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Who Am I?

A Civil War Mystery



Who wore this?

When?

Where?

Why?



U.S. Civil War Zouave Uniform

THE UNIFORM WORN BY the 5th New York Volunteer Infantry (Duryée's Zouaves) had a distinctive jacket, vest, sash, baggy trousers, and fez. During the first year of the Civil War other volunteer units on both sides wore the exotic uniform based on that of the elite Zouave battalion of the French Army. French soldiers were inspired by the colorful and exotic apparel that they saw when they invaded Algeria in 1830. First adopted by French colonial soldiers in North Africa in the 1830s, the appeal of the dashing Zouave image quickly extended worldwide. In the American Civil War, more than 70 volunteer Zouave units fought for the Union, including a unit that fought at the First Battle of Bull Run, and 25 fought for the Confederacy.

The election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860 transformed southern discontent into rebellion, as seven states seceded and created the Confederate States of America. When Lincoln refused to withdraw federal troops from Fort Sumter in Charleston, South Carolina, Confederate guns fired on the fort. Four more states now seceded and joined the Confederacy. A long and bloody war followed, leaving nearly 530,000 young men dead and 400,000 wounded.

The Battle of Bull Run, the first major clash in the Civil War, ended in a Confederate victory. It shattered illusions that either side would win quickly or easily. The battle came about when President Lincoln ordered General Irvin McDowell to strike Confederate forces at Manassas Junction, as a step toward taking Richmond. He wanted to move quickly against the enemy, hoping a decisive victory would quell the rebellion. Attacking early in the morning, Union forces first seemed to be winning, but the Confederates checked their advance. Confederate general Thomas Jackson earned the nickname "Stonewall" for his stout defensive stance. Late in the day, the Confederates counterattacked. Weary Union troops retreated, then panicked and fled helter-skelter back to Washington.



This United States Sharps rifle was carried by the 5th New York Zouaves.

Sharps Rifle

Have students answer the questions on the front of the poster and brainstorm the purpose of this outfit without showing the other related posters. Discuss their responses. Consider extending these questions to help students think carefully about their conclusions, including assumptions about gender and national origin.

Next, read students the background information, then consider the following as a class:

- ★ Why would this unit choose to copy the style of this group of French soldiers? Why do you think the French soldiers chose to dress like their former enemies?
- ★ What advantages and disadvantages do you think the uniform provided for soldiers?

Complete activities from the following resources from the National Museum of American History:

Who Am I? A History Mystery: <http://americanhistory.si.edu/militaryhistory/resources/whoami/whoami.html>

Comparing Confederate and Union Soldiers in the Civil War: <http://americanhistory.si.edu/militaryhistory/resources/Lesson8.pdf>

Voices of Bull Run: <http://americanhistory.si.edu/militaryhistory/resources/BullRun/UnitOverview.pdf>

First Person Accounts: Spotswood Rice, William Christie, Louis Myers: <http://americanhistory.si.edu/militaryhistory/resources/education.asp#3>

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What clues can you find to the wearer's identity?



Union Infantry Uniform

UNION SOLDIERS WORE regulation uniforms of heavy wool in just two sizes with leather-billed caps and stiff shoes. At the start of the Civil War enlisted men in the U.S. Army were issued two coats, a frock coat used for dress with standing collar that reached almost to the knees, and a fatigue coat for performing regular duties. According to the 1861 regulations trousers were to be dark blue like the coats. This was changed to sky blue on 16 December 1861 and lasted to the end of the war.

On a typical twenty-mile march, they packed more than sixty pounds of gear. Atop knapsacks stuffed with extra clothes, a weekly change of underwear, and personal “truck,” they carried rolled up wool and rubber blankets and half a tent. They filled haversacks (satchels) with salt pork, hardtack, coffee, sugar, dried peas, pressed sheets of dried vegetables, and perhaps a pickle. They slung canteens and cartridge boxes over their shoulders and carried muskets. A match safe, lantern, frying pan and cup would have been part of a soldier’s equipment.

In the North, soldiers were farmers and factory workers and newly arrived Irish immigrants; some were African Americans—both escaped slaves and, after 1862, free blacks who were recruited for the United States Colored Troops. Most soldiers were volunteers who joined for the cash bounty or the monthly salary (\$13 for privates in the Union army). Many were draftees unable to pay a substitute to go in their stead.



Civil War Soldier’s Mess

Have students brainstorm answers to the questions on the front of the poster. Be sure to help students consider the characteristics of the clothing, including material used and texture.

Next, read students the background information, then consider the following as a class:

- ★ Based on the background reading, describe the person you think may have worn this uniform.
- ★ What items did you think this person would need to carry? After listening to the background reading, which items were a surprise to you, or did you learn about for the first time?

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Uniform coat of Private in 9th Kentucky Infantry Regiment, known as Logan's Grays, CSA

THE CONFEDERACY STRUGGLED to keep troops equipped and supplied. Confederate soldiers wore various uniforms, although gray jackets became common. Many had no knapsacks; instead they looped their bedrolls across their torsos when they marched. Tents were scarce. Men kept tobacco and pipes, a bit of soap, and maybe foraged apples in their haversacks. Many immediately cooked and ate their three-day ration of fatback (pork) and cornbread, rather than packing it. They filled their canteens with buttermilk or cider, and kept a cup to dip water from streams. They carried their muskets, but most had no cartridge boxes, so they stuffed ammunition in their pockets.

Many soldiers from the South were farmers, mechanics, and students. Most were volunteers who joined for the cash bounty or the monthly salary (\$11 in the Confederate army). Many were draftees unable to pay a substitute to go in their stead. Many died in their first months from illness or wounds.



The Bowie knife was popular with Confederate forces during the Civil War.

Bowie Knife and Scabbard

Have students consider the questions on the front of the poster and discuss their responses. Use the following to prompt additional discussion:

- ★ Examine the uniform closely, especially the belt buckle. What does the uniform suggest about the wearer? Which side did this person support?

Next, read students the background information, then consider the following as a class:

- ★ Consider the experiences of Union and Confederate soldiers. How were they similar and how were they different?

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Patched Dress

A CIVIL WAR-ERA NURSE might have worn a dress like this. This dress has been patched and altered to extend its usefulness. Several thousand women worked as nurses in Union and Confederate military hospitals, caring for and comforting the wounded. Necessity forced armies on both sides to add women to their corps of male nurses. The U.S. Army specified that recruits be plain and directed them to dress simply, not in hoop skirts. Nurses worked far behind the lines, struggling to keep hundreds of patients washed and fed with lemon juice, beef-tea, and milk porridge. They changed dressings and packed deep wounds with cotton lint.



Vivandière Uniform

Women had other roles on the battlefield, too. Women known as vivandières—often daughters and wives of officers—accompanied and provided support to many Union and Confederate regiments. Vivandières sold tobacco, coffee, identification tags, oil lamps, hams, and whiskey, and did laundry, sewed, and cooked. They were quasi-military, often wearing

skirted uniforms and sometimes drawing a salary from the regimental paymaster.

Some women served as spies for their chosen side, but many stayed at home to run households and farms without their spouses. Many Southern women experienced deprivation, as food shortages became severe toward the end of the war. Moreover, Southern women experienced the war on their doorsteps. Some

young women, especially in the North, found work in industry, nursing, and teaching, replacing men who had gone to war.

Have students consider the questions on the front of the poster. Discuss their responses. Include the following to prompt additional discussion:

- ★ From what material is this dress made? Is the dress elaborately decorated, or simple? What might these answers suggest about where and why this dress was worn?

Next, read students the background information, then consider the following as a class:

- ★ In what other ways might women in the Civil War have supported the war effort?
- ★ Consider this dress relative to the other Civil War posters. What groups are represented in these posters? What other groups might be considered when thinking about this period in American history?

Have students choose one of the costumes presented on the posters and, using the background reading from all four posters and their knowledge of the period, answer the following prompt in 1–2 sentences: Who are you? What role do you play in the war and what are your motivations for participating? Alternate assignments: write a short diary entry or letter about the war from the perspective of the student's chosen character, or have students create short monologues with costumes inspired by the posters that describe each character's motivations and perspective on the conflict.

Complete activities from the following resources from the National Museum of American History:

Women's Role in the Civil War: <http://americanhistory.si.edu/militaryhistory/resources/Lesson7.pdf>

Who Am I? A History Mystery: <http://americanhistory.si.edu/militaryhistory/resources/whoami/whoami.html>

The Lincoln-Keckley Dress: <http://www.objectofhistory.org/objects/intro/dress/>

For more resources, visit Smithsonian's History Explorer: www.historyexplorer.si.edu