

# DEFENDERS OF FREEDOM

## Video Clips

If you want to further engage your students in this topic, you can pull video clips from any of the following famous war films: *Glory* (1989), *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), *Platoon* (1986), *Blackhawk Down* (2001), *The Hurt Locker* (2008), and/or *Lone Survivor* (2013). Feel free to use any clip that you feel will powerfully show the experiences of men and women in the U.S. military.

## Additional Resources:

1. "Veterans History Project" A Project of the American Folklife Center of the Library of Congress  
<http://www.loc.gov/vets/>
2. Civil War Trust – Primary Sources from the Civil War  
<http://www.civilwar.org/education/history/primarysources/>
3. War Letters from Various Wars  
<http://www.war-letters.com/>
4. A Million Thanks - "Send a Letter to a Soldier"  
[http://amillionthanks.org/send\\_a\\_letter.php](http://amillionthanks.org/send_a_letter.php)

## LEARNING ACTIVITIES

### SET (Personal Connection)

To engage students and connect to prior knowledge about the military experience, use the Defenders of Freedom Lesson PowerPoint to provide the following questions: Would you ever consider joining the military? Why or why not? What characteristics does a soldier for the U.S. need to have? Why? You can have the students write down their answers, share those answers in pairs, then hold a brief class discussion.

### LECTURE/DISCUSSION: Overview of the U.S. Military

To provide students with an overview of the U.S. Military, use the Defenders of Freedom Lesson PowerPoint. You are also encouraged to do your own research to add to these slides. This simple lecture will provide a breakdown of the U.S. Armed Forces and some statistics. Students should be encouraged to take notes for understanding. Use probing questions to involve the class.

## ORAL HISTORY

Now that the students have a basic understanding of the U.S. military, play the following oral history interview from the Lincoln Legacy Project:

### – Boyle Brothers

Former U.S. Marines and brothers Chuck, Dan, and Ish Boyle reflect on the sacrifices their parents made in order for them to have more opportunities growing up and understand the importance of family. They also reflect on their time serving in the Marine Corps and how freedom, opportunity, and equality played an important role during their time in the Middle East.



Use the questions on the Defenders of Freedom Lesson PowerPoint to debrief and discuss their stories.

### PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS: Stories of Soldiers

Now that your students have heard the Boyle Brothers elaborate about their time and service in the US military, it time to allow your students to hear other soldier's stories using primary sources.

- **Analyze:** Using the internet (list of websites in the resources section), select a letter or other written account from a soldier. Have students read the account and summarize what the letter is indicating. What is the soldier's main point in the letter? What does the soldier's story "say" about life in the military?
- **Share:** Once students read the account and answer the questions, have students discuss their findings with a partner.
- **Class Discussion:** Have students present their findings to the class in a teacher led question/answer activity.

# DEFENDERS OF FREEDOM

## CONDUCT AN INTERVIEW: Defenders of Freedom

Now, it is time for your students to play historian. There are many stories that have not been recorded or told. Now it's your turn to add to the historical record.

- **Groups:** Break the students into groups. You could use pairs or groups of 3. Choose a leader for each group.
- **Find a Veteran:** Students should brainstorm methods to find a veteran to interview. Do they have someone in their family? Do they know someone in the community? If not, are there local organizations (i.e. American Legion) that the students could contact? In what era or time did this veteran serve? Provide as much scaffolding and support as necessary, but the idea is for students to take the lead in problem solving.
- **Research:** Once each group has identified a veteran to interview, the students should research the era, time, conflict, etc. that this person was involved in. The idea is to gain valuable background information to build questions for the interview. This research could be done over several days in class or at home.
- **Create Questions:** Each group should write at least 5-10 good questions to use in the interview. These questions must be respectful and appropriate. Be careful and sensitive when writing questions about combat experience. Students should work together to come up with the most interesting questions possible.
- **Conduct the Interview:** Students should schedule a time to meet with their veteran. Use a consent form or release to videotape the interview. Conduct the interview. Instruct students to make sure to send a thank you note to their veteran afterwards for doing the interview.
- **Share in Class:** As a class, you can hold a film festival to share the recorded interviews. Or, groups can simply share their highlights during brief presentations.

## EXTENSION: Modern Day Issues

What does our country owe to its veterans? What should the government do for them? What does the government do for them? As a possible extension activity for this lesson, students can explore issues involving the military and veterans today. Such issues can include:

- **Funding/Defense Budget**  
How much money is spent? Is this too much or too little? Why?
- **Benefits of Service/GI Bill**  
What benefits do soldiers receive for serving the country? Should these be expanded or reduced? Why or why not?
- **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)**  
What are some of the mental health issues associated with combat experience?
- **Preparedness/Supplies**  
Do U.S. soldiers always have what they need? Why or why not?
- **Veterans Administration**  
What is the VA? What services does it provide? What are its positives? What are its criticisms?
- **Use of the Military Around the World**  
When should the U.S. military be used? What is a good reason to send men and women into harm's way?

There are a number of different directions you could go with these issues. Students could conduct short research projects on these topics. You could have students write a letter to the editor of a local newspaper expressing their views. Or, students could write a letter to their congress person arguing for a change in policy. Choose what works best in the time you have available and for your students. Let their interest guide the way.

## CLOSURE: Thank You Card

Have your students write a thank you letter to a member of the United States military currently serving overseas. What message do you want that soldier to have? Encourage students to mail their letters using the website "A Million Thanks" ([http://amillionthanks.org/send\\_a\\_letter.php](http://amillionthanks.org/send_a_letter.php)).

# CONDUCT AN INTERVIEW — DEFENDERS OF FREEDOM

## Adding to the Historical Record

### OVERVIEW

From the moment the minutemen stood in defiance of tyranny at Lexington Green, Americans have been willing to fight for and defend their freedom. Millions of men and women have served proudly in the U.S. military for over 240 years. They helped give birth to this country at Yorktown. They bled at Gettysburg to keep the country together. They suffered unspeakable horrors of the trenches on the Western Front. They stormed the beaches of Normandy. And, many have given their “last full measure of devotion” to defend freedom in other countries across the world. Their contributions are deserving of more recognition than just medals and monuments. Sadly, so many of their stories have gone unrecorded.

In this activity, you will play historian to conduct an interview of a man or woman who served our country. Read the directions below carefully.

### DIRECTIONS

- **Groups:** Break into groups. You could work in pairs or in groups of 3. Choose a leader for each group.
- **Find a Veteran:** Brainstorm methods to find a veteran to interview. Do you have someone in your family? Do you know someone in the community? If not, are there local organizations (i.e. American Legion) that you could contact? In what era or time did this veteran serve?
- **Research:** Once your group has identified a veteran to interview, you should research the era, time, conflict, etc. that this person was involved in. The idea is to gain valuable background information to build questions for the interview. This research could be done over several days in class or at home.
- **Create Questions:** Each group should write at least 5-10 good questions to use in the interview. These questions must be respectful and appropriate. Be careful and sensitive when writing questions about combat experience. You should work together to come up with the most relevant and interesting questions possible.

- **Conduct the Interview:** Schedule a time to meet with the veteran. Use a consent form or release to videotape the interview. Conduct the interview. Make sure to send a thank you note to their veteran afterwards for doing the interview. Feel free to use the resources on conducting oral history interviews at <http://www.lincolnslegacyoralhistories.com>.
- **Share in Class:** As a class, we will hold a film festival to share the recorded interviews. Or, groups can simply share their highlights during brief presentations.

