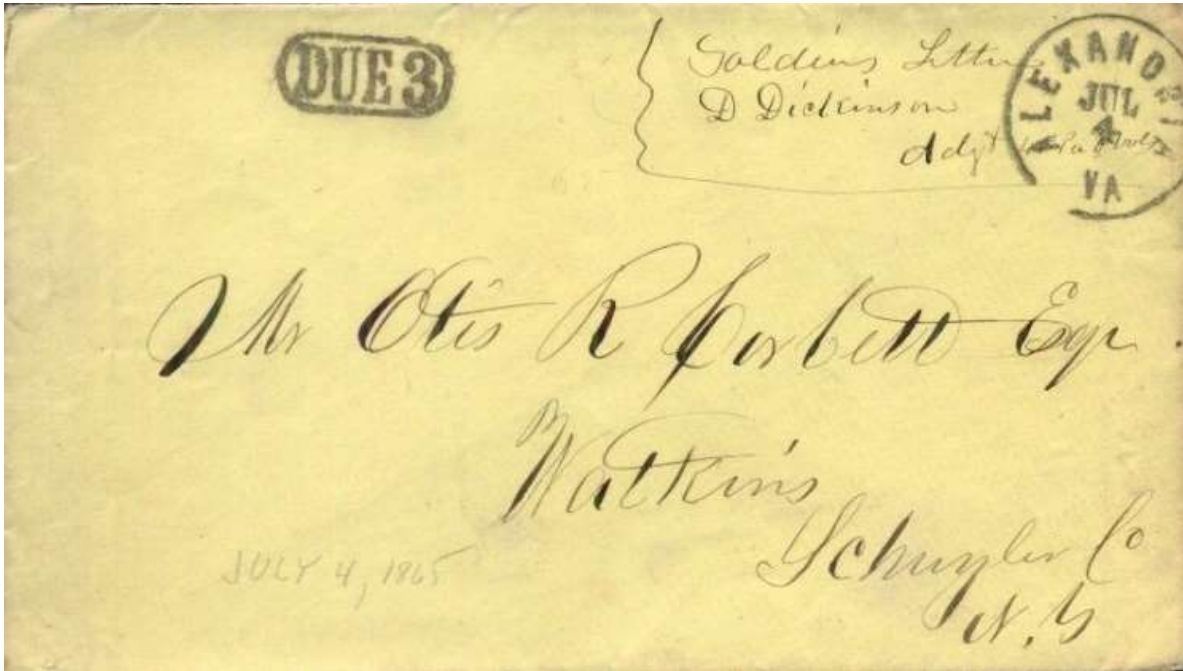


# Civil War

## Letter Writing Activity



Washington D. C. March 9. 1862

Dear Brother yours of the 27<sup>th</sup> mailed the 27<sup>th</sup> come to  
to hand last <sup>night</sup> and I haste to answer it but I shall  
have to be brief as the mail leaves soon I will  
say that my general health is good although I  
have a cough from the effects of cold I caught  
some <sup>time</sup> ago we have had another snow since I last  
wrote you from Meridian Hill to Fort Glacum  
four <sup>miles</sup> distant from there six miles from Washington  
in a north westerly direction there is two companies to  
guard this fort it covers  $\frac{1}{2}$  acre the rest of our regiment  
is placed in four other different forts from one to  
two miles apart one the head quarters Fort Totten has  
three companies and is three quarters of mile distant  
there is ten twenty four pounders in our fort  
our Colonel has had further difficulty with the  
our officers has been arrested ~~examined~~ before  
a board found guilty of charges consequent the

## Civil War Letter Writing Activity

As you learned in Peter Serko's article, **Letter Writing During the American Civil War** at <https://historicbooksforkids.com/articles/b/Letter-Writing-During-the-American-Civil-War>, writing letters was the only way to stay in touch with loved ones. Most had never been separated for a single day let alone months and years. Soldiers worried about the health, safety and welfare of their families – parents, siblings, wives and children – while they were away.

Learning the news of their communities helped them to forget about their own perils and the sometimes monotony of being a soldier. The more letters they received, the better their morale, especially if it was good news.

In this activity, you will work with a partner to write letters. One of you pretend to be a civil war soldier and the other, a family member. If working in a homeschool co-op, try partnering with someone you otherwise have no contact with (including social media!)

### Choose a date

Review the timeline at <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/articles/day-civil-war> and choose a date or period to begin and use for your correspondence.

### Create your character

You and your correspondence partner will need to make up characters who may have lived during the American Civil War. If you have actual ancestors from that conflict, you can pretend to be them. Your letters to each other will be through the eyes of these characters. You can be siblings, cousins, best friends, parent and child or any other close relationship you choose.

Write down every characteristic of who you will pretend to be. Work with your partner so your characters do not conflict in backgrounds:

#### **Soldier:**

- Name, rank, age, etc.
- Relationship to your correspondence partner
- Describe your surroundings. Where are you located? What battle(s) have just passed or are forthcoming?
- Describe your fellow soldiers/friends/captain. [Note, many soldiers named new babies after their immediate commanders out of respect.]
- What do you miss most from home?
- What (if any) home responsibilities can you handle from afar?
- Are you a Union or Confederate soldier? For which cause will you be fighting? Why is that cause important to you?

- What are your biggest concerns about home? What do you most want to know?

**Correspondent (friend/relative):**

- Name, age, gender, etc.
- Relationship to your correspondence partner
- Describe your home and community. Where do you live? Is it a farm? Is it in a city or town? Who are your neighbors?
- Describe the rest of your family. Who will you need to write about?
- What was life like before the soldier went away? What was your most pressing concerns? What occupied your thoughts?
- What are the hardships caused by your soldier’s absence? What new thoughts/concerns have emerged?
- How do you feel about your soldier’s choice to support the cause (whether Union or Confederate)?
- What are your biggest concerns about your soldier? What do you most want to know about?

**Begin your correspondence**

Be sure to hand write your letters and envelopes. Use plain, unlined paper. Write through the eyes of your character as though you are really in the place and time described in your characteristics.

Be sure to react to true events that happened on the dates you choose. Write at least five letters each, or continue throughout the duration of your Civil War education.

**Discuss what you learned**

Receiving letters was a big deal and families would be eager to share them. Read letters aloud to the rest of your fictional “family” (or in class.) Then you can discuss in class or homeschool the things you learned or wrote about.



**Read Hattie’s War by Peter Serko**

A story inspired by real Civil War era people and things learned in their letters.

Available in our bookshop at [www.HistoricBooksForKids.com](http://www.HistoricBooksForKids.com).

