

# Maryland in the Civil War: Signaling an Invasion Teacher's Guide

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## Objectives:

Students will:

- Identify the methods of communication available during the 1860's.
- Analyze the advantages and disadvantages of various communications methods during war time.
- Investigate the causes and effects of the invasion of Maryland by Confederate troops in 1862.

## Maryland Learning Outcomes:

### Social Studies Skills

*Students will demonstrate an understanding of historical and current events using chronological and spatial thinking, develop historical interpretations, and frame questions that include collecting and evaluating information from primary and secondary sources.*

- Find, interpret, and organize primary and secondary sources of information including pictures, graphics, maps, atlases, artifacts, timelines, political cartoons, videotapes, journals, and government documents.
- Apply the concept of change over time by organizing turning point events in chronological order and applying chronological terms correctly, including decade, century, and generation.

### Geography

*Students will use geographic concepts and processes to examine the role of culture, technology, and the environment in the location and distribution of human activities and spatial connections throughout time.*

- Construct and interpret maps using map elements including a title, cardinal and intermediate directions, compass rose, border, longitude and latitude, legend/key, author, date, and scale.
- Explain how people in Maryland and the United States are linked by transportation and communication.

## Worksheets:

Maryland in the Civil War: Signaling an Invasion Worksheet (6 pages)

## Other Materials Needed:

Ruler or stick (to make flags)

## Key Web Sites Used in This Lesson:

- World of Wings Pigeon Center - Story about "G.I.JOE":  
<http://cedarvalley.virtualave.net/articles/wartimebirds/gijoe.htm>
- Hobbes' Internet Timeline: <http://info.isoc.org/guest/zakon/Internet/History/HIT.html>
- @ Work from the PBS program "Nerds 2.0.1":  
[http://www.pbs.org/opb/nerds2.0.1/networking\\_nerds/atwork.html](http://www.pbs.org/opb/nerds2.0.1/networking_nerds/atwork.html)
- Semaphore Flag Signaling System: <http://www.anbg.gov.au/flags/semaphore.html>
- History of the U.S. Postal Service: <http://www.usps.gov/history/history/hisl.htm>
- Guglielmo Marconi: The "Father of Radio": <http://www.marconiusa.org/marconi/>
- Samuel F. B. Morse's colored sketch of railway telegraph, ca. 1838:  
[http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/mcc:@field\(DOCID+@lit\(mcc/039\)\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/mcc:@field(DOCID+@lit(mcc/039)))
- Alexander Graham Bell's design sketch of the telephone, ca. 1876:  
[http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/mcc:@field\(DOCID+@lit\(mcc/004\)\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/mcc:@field(DOCID+@lit(mcc/004)))

## Illustration Sources:

- HarpWeek an online version of Harper's Weekly magazine: <http://www.harpweek.com/>
- American Memory Historical Collections from the Library of Congress:  
<http://memory.loc.gov/>) Specifically the following collections:
  - The Selected Civil War Photographs Collection:  
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/cwphhtml/cwphome.html>
  - Words and Deeds in American History:  
<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/mchtml/corhome.html>

## Teacher Background:

This lesson's primary purpose is to investigate the methods of communication used during the first war fought after the Industrial Revolution – the American Civil War. While the telegraph had revolutionized communication, with trans-Atlantic telegraph cables carrying messages from Europe to America and telegraph links between every city, the use of flags was actually much more important during the Civil War than the telegraph.

Major Albert Myer, an Army surgeon, invented the flag signal system, a uniquely American device, in the late 1850s. Both Confederate and Union troops used flags for communication, but a Union "Signal Corps" was not recognized as a separate division of the army until 1863. The military telegraph was never recognized in the same manner. Many of the telegraph operators were civilians and their independence was criticized by many in the U.S. Army.

## Introduction/Motivation:

Introduce the lesson by asking students how they would send a message from their school to Washington, D.C. After writing the various methods on the board, ask students which of these methods would have existed 140 years ago? Tell students that they will be investigating an invasion of Maryland that took place during the Civil War and the methods used by soldiers at that time to communicate messages about the invasion to headquarters in Washington.

NOTE: some of the reading in the lesson may use vocabulary that is unfamiliar to the students. Look over the lesson and prepare students for any words with which they may be unfamiliar.

## Lesson Development:

The first part of the lesson asks students to find Sugar Loaf Mountain, a hill where the invasion of Maryland in 1862 was first spotted. The lesson uses an 1861 map of the middle Atlantic states from the American Memory collection at the Library of Congress. The map is shown at various levels of magnification, so if students do not know where Sugar Loaf is at the beginning, tell them to keep working – it will become clear.

If you or your students have an fast Internet connection and wish to view the actual map, and want to control navigation around the map, the following link will go directly to the biographical information page. Click on the small map to go to a page where a map view allows various degrees of magnification and navigation. Have students view the part of Maryland where the school is located to see what landmarks were on the 1861 map.

- Map of part of Virginia, Maryland and Delaware from the best authorities Compiled from official sources & drawn by Chas. Heyne C. E. Lith. of J. Bien., 1861:  
[http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/gmd:@filreq\(@field\(NUMBER+@band\(g3790+cw0013400\)\)+@field\(COLLID+cwmap\)\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/gmd:@filreq(@field(NUMBER+@band(g3790+cw0013400))+@field(COLLID+cwmap)))

After students have discovered where Sugar Loaf Mountain is located, a short discussion of the Civil War is included for students whose curriculum does not cover the causes of the war. This could be supplemented by other sources if the teacher wishes.

Students will then investigate several methods of communication: they may have mentioned some during the introduction, while others may be new to them. Several web sites are used in this portion of the activity where students are asked to find out when the method of communication was first used. This will allow them to answer the question of which communication method could have been used in 1862.

Students are then asked to complete a simple chart to list advantages and disadvantages of the various methods of communication (carrier pigeon, flags, postal mail, and the telegraph) that were in use in 1862.

To see how people of the 1860s were fascinated by the U.S. Army Signal Corps, students are then asked to investigate a large illustration from the June 28, 1862 issue of *Harper's Weekly*

magazine. The instructions ask them to write descriptions of the 9 smaller pictures, but teachers may wish to have them write descriptions of only 3 or 4 scenes to save time.

Students are then shown the method by which the signal corps sent messages. It was called the "wig-wag" flag system – a simple method to communicate with one flag. Although it is no longer used, it was a communications breakthrough at the time. Students should be encouraged to try to use it to communicate simple messages and to compare it with other flag systems, such as the semaphore flag signaling system.

The Battle of Antietam was the result of Lee's invasion of Maryland in 1862. While the image showing Confederate dead on the battlefield may be unsettling for some students, Antietam was the single bloodiest day of the war; where almost 5,000 Union and Confederates soldiers were killed.

### **Thoughtful Activity:**

The final activity involving decoding a message. This allows students to try their hand at decoding an actual message sent during the Civil War using the wig-wag flag system which they have studied. After decoding this message, have them develop other codes to use with the flag system. Have them send their messages to one other using a flag and their own code as a key.

### **Scoring Tool:**

3 Points	The message is correctly interpreted. Students develop additional codes and exchange a wig-wag message using this code.
2 points	The message is correctly interpreted.
1 point	The message is partially interpreted.
0 points	The message is incorrectly interpreted.