Civil War Map Analysis Worksheet

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?