

# CIVIL WAR

## ON THE WESTERN BORDER

### LESSON PLAN

CIVILWARONTHEWESTERNBORDER.ORG

#### OVERVIEW

#### GRADE LEVEL:

8-12

#### SUBJECT:

U.S. History

Missouri History

Kansas History

#### ESTIMATED CLASS TIME:

80-120 minutes

#### WEBSITE RESOURCES:

[Toward an Emancipationist Interpretation of George Caleb Bingham's General Order No. 11: The Reception History of the Painting and The Remembered Civil War in Missouri](#), by Joan Stack

[Martial Law Painting](#)

[General Order No. 11 Border War Encyclopedia Entry](#)

[General Order No. 11 Text](#)

[Back Home WPA Post Office Mural](#)

## General Order No. 11 and Bingham's *Martial Law*

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### Introduction

The Missouri-Kansas border region erupted into violence and disorder before and during the Civil War. Armed Southern sympathizers waged a guerrilla war against the Union forces that were tasked with keeping Missouri from falling into Confederate hands. Union Brigadier General Thomas Ewing held command of the border region, and in 1863 he seized artist George Caleb Bingham's empty Kansas City home to serve as a prison for female relatives of Missouri rebels. The house tragically collapsed on August 13, 1863, and four of the women being held within perished, an event that fueled the violent raid on the town of Lawrence, Kansas, by William Quantrill and hundreds of guerrilla fighters only eight days later.

In reaction to this event and many other violent acts taking place along the Missouri-Kansas border, General Ewing issued his infamous General Order No. 11 later that same month. The order mandated that residents of rural areas in Jackson, Cass, Bates, and Vernon Counties in Missouri leave their homes and report to local military authorities. Citizens who could convince military authorities of their loyalty to the Union were then permitted to settle within one mile of a military post in Missouri or to relocate to non-border areas of Kansas.

Ewing's supporters maintained that the action helped quell violence in the area by severing the link between pro-Confederate guerrilla fighters and their networks of support. His opponents, on the other hand, claimed that General Order No. 11 displaced loyal citizens and destroyed countless families and homes.



*Martial Law, or General Order No. 11. Painting. 1868. State Historical Society of Missouri – Columbia.*

Although he remained loyal to the Union, George Caleb Bingham was an avowed critic of Ewing and filled his painting with depictions of mayhem caused by the order. While Bingham made his position on Ewing's action perfectly clear, the exact way he intended *Martial Law* to be interpreted by viewers has been debated over the years.

## Objectives

This lesson introduces students to General Order No. 11, to the conditions along the Missouri-Kansas border that set the stage for it, and to the ways it affected the lives of civilians trying to survive during the war years. Students will also be introduced to George Caleb Bingham's artistic depiction of the effects of General Order No. 11, *Martial Law*, and to the idea that artistic works can be interpreted in a variety of ways that can impact our understanding of history.

## Requirements

This lesson plan was inspired by Professor Joan Stack's article "Toward an Emancipationist Interpretation of George Caleb Bingham's *General Order No. 11*," printed in the July 2013 issue of *Missouri Historical Review* (<http://www.kchistory.org/u?/Local,40632>). It is advised that the instructor read this article prior to implementation of this plan.

Students will require access to web accessible computers or tablets and the instructor will require the use of a classroom multimedia projector.

## Instructional Plan

1. Display Bingham's *Martial Law* painting (<http://www.civilwaronthewesternborder.org/content/martial-law>) before students using a classroom projector or other multimedia display device. Allow time for students to absorb the content of the painting. Ask for volunteers to share their reactions and interpretations of the events depicted therein with the class. Record responses and other keywords that the painting elicits from students. Use the list of recorded items to lead a class discussion of Bingham's painting. Suggested discussion questions:
  - Who was George Caleb Bingham?
  - Do you think the scene in this painting took place before, during, or after the Civil War?
  - Who do you think the main figures of the painting are? What do their actions suggest about the scene created by the artist?
2. Assign students to read the Border War Encyclopedia entry for General Order No. 11 (<http://www.civilwaronthewesternborder.org/content/general-order-no-11>) as well as the actual text of the document. (<http://www.civilwaronthewesternborder.org/content/general-order-no-11-0>)
3. Divide students into small discussion groups. Ask that each group discuss the following question: Was General Order No. 11 a necessary action?
4. Assign students to assume the role of an individual living along the Missouri border when General Order No. 11 was issued and compose a letter to a family

member or friend describing their reaction. Instruct students to use the figures depicted in Bingham's painting as inspiration if they experience difficulty deciding upon a role. Instruct students to refer back to the text of General Order No. 11 while composing their letter. Student-composed letters should address the following points:

- The geographic area affected by the order
  - Actions they must take as a result of the order
  - Where they are able to reside after being evacuated
  - The likely consequences for their homes, livestock, and crops after being evacuated
5. Lead a class discussion regarding General Order No. 11 and *Martial Law*. Introduce students to the three interpretations of Bingham's painting described below:
- The Pro-Confederate Interpretation
    - Missourians victimized
    - The old man stands in opposition to a group of Union soldiers
    - The painting shows Union evils inflicted upon innocent people
    - The behavior of the African American figures, e.g. the slave woman in the red dress is holding a white woman that has fainted rather than attending to her own needs
  - The Reconciliationist Interpretation
    - Bingham wanted to help heal Missouri after the Civil War
    - Reunion through the assigning of equivalent blame, Union and Confederate, for atrocities committed during the war
    - Bingham's painting captures his anger with the actions of General Ewing and not with individual acts committed by Union or Confederate forces.
  - The Emancipationist Interpretation
    - A left-to-right viewing of the painting shows a cause and effect relationship that leads toward emancipation for slaves
    - The white father seems frozen in the past while the African American father leads his son into the future
    - The painting conveys a sense of shared experience amongst whites and African American slaves
    - The act of self-emancipation seems encouraged by the African American father exiting the scene with his son (note: slavery did not end in Missouri until January 11, 1865, more than a year after General Order No. 11 was issued)
    - Slaves are depicted in Bingham's painting and not hidden
      - To illustrate this point further, display Tom Lea's WPA Post Office mural *Back Home* (<http://livingnewdeal.berkeley.edu/projects/post-office-mural-pleasant-hill-mo/>) before class. Encourage students to notice that the subject of slavery in Missouri is not addressed in Lea's mural at all while Bingham chose to confront the issue in his painting.
6. Assign students to assume the role of an art critic writing in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and to compose a written reaction to their viewing of *Martial Law*. Each written

response should support at least one of the interpretations listed above and explain why at least one other interpretation is incorrect.

### Standards Statement

This lesson plan has been designed in keeping with the National Council for the Social Studies' framework for social studies content standards, with focus placed upon the goals of encouraging students to better understand important concepts, such as change over time, historical context, continuity, and bias, so that they may become more effective historical researchers and argumentative writers.

### Suggested Assessment Rubrics<sup>1</sup>

<b>General Order No. 11 Letter Assessment Rubric</b>				
<b>Category</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Sentences &amp; Paragraphs</b>	Sentences and paragraphs are complete, well-constructed and of varied structure.	All sentences are complete and well-constructed. Paragraphing is generally done well.	Most sentences are complete and well-constructed. Paragraphing needs some work.	Many sentence fragments or run-on sentences, or paragraphing needs lots of work.
<b>Ideas</b>	Ideas were expressed in a clear and organized fashion. It was easy to figure out what the letter was about.	Ideas were expressed in a mostly clear manner, but the organization could have been better.	Ideas were somewhat organized, but were not very clear. It took more than one reading to figure out what the letter was about.	The letter seemed to be a collection of unrelated sentences. It was very difficult to figure out what the letter was about.
<b>Content Accuracy</b>	The letter contains at least 10 pieces of accurate information that directly relates to the prompt.	The letter contains 6-8 pieces of accurate information that directly relates to the prompt.	The letter contains 2-4 pieces of accurate information that directly relates to the prompt.	The letter contains no pieces of information that directly relates to the prompt.
<b>Neatness</b>	Letter is clean and easy to read with no distracting errors.	Letter is clean and easy to read with very few distracting errors.	Letter is somewhat difficult to read with a distracting amount of errors.	Letter is difficult to read and has many distracting errors.

<b>Martial Law Art Critic Response Assessment Rubric</b>				
<b>Category</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Sentence Length</b>	Every paragraph has sentences that vary in length.	Almost all paragraphs have sentences that vary in length.	Some sentences vary in length.	Sentences rarely vary in length.
<b>Flow and Rhythm</b>	All sentences sound natural when read aloud. Each sentence is clear and has an obvious emphasis.	Almost all sentences sound natural when read aloud, but 1 or 2 are difficult to understand.	Most sentences sound natural when read aloud, but several are difficult to understand.	The sentences are difficult to read aloud because they are difficult to understand.
<b>Introduction</b>	The introduction is inviting, states the main topic, and previews the structure of the paper.	The introduction clearly states the main topic and previews the structure of the paper but is not inviting to the reader.	The introduction states the main topic, but does not adequately preview the structure of the paper nor is it inviting to the reader.	There is no clear introduction of the main topic or structure of the paper.
<b>Accuracy of Information</b>	All supportive facts are reported accurately.	Almost all supportive facts are reported accurately.	Most supportive facts are reported accurately.	No facts are reported or most are inaccurately reported.
<b>Conclusion</b>	The conclusion is strong and readers can understand the writer's intent.	The conclusion is recognizable and readers can understand most of the writer's intent.	The conclusion is recognizable, but readers have difficulty understanding the writer's intent.	There is no clear conclusion or intent.

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<sup>i</sup> Assessment rubrics created using *Rubistar*. <http://rubistar.4teachers.org/>