



# Reading Civil War Maps

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## Grade Level

2-8<sup>th</sup>, High School U.S. History

## Estimated Time

1 hour – 1 ½ hours. More time may be allotted for students to create their own maps.

## Goal

After viewing the short documentary film *The Challenge*, students will study historical maps of Charleston during the Civil War, and locate important historical sites discussed in the films. Students will also learn about the importance of maps to Civil War military leaders and discuss their utility to modern historians and archaeologists.

## Objectives

After completing the activity and viewing *The Challenge*, students will be able to:

1. *Recall* historical events featured in the Fort Lamar documentary films.
2. *Summarize* key events from the documentary.
3. *Locate* Fort Lamar, the Battle of Secessionville, and the Swamp Angel in South Carolina and in the Charleston area.
4. *Explain* the significance of the Battle of Secessionville in the context of the Civil War.
5. *Demonstrate* basic map reading skills.
6. *Identify* key map elements (e.g., scale, map symbols, latitude and longitude) and explain why understanding these elements is important for the reader.
7. *Analyze* historical maps that depict Fort Lamar, the Swamp Angel, and other locations in and around Charleston during the Civil War.
8. *Hypothesize* how historical maps may have been used in the past / what their original purpose was.
9. *Contrast* different historical maps that depict the same place and time period.
10. *Explain* why maps are useful resources for historians and archaeologists.
11. *Compare* Charleston and the surrounding area as depicted on historical maps to Charleston today, as depicted on modern maps.
12. *Create* their own map, drawing on historical maps as a reference and incorporating basic map elements (e.g. scale, symbols, a title, etc.).

## **Academic Standards**

### **Social Studies**

- 2-1.1 Identify on a map the location of places and geographic features of the local community (e.g., landforms, bodies of water, parks) using the legend and the cardinal directions.
  - 2-1.2 Recognize characteristics of the local region, including its geographic features and natural resources.
  - 2-1.3 Recognize the features of urban, suburban, and rural areas of the local region.
  - 2-1.4 Summarize changes that have occurred in the local community over time, including changes in the use of land and in the way people earn their living.
  - 2-1.5 Identify on a map or globe the location of his or her local community, state, nation, and continent.
  - 3-4.4 Summarize the course of the Civil War in South Carolina, including the Secession Convention, the firing on Fort Sumter, the Union blockade of Charleston, the significance of the *Hunley* submarine; the exploits of Robert Smalls; and General William T. Sherman's march through the state.
  - 4-6.4 Summarize significant battles, strategies, and turning points of the Civil War, including the battles of Fort Sumter and Gettysburg, the Emancipation Proclamation, the role of African Americans in the war, the surrender at Appomattox, and the assassination of President Lincoln.
  - 4-6.5 Explain the social, economic, and political effects of the Civil War on the United States.
  - 8-4.5 Compare the military strategies of the North and the South during the Civil War and the fulfillment of these strategies in South Carolina and in the South as a whole, including the attack on Fort Sumter, the Union blockade of Charleston and other ports, the early capture of Port Royal, and the development of the *Hunley* submarine; the exploits of Robert Smalls; and General William T. Sherman's march through the state.
- USHC-3.2 Summarize the course of the Civil War and its impact on democracy, including the major turning points; the impact of the Emancipation Proclamation; the unequal treatment afforded to African American military units; the geographic, economic, and political factors in the defeat of the Confederacy; and the ultimate defeat of the idea of secession.

### **Activity Type: In-Class / Out-of-Class**

This is to be done as an in-class activity. The teacher will provide the required materials. Students may complete the final segment of the lesson plan, which involves creating their own map, outside of class.

### **Materials**

- “Civil War Map Analysis” Worksheet (questions may be adapted to better suit individual grades or classes)
- “Civil War Maps” Handout (optional – students may study the historical maps online.)

- Art Supplies (pencils, pens, paper, graph paper, markers, rulers, etc.)

## Fort Lamar History

- By the spring of 1862, Union forces under the leadership of Brigadier General David Hunter, commander of the Union's Department of the South, were poised to launch an assault on Charleston by way of land. A Union victory at the Battle of Port Royal in November of 1861 provided the Federals an excellent staging area for organizing an attack on the city. Logistical information provided by Robert Smalls, a runaway slave who had commandeered a Confederate steamer, the C.S.S. Planter, opened the way for Union troops to advance on James Island.
- Capturing Charleston early into 1862 would have dramatically turned the tide of war in the Union's favor. The North could have utilized Charleston's large harbor and railroad connections to launch large-scale campaigns into the South's interior, potentially forcing the Confederacy to divert its eastern forces away from Virginia.
- To protect Charleston's southern flank, the Confederates, under the command of Major General John C. Pemberton, constructed a string of fortifications on James Island, extending from Fort Pemberton on the Stono River to a small fort built on the neck of the Secessionville peninsula. General Pemberton placed South Carolinian Brigadier General Nathan George "Shanks" Evans in charge of the island's defenses.
- The Secessionville fort, then known as the Tower Battery for the watchtower constructed at the site, was flanked by marsh on both sides and was built on the narrowest portion of the peninsula, which measured only 125 yards wide. Colonel Thomas G. Lamar was placed in command of the fort and tasked with overseeing its construction.
- On June 2, 1862, Union forces under the command of Brigadier General Henry W. Benham, who was placed in charge of the operation by General David Hunter, landed on the southwestern tip of James Island at the Grimball Plantation.
- A few minor skirmishes followed as Union forces began to unload supplies and organize troops, in turn prompting the Confederates to reinforce their fortifications.
- Worried that they did not have enough men to capture Charleston, General Hunter ordered General Benham to not advance on Charleston or Fort Johnson until he received reinforcements or direct orders to attack.
- Despite these instructions, in the early morning of June 16th General Benham launched a surprise attack on the Secessionville fort. This force, totaling around 6,500 men organized into two columns, was expected to easily overwhelm the Confederate garrison of 500.
- As the Union force approached the fort, they had to navigate through overgrown hedge rows and open cotton fields, slowing their advance. As the land approaching the fort narrowed, the left side of the Union column was pushed into the marsh, breaking the line and compressing the center, causing the second wave to run into the first.

- At this point, around 5:00 am, the fort's defenders were alerted to the Union's presence. As the Confederates rushed to their stations, Colonel Lamar took personal command of the 8-inch Columbiad cannon. When the Union lines were within two hundred yards of the fort, they were met with the mighty Columbiad's blast.
- Despite sustaining heavy fire from the fort's cannons, the Union forces managed to climb onto the fort's parapets where they fought hand to hand with the Confederate defenders.
- The fort's garrison was quickly reinforced by surrounding Confederate battalions, who were able to repel the Union's foothold.
- The marshes inhibited the Union army from launching a successful flanking maneuver to assist the main assault, as the water and pluff mud proved to be impassable.
- Confederate artillery fire to the Union's flank, in addition to Confederate reinforcements, forced General Benham to order a retreat. Despite the battle only lasting around two and a half hours, losses were heavy.
- The Union sustained nearly 700 casualties, with 107 killed, while the Confederates experienced around 200 casualties, with 52 killed. Most of the battle's casualties occurred either on the narrow peninsula immediately in front of the fort or on the fort itself.
- After the battle, the Secessionville fort, which was referred to as the "Tower Battery" at the time of the battle, was renamed to Fort Lamar in honor of its commander. Colonel Lamar, who was wounded during the battle, died a year later from fever contracted while serving on the island.
- By July 8th, the Union army vacated James Island and returned to Port Royal.
- For disobeying orders and losing the battle, General Benham was court martialed and demoted.
- Fort Lamar was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1979.

## Basic Map Skills Background

- A **map** is a symbolic representation of a place, drawn on a flat surface, and designed to display specific characteristics about a place in a visual way. Different types of maps tell us different things about a place, but all maps have a few common characteristics.
- All maps use **symbols** to represent information. Common map symbols include dots for cities and towns, solid lines to represent borders, rivers, or roads, and colors to represent a country's area or geography. Symbols are defined in a **map's legend, or key**.
- All maps are models of a place, and many maps have a **scale** to indicate the relationship between distances shown on the map and real distances on Earth. Scales are most commonly displayed as a graphic scale, or a horizontal line with increments that translate distance on the map to miles, kilometers or another unit of measurement.

- A common feature on maps is a **grid** of numbered lines, called latitude and longitude. These lines divide the world into imaginary sections. Lines of **latitude** run east to west, parallel to the Equator, while lines of **longitude** run north to south, from pole to pole. Latitude and longitude are measured in **degrees**. The **Equator** is zero degrees latitude, while the **Prime Meridian** is zero degrees longitude. Lines of latitude and lines of longitude intersect to create **coordinates**, which are used to find a place's exact location in the world.
- Other important map elements include a map's title, author, date, and orientation. A map's title is important because it tells us what the map is depicting. A map's author and date are also important because they can inform the reader of a map's accuracy and / or its purpose. **Orientation** tells us direction on a map and is often indicated by an arrow pointing north or a **compass rose**.
- Because of the Earth's spherical shape, it is impossible to perfectly transfer the planet's surface to a flat map. Therefore, all maps suffer from some sort of **distortion** that alters the size, shape, and relative location of places depicted on a map. The larger the area a map covers, the greater its distortion will be.
- **Projection** refers to the way mapmakers, called **cartographers**, choose to depict a place on a flat map and what characteristics they want to accurately represent. For example, on a conical projection map, in which Earth is represented as a flattened cone, latitude lines appear curved while lines of longitude appear straight. The result is that areas between the poles and the equator are accurately represented, while areas close to the equator or poles are distorted. Conversely, in a cylindrical projection, where the earth is represented as flattened cylinder, the areas near the equator are accurately depicted, but accuracy decreases in areas closer to the poles.
- Maps serve a variety of purposes and are designed to accurately display specific characteristics of a place, while omitting other types of information depending on the map's intended purpose. **General references maps** show important physical features of an area, such as the locations of cities, roads, mountains, rivers, and coastlines. Their primary purpose is to summarize the landscape and are useful for a variety of purposes. **Thematic maps**, on the other hand, only depict information on a specific topic or theme and are only useful for their specific purpose. An example of a thematic map could be the distribution of people's average income in a city via neighborhood, or the regional distribution of primary languages in a country.

## Vocabulary

- **Cardinal Directions** – one of the four main points of a compass: North, South, East, West.
- **Cartographer** – a person who makes maps.
- **Compass Rose** – a symbol indicating the cardinal directions (North, South, East, and West). Used on a map to orientate the reader.
- **Coordinates** – a set of numbers that gives a place's precise location, typically its latitude and longitude.

- **Degree** – unit of measurement for latitude and longitude.
- **Distance** – measurable space between two or more objects.
- **Distortion** – representation that is inaccurate, mistaken, or false.
- **Equator** – an imaginary line around the Earth, running east-west, at 0 degrees latitude.
- **General Reference Map** – a map that displays general geographic / physical facts about an area with the purpose of summarizing the landscape.
- **Graphic Scale** – a way of relating distance on a map by using a bar scale that correlates a unit of measure on a map to actual distances on Earth.
- **Grid** – horizontal and vertical lines used to locate objects in relation to one another on a map.
- **Latitude** – distance north or south of the Equator, measured in degrees.
- **Location** – the position of a particular point on the surface of the Earth.
- **Longitude** – distance east or west of the Prime Meridian, measured in degrees.
- **Map** – a symbolic representation of a place, typically depicted on a flat surface.
- **Orientation** – an object or person's position in relation to true north.
- **Projection** – the method by which a place on the globe is represented on a flat map.
- **Map Legend** – a part of the map that explains symbols and abbreviations used on the map. Also called a key.
- **Prime Meridian** – an imaginary line around the Earth running north to south, at 0 degrees longitude.
- **Scale** – the relationship between distances shown on a map and actual distances.
- **Symbol** – a sign or mark that represents something else.
- **Thematic Map** – a map that displays information or data of a particular topic or theme.

## Lesson

1. Give a brief overview of Fort Lamar and the Battle of Secessionville. Show your students the short documentary film *The Challenge*. You can also show the short documentary films *The Confrontation*, *The Battle*, and *The Swamp Angel*.
2. Review necessary map skills, depending on grade level and prior class experience with studying maps. Review map vocabulary as necessary.
3. Introduce the two maps your students will be using for this lesson:
  - a. **Map 1** - "Map of the Defenses of Charleston City and Harbor", available at: <https://www.loc.gov/resource/g3701sm.gcw0098000/?sp=7&r=0.145,0.075,0.447,0.285,0>.
  - b. **Map 2** - "Map of Charleston Harbor with Morris Island and James, Broad, Folly, and Cole's Islds.: showing the position of the Union and Rebel forts and batteries & & November and December 1863", available at: <https://www.loc.gov/resource/gvhs01.vhs00267/?r=-0.073,-0.07,1.132,0.687>.

4. It is recommended that students complete this activity in the computer lab, so students can move around the maps and observe details on their own. Alternatively, this lesson can be completed in the classroom by displaying the maps on the board.
5. Distribute the "Civil War Map Analysis Worksheet." Students can also answer the questions on a separate sheet of paper.
6. Have your students look at **Map 1**, "Map of the Defenses of Charleston City and Harbor".
7. As a class, discuss the contents of this map. Have your students contribute questions and observations, using the questions on the worksheet to guide conversation. Areas for discussion include:
  - a. What do you immediately notice when looking at this map?
  - b. Can you locate important map elements, such as the map's legend, title, date, scale, coordinates, symbols, etc.?
  - c. What do the red and blue markings mean?
  - d. What was the map's intended / original purpose? How was this map useful in the Civil War and to whom?
  - e. How easy or difficult is it to read this map?
  - f. Can you locate places mentioned in the documentary, such as Fort Lamar / Secessionville, the Swamp Angel, Fort Wagner, Fort Johnson, Fort Sumter, and Grimball's plantation? Discuss the locations of these places in relation to each other. Does looking at a map provide a clearer view of the events depicted in the *Fort Lamar* documentary?
  - g. How might this map be useful to historians and archaeologists today?
8. Next, have your students look at **Map 2**, "Map of Charleston Harbor with Morris Island and James, Broad, Folly, and Cole's Islands".
9. As a class, discuss the contents of this map. As with Map 1, have your students contribute observations and questions for discussion.
  - a. Compare this map to the previous map. How are they similar? How are they different?
  - b. What information does Map 2 convey that Map 1 does not?
  - c. Can you identify key map elements, such as the map's legend, title, author, date, scale, symbols, etc.?
  - d. How did the mapmaker for Map 2 use color differently than the mapmaker for Map 1?
  - e. What was this map's intended / original purpose? How was it useful and to whom?
  - f. Can you find the same locations you found with Map 1 on Map 2?
10. Discuss with your students the necessity of accurate maps in the Civil War. How was having an accurate map important for certain weapons or military operations, such as the Swamp Angel?
11. Find a detailed view of Charleston on a modern map, like Google Earth. Ask your class to compare how Charleston and its surrounding areas have changed since Map 1 and 2 were created in the 1860s. Zoom in on the locations your students

identified on the historical maps (i.e., Fort Lamar, the Swamp Angel, Fort Wagner, etc.). Explore questions such as: Do these structures still exist? How has their surrounding area changed? Charleston has grown a lot since the Civil War. Should we be worried about losing or damaging these historical sites because of residential or business development?

12. After your students have completed the worksheet, tell them that they will now be creating a map of their own. Distribute art supplies. Have your students create a map of their local neighborhood, town, community, or area. It is up to the students to determine what characteristics / information they want to represent on their maps. They can create a general reference map or a thematic map. Whatever their decision, a map must contain symbols, a title, a map key, and a scale. When creating their maps, students may use the historical maps used in this lesson as references.

## References

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- United States War Department, Davis, G. B., Cowles, C. D. & Caldwell, J. A. (1892) *Atlas of the war of the Rebellion giving Union and Confederate armies by actual surveys by the Union and Confederate engineers, and approved by the officers in command, of all the maps herein published*. New York: Atlas Pub. Co. [Map] Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2009581111/>.

# Civil War Map Analysis Worksheet

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For this activity, you will be analyzing two historical maps from the Civil War. Both maps depict the Charleston harbor and its surrounding sea islands, as well as Confederate and Union fortifications. Study each map carefully, observing small details, noting design choices by the cartographer, and answer the questions below. Be sure to discuss your answers as a class.

## **Map # 1: “Map of the Defenses of Charleston City and Harbor”**

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/g3701sm.gcw0098000/?sp=7&r=0.145,0.075,0.447,0.285>

1. What is the first thing you notice when looking at this map?
2. What is the map’s full title, as printed on the map?
3. Whose report was this map intended to accompany?
4. What unit of measurement does the map’s scale use?
5. What do the red and blue lines represent, according to the map key?
6. Find the following places on the map: The city of Charleston, Fort Lamar & Secessionville, the Swamp Angel, Fort Wagner, Fort Johnson, Fort Sumter, Grimball’s plantation, and the Stono River. Are these locations closer together or farther away from what you initially expected? Does seeing these locations on a map provide a clearer picture of the military operations in and around Charleston during the Civil War?
7. Observe the darker shaded areas around Fort Lamar. What do you think these darker areas represent?
8. What do you think this map’s intended or original purpose was? Why was it created and for whom?
9. How easy or difficult did you find reading this map?
10. How might this map be useful to historians or archaeologists?

**Map #2: “Map of Charleston Harbor with Morris Island and James, Broad, Folly, and Cole’s Islands”**

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/gvhs01.vhs00267/?r=-0.073,-0.07,1.132,0.687>

1. Compare this map to the previous map. How are they similar? How are they different?
2. What information does Map 2 tell us that Map 1 does not?
3. What is this map’s full title, as printed on the map?
4. Who is the author of this map? What organization did they belong to?
5. What is the map’s scale?
6. How did the mapmaker for Map 2 use color differently than the mapmaker for Map 1?
7. What was this map’s intended purpose? How was it useful and to whom?
8. Can you find the same locations on Map 2 that you found on Map 1? What locations are missing, if any?
9. Does this map also indicate different types of terrain, like in Map 1? How does it do this?
10. How easy or difficult did you find reading this map?
11. How might this map be useful to historians or archaeologists?