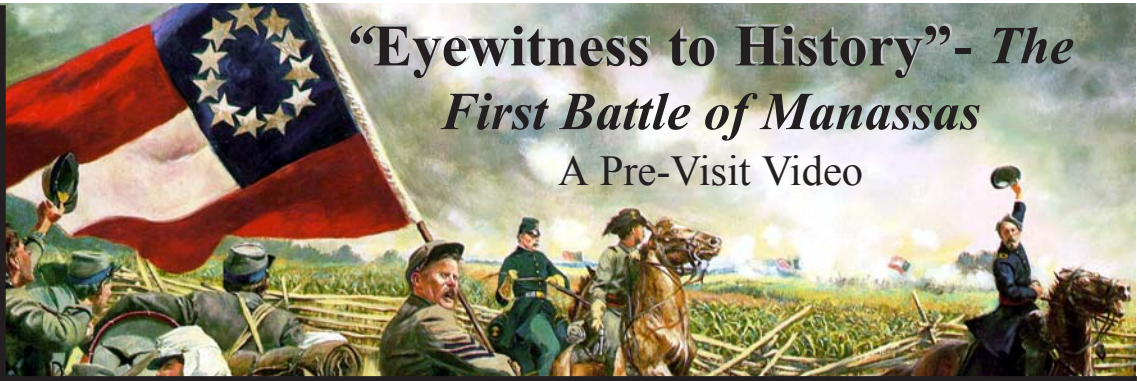


“Eyewitness to History”- *The First Battle of Manassas* A Pre-Visit Video



Clip from *The Fourth Alabama*, by Don Troiani. Courtesy of Historical Art Prints, Southbury, CT.

Background Information

As the first major battle of the American Civil War, First Manassas was in many ways different from the battles that would occur later in the war. It was at First Manassas that America, soldiers and civilians alike, received its initial exposure to the horrors of war — the “baptism of fire,” as the soldiers themselves referred to it.

The general idea, which both North and South believed in early 1861, that war would be an exciting, glorious adventure, proved to be misguided when the fighting began in earnest. The notion of a brief, bloodless conflict disappeared when the smoke of battle cleared on the evening of July 21, 1861 revealing near 900 dead and approximately 3,000 wounded. From the most basic concepts of what military life was like, to flag and uniform design, the First Battle of Manassas changed everything. The results of the battle caused both sides to stop and examine their preparedness and resolve for war.

The video “*Eyewitness to History*” uses the television news format to introduce students to these important concepts. Alternating between a news anchor and field “interviews” with people involved in the battle, the program gives this event the feeling of a developing news story. Students will identify with the youthful reporters and the historical figures being interviewed: two teenage soldiers and a young woman. Thus, students will come to understand First Manassas and the Civil War, not as an abstraction, but as a real event involving real people.

This video is designed for use at the 4th, 5th and 6th grade levels and as a pre-visit activity to Manassas National Battlefield Park. If you cannot visit the park, the video still can be used with some minor modification to the lesson. For higher-grade levels, the ideas contained in the video and this lesson can be adapted. Perhaps, having students develop their own news program on the Civil War using the information provided and video as a model?

Objectives

1. Students will be able to name two sites where fighting occurred during the First Battle of Manassas and which army was victorious at the battle’s conclusion.
2. Students will be able to explain at least two things that created confusion for the soldiers who fought in First Manassas and what changed as a result.
3. Students will be able to compare how soldiers feelings about war changed after they participated in First Manassas.
3. Students will be able to articulate ways war impacts civilians and communities.

This module of Baptism of Fire addresses the following Standard(s) of Learning:

National: Era 5: Civil War and Reconstruction, 2b

Virginia: History/Social Science VS.1, VS.7, & USI.9.



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Activities for the Class

- Have the class view “Eyewitness to History” and complete the accompanying worksheet while they watch the video.

Be sure the students listen for battle locations and place names associated with the campaign. The video will tell the students that the armies were fighting for control of Manassas Junction, a key juncture of two major railroads that connect Washington D.C with Richmond and the Shenandoah Valley. The two armies were camped along Bull Run prior to the start of the battle. The fighting began on Matthews Hill and shifted to Henry Hill, with much of the heaviest fighting swirling around the Henry House. The Stone House saw action during the fighting and served as a hospital during and after battle. It is recommended that you review the worksheet with the children before watching the video.

Note: If you are showing this video in preparation for a visit to Manassas National Battlefield Park, remind the students to have questions ready for the Park Ranger who will be conducting the program. The video has intentionally left some questions unanswered, including the fate of Mrs. Henry and Lucy Griffith. These questions are answered in the *Baptism of Fire* module “The Henry House.”

About the Video

“*Eyewitness to History*” was produced for Manassas National Battlefield Park as part of a *Parks as Classrooms* grant. All exterior scenes were shot on location at Manassas National Battlefield Park, and all historical figures interviewed in the production are based on real-life participants in the battle. Some dramatic license was taken to tell the story of the battle.

Characters Featured in the Video:

James Robert Montague was born in 1844 and enlisted in the 27th Virginia Infantry on April 22, 1861. A student at the time of his enlistment, he was assigned to Company A and fought at the First Battle of Manassas until he was wounded in the thigh. Although he probably wasn’t taken to the Stone House as indicated in the video, he was evacuated from the battlefield and taken to a hospital in Charlottesville, Virginia. On October 31, 1862, Montague returned to duty, just as his company was being transferred to the artillery, where they became known as Carpenter’s Battery. Montague was wounded on July 3, 1863, during the Battle of Gettysburg, and again on September 13, 1864, in action at Wade’s Depot. At the war’s end, he returned to school and graduated from Washington College (now Washington and Lee University) in 1868. He took up farming and eventually moved to Orlando, Florida. He died there in 1910.

Factoid:

Bull Run or Manassas?

The First Battle of Manassas was also known as the First Battle of Bull Run. The reason why? Confederate armies tended to name battles after the closest town or local railroad facility (junction, station or depot). In this case, Manassas Junction. The Northern armies tended to name battles after the closest river, stream or creek. Hence the name Battle of Bull Run after the stream Bull Run.

Ask the students to speculate why you would want to name a battle after a geographic feature like a river or railroad station?

Note: Remember, this is a General Rule and there are exceptions.

- Other battles with two names include: *Antietam* or *Sharpsburg*, *Shiloh* or *Pittsburgh Landing* and *Stone’s River* or *Murfreesboro*.



Alexander Black was born in 1855 and was only 16 years old when he enlisted in 1861. He joined Company I of the 11th New York Infantry, known popularly as the “Fire Zouaves” because many of its members were New York City volunteer firemen. Black joined the service as a drummer boy on May 7, 1861, enlisting to serve for the duration of the war. There is no further record on his military service. (The head wound suffered by Black in the video is in license taken by the scriptwriters.)

Lucy Griffith’s life an background is not recorded like so many other slaves. She is believed to have been young at the time of the battle. Lucy was actually owned by Alexander Compton, a neighbor of the Henry’s and wartime minister of the Sudley Methodist Church, and was being leased by Judith Carter Henry. On the day of the battle, Lucy Griffith remained at Spring Hill as the Henry house was known, with Judith Carter Henry, and two of Mrs. Henry’s three grown children, John and Ellen.

Note: *If you visit Manassas National Battlefield Park, the Park Ranger will cover the following information during the field trip. If you have made arrangements for a program at the battlefield, **do not** share this information with your students.*

As indicated in the video, Lucy Griffith did hide under the bed during the battle. She escaped with only minor wounds, notably to her right arm. After the war she settled in nearby Gainesville, Virginia and worked as a cook and laundress. Those who knew her remembered that she carried her arm stiffly, perhaps as a result of her wounds. This information is also covered in the **Baptism of Fire** module “**The Henry House.**”

Answer Key for Student Worksheet:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Slavery, separate from the union/preserve the union depending upon the side. | 9. Destroy homes & towns. Soldiers destroyed or ate crops |
| 2. Confederate States of America. 1861 | 10. Alexander Black. To keep the South in the Union. |
| 3. Railroad Yard. Can be used to move the armies. The railroads lead deep into different parts of the Confederacy and to Washington D.C. | 11. Water, one was killed the other wounded |
| 4. Bull Run | 12. Shot by troops in blue uniforms. Flags. |
| 5. Defend his home, right to establish a new country, and to keep his home free. | 13. General standard will be Blue uniforms for the Union and gray for the Confederacy. The us will keep its flag and the south will change their flag to one that is more distinctive, the Stars and Bars. |
| 6. 4 years. Approximately 6,000 | 14. The Confederates or South |
| 7. Judith Henry. She felt safe in her own home. | 15. Stone House |
| 8. Lucy. She stayed with Mrs. Henry | |

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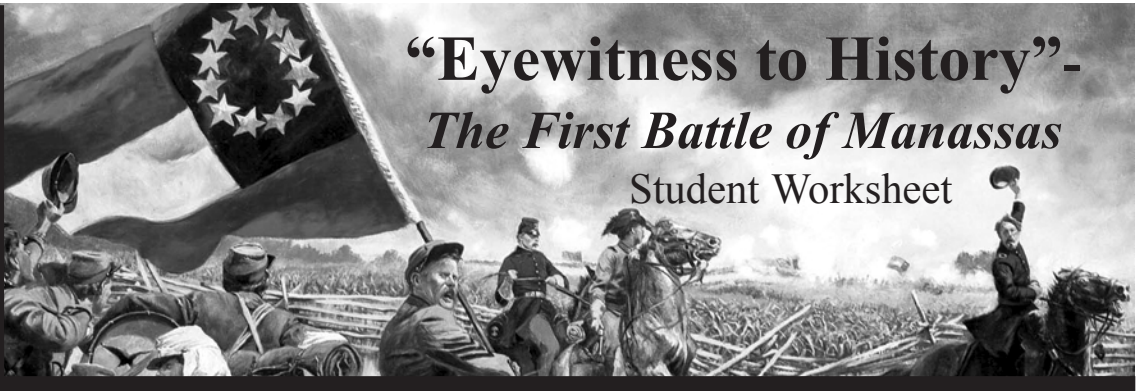
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Student Worksheet



Name: _____

Date: _____

Directions: Answer these questions while watching the video. They are in the order of their appearance in the film. If you are visiting Manassas National Battlefield Park on a field trip, remember, you will be seeing many of the places from the video.

1. According to the film, what was the main reason for the American Civil War?
2. What was the name of the country that the Southern states formed when they left the Union? What year was it formed?
3. What is Manassas Junction and why is it important?
4. What is the name of the creek where the North and South would face each other in the first major battle of the war?
5. Why does Robert James Montague want to fight in the battle?



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Text and concepts by the Education Staff, Manassas National Battlefield Park. 1994.

6. How many years did the Civil War last and how many soldiers died by the end of it?
7. Who lived on Henry Hill and why did this person not leave when the battle began?
8. In the film, who is looking for their kitty? Why is he still in the area despite the battle?
9. What effect did soldiers often have on local communities, farms and civilians?
10. What is the name of the drummer boy featured in the film and why is he fighting?
11. What is he looking for? What happened to his two friends?
12. Because of the confusion, what happened to the drummer boy's unit? What two things caused the confusion?
13. After First Manassas, uniforms and flags for each side will become standardized. What color uniforms will the two sides wear as a standard?
14. What will the standard flags be for the Union and the Confederacy?
15. Who won the battle?