

Heroes Who Made a Difference

Memorializing a Distinguished Service Cross Award Recipient

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Lesson Description:

Overview: Students put actual names and individual actions to the larger events of World War I by learning about the Distinguished Service Cross and honoring a soldier from the United States who earned one. Students research a recipient of the medal and write an editorial commemorating that soldier. This can be kept within the classroom but has the opportunity for community outreach if there are local honorees.

Time: One to Four Days

Grade Level: 5-12

Objectives: At the conclusion of this lesson, students will be able to

- Examine the requirements to earn the Distinguished Service Cross
- Select and research a recipient of the medal during World War I
- Understand at least one major battle/offensive of World War I through the actions of an individual who acted heroically at that time.
- Write a newspaper editorial commemorating that soldier



Guiding Question: What does distinguished service to your country in a time of war look like? How does a medal serve as a symbol of the extraordinary service of an otherwise ordinary individual? What is the value in learning about a large-scale war through the experiences of an individual? How do we honor those individuals a century later?

Connections to Common Core: **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.2** Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

Connections to C3 Framework (National Council for the Social Studies): **D2.His.3.6-8.** Use questions generated about individuals and groups to analyze why they, and the developments they shaped, are seen as historically significant.

Documents Used:

Primary Sources:

Distinguished Service Cross: Artifact photograph and explanation
<http://historyexplorer.si.edu/resource/?key=4186>
<http://amhistory.si.edu/militaryhistory/collection/object.asp?ID=424>

Secondary Sources:

Home of Heroes website
(http://www.homeofheroes.com/valor/1_citelinks.html)

Lesson Preparation:

This lesson can serve as a concluding activity for a unit on World War I or a launch into a WWI unit. Students need to have access to the websites listed and teacher should navigate the websites ahead of time to help students. Students can be given “free-reign” to select a soldier of their choosing or the teacher can narrow it down to a limited number of soldiers.

Day 1 Procedure:

- Use the [Smithsonian History Explorer website](#) and the Smithsonian’s [Price of Freedom Primary Source](#) collection to learn and analyze the medal itself. Be sure to enlarge the image by click on it (another page opens with more details).
- Teachers can choose to have students work alone, in small groups, or as an entire class. Either way, students should individually complete the “Primary Source Analysis” worksheet using the medal and the website as a guide.
- Using the listed websites on the “Get to know your soldier” organizer, and other reliable online sources, select a soldier from World War I who was a recipient of the Distinguished Service Cross. Complete page one of the “Get to know your soldier” organizer the best you can with available reliable sources.

Day 2 Procedure:

- Finalize the “Get to know your soldier” organizer.
- Complete the “Editorial Outline” using the information collected. Use it to write the final editorial.

Assessment Materials:

Formative Assessment Materials:

- Primary Source Analysis Sheet
- Get to know your Soldier organizer
- Editorial Outline

Summative Assessment Materials:

- Completed Editorial

Methods for Extension:

- Read “The Shock of War” and add several sentences to your letter about the impact of the war on soldiers. Write in general terms like “Many soldiers in World War I...” Be careful not to make assumptions about the impact on your specific soldier.
<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/the-shock-of-war-55376701/>
- Contact your local newspaper and submit your editorial for publication.
- Create a class website or blog and electronically publish your editorials.

Adaptations:

- Complete only the “Editorial Outline” instead of writing the actual editorial.
- Teacher pre-searches for several soldiers with lots of information and provides students with the necessary information for the “Get to know your soldier” organizer.

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Primary Source Analysis

Artifact Title: Distinguished Service Cross Medal

Use the following websites to help you:

historyexplorer.si.edu/resource/?key=4186 (bit.ly/dscsmithsonian) **Click the medal for more!**
amhistory.si.edu/militaryhistory/collection/object.asp?ID=424 (bit.ly/dscsmithsonian2)

Date established: _____ Established by (Name & Title): _____

What do you think is the important **historical context** of that date and significance of the individual?

What are some of the qualifications of a medal recipient:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Artifact Description

Dimensions:	Materials:
Physical Description:	What is the significance of the symbols on the medal? - - - - -

Get to know your soldier

Name of soldier:	Service Branch:
Rank:	Division:
Hometown:	Regiment:
State:	Company:

Date of heroic action: _____ Location of heroic action: _____

Details of heroic actions (a good place to begin is HomeofHeroes.com bit.ly/dscww1):

Which Distinguished Service Cross qualifications did your soldier's actions meet?

Using the date and location of your soldier's death, research the actions of his division/regiment/company to connect his actions to the broader battle/war and how that battle impacted World War I:

Check off the sources you used:

[Home Of Heroes](#)

[U.S. Army Medical Department](#)

Other sources (properly cite):

Editorial Outline—A recommended “flow” for your editorial

Directions: You are going to write an editorial for a local newspaper explaining to readers what the distinguished service cross is, the soldier you researched, their specific actions, the impact that battle had on the overall war, and the need to remember the heroic actions of your soldier almost a century ago.

Introduction sentence: Start off naming your soldier, their rank and hometown, the date they conducted the heroic action, location of that action, and their status as a Distinguished Service Cross award recipient.

Next two to four sentences: Tell the story of your soldier’s heroic actions that day. Be specific and be accurate.

Next two to three sentences: Explain the battle this heroic action took place in and significance of battle in WWI.

Next two to four sentences: Explain the Distinguished Service Cross award and the qualifications to receive the award. Be sure to explain how specifically your soldier met the award requirements.

Conclusion: Explain how the actions of your soldier are historically significant and a personal statement regarding why the people of this community should remember your soldier.