

# Voices of War

Use primary sources to examine different experiences of the Civil War.

**SS.8.A.1.7** "View historic events through the eyes of those who were there as shown in their art, writings, music, and artifacts."

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

## 1 READ AND MARK \_\_\_\_\_ Read it twice

**YOUR JOB** In each paragraph, underline one detail that reveals a person's viewpoint, circle a clue about what the source leaves out or cannot show, and number the three source types 1 through 3.

### Three Views of the Civil War

- ① In September 1863, James Henry Gooding, a Black corporal in the 54th Massachusetts Infantry, wrote a letter to President Abraham Lincoln. Gooding protested that Black soldiers received lower pay than white soldiers. He asked, "Are we Soldiers, or are we Labourers?" The question reveals his anger and his demand for equal treatment. A letter carries one person's viewpoint, not every soldier's experience. Still, Gooding's words show that fighting for the Union did not protect Black troops from discrimination.
- ② In 1862, poet James Sloan Gibbons wrote the words to "We Are Coming, Father Abraham, 300,000 More" after President Lincoln called for more volunteers. Printed song sheets let people buy, sing, and share its patriotic message. The title speaks directly to Lincoln, calling him "Father Abraham." Its confident promise of volunteers presents support for the Union war effort. The song acknowledges tearful farewells and sacrifice, yet uses them to encourage enlistment. It does not represent every wartime viewpoint, including opposition to the war. Its purpose shapes what it shows.
- ③ After the war, artist Winslow Homer painted *The Veteran in a New Field* in 1865. The painting shows a former Union soldier cutting wheat with a scythe. His discarded uniform jacket lies nearby, and the scythe evokes the Grim Reaper, a symbol of death. Homer did not paint a battle scene. Instead, his art connects farm work, loss, and a veteran's return to civilian life. Like the letter and song, the painting offers evidence, but viewers must notice both what the artist included and what he left out.

**2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE** \_\_\_\_\_ Use the passage

**1** What do Gooding’s question about being “Soldiers” or “Labourers” and his letter to Lincoln reveal about his viewpoint?

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**2** How does the purpose of “We Are Coming, Father Abraham, 300,000 More” affect the view of the war that it presents?

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**3** Which two details in Homer’s painting connect a veteran’s civilian life with his wartime experience? Explain what those details suggest.

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**4** How do Gooding’s letter and the song sheet show different concerns about the Union war effort?

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**3 YOUR TURN** \_\_\_\_\_ Your own words

Choose one source from the passage. Write an 80- to 100-word museum label that explains what the source shows about its creator’s viewpoint, uses two details from the source, and identifies one limit of the source.

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**PART 1 • READ AND MARK**

In each paragraph, underline one detail that reveals a person's viewpoint, circle a clue about what the source leaves out or cannot show, and number the three source types 1 through 3. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

**PART 2 • ANSWERS**

| # | QUESTION                                                                                                                                 | ANSWER                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|---|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | What do Gooding's question about being "Soldiers" or "Labourers" and his letter to Lincoln reveal about his viewpoint?                   | <b>Gooding was angry about unequal pay for Black soldiers and demanded equal treatment from national leaders.</b>                                                                                              |
| 2 | How does the purpose of "We Are Coming, Father Abraham, 300,000 More" affect the view of the war that it presents?                       | <b>It acknowledges tearful farewells and sacrifice but emphasizes patriotic commitment to encourage enlistment. It does not represent every viewpoint, such as opposition to the war.</b>                      |
| 3 | Which two details in Homer's painting connect a veteran's civilian life with his wartime experience? Explain what those details suggest. | <b>The discarded uniform jacket identifies his military service, while cutting wheat suggests a return to civilian work. The scythe also evokes the Grim Reaper, connecting the harvest with wartime loss.</b> |
| 4 | How do Gooding's letter and the song sheet show different concerns about the Union war effort?                                           | <b>Gooding's letter focuses on discrimination and unequal pay faced by Black soldiers. The song sheet focuses on encouraging volunteers and presenting patriotic support for the Union.</b>                    |

**PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)**

Gooding's 1863 letter to Lincoln shows that Black Union soldiers fought for a country that treated them unfairly. His question, "Are we Soldiers, or are we Labourers?" expresses frustration with unequal pay. Addressing the president shows that he wanted national leaders to correct the problem. This letter is strong evidence of Gooding's own experience, beliefs, and goals at the time. It cannot tell us whether every Black soldier felt the same way, so historians should compare it with other sources.

Accept answers that use accurate evidence from the selected source and make a reasonable claim about viewpoint or purpose. For the museum label, accept any stated limitation that recognizes one source cannot represent every person's experience or every part of the war.