

Battle Names of the Civil War

Introduction:

In these activities, students will learn names and locations of battles of the American Civil War and how each side had a different name for the same battle.

Grade level: 7th through 12th

Illinois State Goals:

16A, 17C

Objectives:

Know the names that the Union and the Confederacy gave to their battles.

Know the dates and locations of some of the major battles of the Civil War.

Students may use their textbooks, the internet, and the books listed in the bibliography to complete the activities.

Activity 1

The Case of the Civil War Sword

Can you solve this mystery?

Jeff had just opened his antique appraisal shop when in walked an elderly gentleman looking very worried.

“Are you any good at swords?” the man asked.

“If you mean fencing, I’m terrible,” Jeff replied. “But if you mean can I authenticate them, then I’m very good.”

“That’s exactly what I mean,” the man said. “My name’s Alan Green. I’ve just been made an offer that seems too good to be true. I was just offered the chance to buy a sword from the Civil War.”

“There are thousands of swords left over from the Civil War,” said Jeff.

“Yes,” agreed Alan, “but how many belonged to General Jackson?”

“Stonewall Jackson?” gasped Jeff. “The great Southern general?”

“Sandy Smith has offered to sell me it for five hundred dollars.”

Jeff stood up quick. He had stopped many of Sandy’s sly deals before.

“If Sandy is part of this, you’ll definitely need help,” he said. “Let’s go.”

Jeff and Alan walked down the street to Sandy’s pawnshop. When Jeff walked in the door, Sandy made a face.

“So, you’re now a Civil War know-it-all,” he scowled. “Well, don’t say this sword isn’t the real thing.”

Jeff walked over to the counter where the sword laid.

Sandy said, “This sword was given to Stonewall Jackson a month after the first Battle of Bull Run. Read what it says on the blade.”

Jeff read: *To Thomas J. Jackson, for standing like a stone wall at the First Battle of Bull Run on July 21, 1861. This sword is presented to him by his men on August 21, 1861.*

“Do you think it belonged to General Jackson?” Alan asked.

Before Jeff could answer, Sandy said, “I’m feeling generous today, I’ll let you have it for only three hundred, how about it?”

“You won’t sell this sword to Alan. It’s a fake.” said Jeff. “It never belonged to General Stonewall Jackson!”

How did Jeff know that?

Answer:

Activity 2

Civil War Battle Names

There is a disparity between the sides in naming some of the battles of the war. In the North, battles were frequently named for rivers or creeks that were prominent on or near the battlefield. In the South, the nearest town was used. Not all of the disparities are based on this land-versus-water conflict. Most modern accounts of Civil War battles use the names established by the North. However, for some battles, the Southern name has become the standard. The National Park Service frequently uses the southern names for their battlefield parks located in the South, presumably in deference to local sensibilities or because the town names are more frequently found on maps accessible to tourists than are river names.

Here is a list of some of the battles that have two names. Match the names the South gave the battles with the names the North gave for the battles. The dates for the battles are listed to give you some help. What state was each battle fought in?

Listed are the Confederates' names for each battle.

Place the corresponding **letter** for the Union's name for the battle and the **state** in which the battle was fought on each line.

Ex: First Manassas was fought on July 21, 1861 *H Virginia*

1. Oak Hills was fought on August 10, 1861 _____
2. Leesburg was fought on October 21, 1861 _____
3. Mill Springs was fought on January 19, 1862 _____
4. Elkhorn Tavern was fought on March 7 – 8, 1862 _____
5. Shiloh was fought on April 6 – 7, 1862 _____
6. Fair Oaks was fought on May 31 – June 1, 1862 _____
7. Gaines's Mill was fought on June 27, 1862 _____
8. Second Manassas was fought on August 29 – 30, 1862 _____
9. Ox Hill was fought on September 1, 1862 _____
10. Boonsboro was fought on September 14, 1862 _____
11. Sharpsburg was fought on September 17, 1862 _____
12. Perryville was fought on October 8, 1862 _____
13. Murfreesboro was fought December 31, 1862 – January 2, 1863 _____
14. Mansfield was fought on April 8, 1864 _____
15. Winchester was fought on September 19, 1864 _____

Union's name for the battle:

- A. Seven Pines
- B. Chantilly

- C. Stones River
- D. Ball's Bluff
- E. Opequon
- F. Pittsburg Landing
- G. Chaplin Hills
- H. First Bull Run
- I. Sabine Cross Roads
- J. Logan's Cross Roads
- K. Wilson's Creek
- L. South Mountain
- M. Antietam
- N. Pea Ridge
- O. Second Bull Run
- P. Chickahominy River

Answers to Activities 1 & 2

Activity 1:

As soon as he read the words on the blade, Jeff knew the sword was a fake. The two clues were the words “Bull Run” and “first.”

Jackson’s men, being Southerners, would have called the battle by the South’s name for it, the Battle of Manassas. Bull Run was the name given to the battle by people from the North.

Also, the sword was supposed to have been given to Stonewall Jackson on August 21, 1861. No one could have known then that there would be another battle on the same spot the next year, in 1862.

Only after both battles had been fought would anyone have used the word “first” to describe the battle fought in 1861.

Activity 2:

1. H Virginia
2. K Missouri
3. D Virginia
4. J Kentucky
5. N Arkansas
6. F Tennessee
7. A Virginia
8. P Virginia
9. O Virginia
10. B Virginia
11. L Maryland
12. M Maryland
13. G Kentucky
14. C Tennessee
15. I Louisiana
16. E Virginia

Resources at the Pritzker Military Library:

Heston, Charlton. *Smithsonian's Great battles of the Civil War* [videorecording]. New York: MasterVision, 1992.

Johnson, Robert Underwood, 1853-1937. *Battles and leaders of the Civil War*. New York: Century; 2001.

Kagan, Neil. *Great battles of the Civil War: an illustrated history of courage under fire*. Birmingham, AL: Oxmoor House, 2002.

Rawls, Walton H. *Great Civil War heroes and their battles*. New York: Abbeville, 1985.

Symonds, Craig L. *A battlefield atlas of the Civil War*. Baltimore, MD: Nautical & Aviation, 1983.