

K.W.L Chart

At the start of the lesson, fill the columns below with what you already **know** about medicine in the Civil War and what you **want to know** about medicine in the Civil War. At the end of the lesson, write what you have **learned** about Civil War medicine.

What do you know about the topic?	What do you want to know about the topic?	What did you learn about the topic?

Fictional versus Informational Texts: Depictions of Civil War Medicine

Below are excerpts from three different texts depicting hospitals and medicine in the Civil War. The first excerpt is from the historical fiction novel, *Gone with the Wind*. The second excerpt comes from the memoir of a nurse who worked at a hospital in Columbia, South Carolina, during the war, and the third excerpt comes from a letter written by a Union soldier stationed in Beaufort, South Carolina, who later fought at the Battle of Secessionville. Read each excerpt and below it, list any facts, claims, or observations you can identify based on the passage.

Gone with the Wind

By Margaret Mitchell, Published 1936

Chapter 8

“Certainly there was nothing romantic about nursing. To her, it meant groans, delirium, death and smells. The hospitals were filled with dirty, bewhiskered, verminous men who smelled terribly and bore on their bodies wounds hideous enough to turn a Christian's stomach. The hospitals stank of gangrene, the odor assaulting her nostrils long before the doors were reached, a sickish sweet smell that clung to her hands and hair and haunted her in her dreams. Flies, mosquitoes and gnats hovered in droning, singing swarms over the wards, tormenting the men to curses and weak sobs; and Scarlett, scratching her own mosquito bites, swung palmetto fans until her shoulders ached and she wished that all the men were dead. Melanie, however, did not seem to mind the smells, the wounds or the nakedness, which Scarlett thought strange in one who was the most timorous and modest of women. Sometimes when holding basins and instruments while Dr. Meade cut out gangrened flesh, Melanie looked very white. And once, after such an operation, Scarlett found her in the linen closet vomiting quietly into a towel. But as long as she was where the wounded could see her, she was gentle, sympathetic and cheerful, and the men in the hospitals called her an angel of mercy. Scarlett would have liked that title too, but it involved touching men crawling with lice, running fingers down throats of unconscious patients to see if they were choking on swallowed tobacco quids, bandaging stumps and picking maggots out of festering flesh. No, she did not like nursing!”

Chapter 17

“No, they were not an attractive lot. Moreover, many of them were dying, dying swiftly, silently, having little strength left to combat the blood poisoning, gangrene, typhoid and pneumonia which had set in before they could reach Atlanta and a doctor. The day was hot and the flies came in the open windows in swarms, fat lazy flies that broke the spirits of the men as pain could not. The tide of smells and pain rose and rose about her. Perspiration soaked through her freshly starched dress as she followed Dr. Meade about, a basin in her hand. Oh, the nausea of standing by the doctor, trying not to vomit when his bright knife cut into mortifying flesh! And oh, the

horror of hearing the screams from the operating ward where amputations were going on! And the sick, helpless sense of pity at the sight of tense, white faces of mangled men waiting for the doctor to get to them, men whose ears were filled with screams, men waiting for the dreadful words: "I'm sorry, my boy, but that hand will have to come off. Yes, yes, I know; but look, see those red streaks? It'll have to come off." Chloroform was so scarce now it was used only for the worst amputations and opium was a precious thing, used only to ease the dying out of life, not the living out of pain. There was no quinine and no iodine at all. Yes, Scarlett was sick of it all, and that morning she wished that she, like Melanie, had the excuse of pregnancy to offer. That was about the only excuse that was socially acceptable for not nursing these days."

Facts/Claims/Observations about Civil War Medicine:

Reminiscences of the Hospitals of Columbia, S.C. during The Four Years of the Civil War

By Mrs. Campbell Bryce, Published 1897, Pages 25-26

eBook available at <http://www.civilwarmed.org/explore/bibs/nurses/>

"I recall one thrilling experience here. I had been requested by some ladies at the "Wayside" to ask after two patients in whom we felt a deep interest; one had a ball in his neck, and the other had been shot in the arm, severing an artery, which had been duly tied, but subsequently became undone by the sloughing of the wound. It was in such a condition it was thought dangerous to allow him to return to his home, so they were both sent up to the College Hospital. As I drove into the campus, Dr. Horlbeck came out with a splint in his hand. I asked if it was for this patient, to which he replied, "Yes; his arm needs attention." Dr. Le Borde came to the carriage to conduct me into the hospital, and took me to see the man with a bullet in his neck. While talking to him we were startled by the most agonized shriek I ever heard, and we both ran into the opposite room. I shall never forget the scene! Dr. Horlbeck stood with one foot on the edge of the bed, with his finger thrust in the wound, and the blood spurting up to the ceiling like a fountain.

Dr. La Borde exclaimed, “Man, how did you dare to open that wound alone, and without the necessary preparations?” I had been trying to learn to keep my wits about me under all circumstances, so stepped close to Dr. Horlbeck and said, “What can I do for you?” “Go for Chisholm. Tell him to bring his instruments, ligatures, and chloroform.” I ran to the carriage, and told Henry, my coachman, to drive for his life. In a few moments Dr. Chisholm was ready, and we drove back at full speed. I declined to witness the operation, but in a few minutes I saw a hand and arm laid on the window-sill. The poor fellow died during the night. He was from Florida, a gay, happy-hearted man. Mrs. Kenerly had a saucer of peaches and cream ready for him as soon as the doctor should finish dressing his wound, but alas, poor fellow, they were not for him!”

Facts/Claims/Observations about Civil War Medicine:

Emmett Cole Letter, January 26, 1862

The letter's original grammar and spellings have been kept.

Transcription available at: <http://blogs.lib.unc.edu/civilwar/index.php/2012/01/26/26-january-1862/>

Beaufort Jan. 26th, 1861 [1862]

Dear Sister

Although my hand trembles and I feel weak from being sick yet I will try and write you a short letter to let you know that I am getting well although I don't suppose you have heard I was sick before. I was taken with the Chill fever two weeks ago. we were then on the Plantations near the Ferry. the next day after I was taken I had to pile myself on top of an old baggage wagon and ride in to Beaufort. I was taken worse as soon as I got here. and I have not been out of the tent till today. you had better think I got tired of lying on the hard ground. but I would not go to the Hospital for it is just the same as signing a mans death warrant to send him there. but I am getting better fast so I will say no more about that. there has been a considerable number in this Co that got their discharge. more from homesickness than any other disease. I hope Leon Duffy

wont go to blowing around there for he showed himself out before he had left. Leieut. Mans went back also. I have nothing to say about him he may plead his own case and another miserable pup by the name of Greenfield. He is old Judge Greenfields son. He has skulked back there with the pretense of recruiting but all he wanted was to get home. prehaps he will be there at our house but you tell the boys there not to enlist under him. Wm. Wheeler is quite lame and I guess he will get a Furlough for three months to go home. And I want to come home when the War is ended and not before. but it is hard telling when that will be. but it is my opinion that Uncle Sam won't pay out \$2 000 000 a day any longer than he can help it. but there seemes to be strange work in the war department. things seem to move so slow. but pray Celestia that it may soon end and it will...

...from your Affectionate brother

Emmett Cole

Facts/Claims/Observations about Civil War Medicine:

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