguistic representations, re-enactments can be used to reinforce what students have learned about the Civil War and bringing history to life.


