

# CIVIL WAR ARCHIVES PROJECTS

## **\*\*Civil War Museum Displays\*\***



### **ARCHIVES:**

The dictionary describes “archives” as the records or historical documents of an institution or community. Most of our vital documents about United States history reside in our National Archives in Washington, D.C. There one can see the surviving copies of The Declaration of Independence, The Constitution, The Emancipation Proclamation and thousands of letters, executive orders and other important records that historians use to interpret our nation’s past.

Your class will create a Civil War Archives Day. It will be the day of **Open House, May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2016**. During the next week, you and the rest of the class will learn about the research and findings on all sorts of topics related to the Civil War.

**GENERAL GUIDELINES:** Read the following instructions for an overview. Then, select a project from the list of suggestions. An **ARCHIVES PROJECT CHART** will be handed out closer to Archives Day. It will detail how you’ll stay on schedule so you do not rush!

1. Look over the list and select a project to research, construct and eventually display as part of the Civil War museum. Try to be original in your choice of a project but always choose something that involves something of importance during the Civil War.
2. Determine after some reading how best to present your project display: diorama, video production or visual presentation.
3. Visit museums or other historical sites to research how information is presented in a professional manner. Research museum displays on the internet. Look for tips on how the curators have presented the information. Observe captions, titles, models, pictures, documents, etc. Maybe ask to speak to the director or curator to ask about the best way to go about constructing your museum piece.
4. Plan carefully. Your display should go through several planning stages on paper before finally choosing a design. Try to get as much help as possible in both the design and construction of your “piece of antiquity.” Just remember, you can get help constructing and planning but it’s your presentation!
5. Think hard on how to be creative and professional in your museum display. Create a display that is both accurate and entertaining. Your presentation is enhanced by the proper use of color, borders, lettering, labels, audio and visual resources and, of course, an interesting topic. Use many visuals-

pictures, props, maps. Try to limit the written word on your display while at the same time conveying all the key elements in an effective product.

6. Make sure that you complete your project a day or two prior to **Archives Day** so that you know exactly what is required.

**Don't forget to check with your parents or guardian on how to transport your display and with your teacher on exactly where it is to be set up on the day it is due.**

- Create a neat and clear title of what your display is about. Visit a museum to observe professional techniques or research the internet and visit museum web sites to gain tips on displaying historical material.
- Try to use bright and contrasting colors-black against white, red against yellow, etc.
- The display can be any shape or size but keep in mind your observations of professional display construction techniques.
- Border your presentation! Use borders and mats around pictures, captions, maps, etc. This technique focuses the eye of the viewer on the display and makes the presentation more pleasing to the eye.
- Use precise lettering. Though cost is a consideration, many hobby stores carry professional stencils or cut out letters in many sizes and colors.
- Use lots of visuals! Though much of your display will be captions, quotes and paragraphs, try to limit how much the view must read. A good rule of thumb is under 300 student-composed words. Use lots of pictures, drawing, maps, timelines and, especially, props.
- Integrate into your display audio or visual components when possible. It can be a crowd pleaser.
- Use good materials! Try to limit how much you spend but do not use an old piece of weather-beaten cardboard. **Take pride in your work.**
- Try your best to present a display that your classmates, your teacher, your parents and, especially, you can be proud of!