

Sherman's March to the Sea

A classroom play by Team HOPE

Cast List

F.Y. Hedley (HED).....Union Soldier
David Conyngham (CONY).....Union Soldier
Dolly Sumner Lunt (LUNT)..... resident of Georgia
George Ward Nichols (NICH).....Major, Union Army
Elijah Lovejoy (ANCH)..... anchor of “The History News Report”
Margaret Fuller (R1).....reporter for “The History News Report”
Nellie Bly (R2) reporter for “The History News Report”
Ernie Pyle (R3).....reporter for “The History News Report”

TEACHER NOTES

SETTING: A contemporary classroom. It is advised to set up the anchor in the front of the room facing the class, in front of some sort of background with “The History New Report.” You may choose to set up the different reporters conducting the interviews around the classroom and have the historical figures come to them. This way it gives the appearance of different locations. A name plate in front of each cast member is highly recommended. A 5x8 index card folded in half works great for this purpose.

COSTUMES: Although not necessary, any period costumes for the historical figures are a great addition. Even a simple hat or wig is excellent.

MASKS: Masks are an easy addition that will add to the drama and make the entire event more fun for the students. First, go to www.google.com and click on “image search.” Type in the historical figure’s name and find an image of the person. Copy and paste the picture in a Word document. You may need to crop and then enlarge the photo so you get a picture large enough to be used as a mask. Portraits obviously work best for this use. Print out the picture and paste it onto a cardboard backing. You can tape a plastic spoon or popsicle stick to be used as a handle. You may decide to make masks for the student correspondents as well, using pictures of television news personalities for the masks.

Note: If there is a historical person you cannot find a picture for, don’t despair! Almost any random “period” person’s picture (as long as it not someone easily recognizable) would work as a mask.

ROLES: Encourage students to act out the roles with as much energy as possible. Do not be too terribly concerned that the sex of the historical figure matching with the sex of the student.

The teacher may decide to take a part in the play, role-modeling one of the historical figures. It is recommended that five copies of the scripts are specifically set aside for each character in the play. For each character, *highlight all their lines* in order to facilitate a faster pace of dialogue. All other students should receive an unmarked copy of the play to read as the play is performed.

ANCHOR AND REPORTERS: In order to facilitate the historical discussions that exist in the plays, actual famous journalist names have been used in the plays. Teachers should point out that these journalists come from different times in American history and do not necessarily reflect the period they report on. It is as if they can travel in time to deliver “The History News Report.” A teacher may also decide to substitute the names given in the script for student names if desired. A brief description of the journalists is as follows:

- **Elijah Lovejoy** (1802-1837) A minister and journalist for the *St. Louis Observer* and later editor of the abolitionist newspaper the *Alton Observer* of Alton, Illinois. In 1837, pro-slavery forces attacked his warehouse in order to destroy his printing press and he was murdered on the scene.
- **Margaret Fuller** (1810-1850) An early woman rights activist, Margaret was the first female journalist to work on the staff of a major American newspaper, *The New York Tribune*. She was a widely read literary critic who was also sent on overseas assignments to Europe.
- **Nellie Bly** (1864-1922) After a writing a fiery rebuttal to a sexist column in the *Pittsburgh Dispatch*, Nellie was hired by a very impressed editor at the newspaper. She went on to become a famous investigative journalist on the plight of working women, and gained further fame for having faked insanity in order to investigate the treatment of the mentally ill.
- **Ernie Pyle** (1900-1945) An American journalist who was a roving correspondent for Scripps Howard newspaper chain. His articles were read in over 200 newspapers. He is most famous for having been a war correspondent during World War II. He led the charge for Congress to give soldiers “battle pay” while in combat. He died under heavy fire from a Japanese machine gun nest in the Pacific on April 18, 1945.

DISCUSSION: Use the attached worksheets to facilitate discussion before and after the play. Students who are not directly involved in the play can attempt to write preliminary answers as the play is performed. The audience should be told that they will be the primarily responsible for the discussion questions at the end of the lesson.

Sherman's March to the Sea

(A Report by HNR News)

NOTE: All responses by historical figures reflect actual events and beliefs as closely as possible.

CAST ABBREVIATIONS

F.Y. HedleyHED
David ConynghamCONY
Dolly Sumner LuntLUNT
George Ward Nichols.....NICH
Elijah LovejoyANCH
Margaret Fuller..... R1
Nellie Bly.....R2
Ernie Pyle.....R3

ANCH Welcome to the History News Report, I am your anchor Elijah Lovejoy. On September 2, 1864, General William Tecumseh Sherman telegraphed President Lincoln with the following message: "Atlanta is ours, and fairly won." General Sherman's march through Atlanta and Georgia would become famous, or infamous, depending on one's perspective. To gain greater insight to this critical Civil War event, we have History News Report correspondents in Georgia to give us live reports. First we have History News Report's Nellie Bly reporting from somewhere east of Atlanta. Nellie?

R2 Thanks Elijah. I am here near the town of Covington, Georgia and just recently had a conversation with General Sherman.

ANCH What did you learn?

R2 Basically that General Sherman has given up his futile search for the Confederate army in order to win a decisive battlefield victory.

ANCH What does he intend to do instead?

R2 He has put in motion a plan to march east and lay complete waste to the confederate infrastructure by destroying railroads, telegraph lines, burning crops and plantations, and just destroying basically anything that could support the Southern war effort. He told me that he wanted to make war so terrible that generations would pass before Southerners would resort to it again.

ANCH It sounds terrible!

R2 It has been. Sherman left Atlanta in flames before leaving rather than leave it as a safe haven for the enemy.

ANCH Thanks for the report Nellie. We will be checking in later with you for an interview with an eyewitness. Right now we have HNR's Ernie Pyle standing by with a soldier in General Sherman's army.

R3 Yes, Elijah, I am here just to the east of Covington, Georgia with Union soldier F.Y. Hedley. Mr. Hedley, can you describe the actions your regiment has been taking part in?

HED Well, the regiment would scatter along one side of the road, each man picking up the end of a railroad tie; then, at the word of command, all would throw the ties end of end, the fall breaking the rails loose. Then ties and telegraph poles were piles up and fired. The rails were thrown across them and were soon red-hot in the middle.

R3 What was the purpose of heating up the railroad ties?

HED The men would pick them up and wrap them around trees, forming what came to be known as “Sherman’s neckties.”

R3 How did the men react to such work?

HED Oh, they seemed to take savage delight in destroying everything that could possibly be used by their enemies!

R3 Thank you Mr. Hedley. Back to you in the studio Elijah!

ANCH We now will go to Margaret Fuller, who is in the same vicinity as Ernie with another Union soldier. Margaret?

R1 Yes, Elijah. I am with David Conyngham. Mr. Conyngham, what sort of actions by the army have you taken part?

CONY Well, one place in Atlanta, Winshop’s iron foundry and machine shops, were set on fire. This property was calculated to be worth about half a million dollars. An oil refinery nearby was soon got on fire and made a fierce blaze I tell you! Next came the freight warehouse, the depot, freight sheds, and stores all around were soon a fiery mass.

R1 It sounds like nothing was saved!

CONY Well, actually some ruffians ran to fire the churches, but the Roman Catholic minister, Father O’Reiley, the only minister left in town, met them an upbraided them for their attempted arson. Even these hardened men shrank before virtue and truth, and the good priest saved not only this own church but also his fellow Christian churches.

R1 Then only specific buildings related to the war were destroyed?

CONY Oh, no! The Atlanta Hotel, Washington Hall, and all the square around the railroad depot were soon in one sheet of flame. Drugstores, dry good stores, hotels, and theaters were all feeding the fiery element. Worn out wagons and camp equipment were piled up in the depot and added to the fury of the flames. Even a stone warehouse was blown up by a mine...

R1 And private residences?

CONY Oh men indulged themselves there too! They plunged into the houses, broke windows and doors with the muskets, dragging out armfuls of clothes, tobacco, and whiskey...the men dressed themselves in new clothes, and then flung the rest in the fire.

R1 I think we've got the general idea. Back to you Elijah.

ANCH Now we have Ernie Pyle again with another report from a Union soldier. Ernie?

R3 I'm with Major George Ward Nichols, who was a journalist before the war. Major, you were just describing the departure from Atlanta. Could you describe to our audience?

NICH It was a grand and awful spectacle to see this beautiful city, now in flames...The heaven was one expanse of lurid fire; the air filled with flying, burning cinders; buildings covering two hundred acres in ruins or in flames; every instant there is the sharp detonation or the smothered booming sound exploding shells and powder concealed in the buildings, and then the sparks and flames shoot up, scattering cinders far and wide.

R3 Why such destruction?

NICH Well, these machine shops forged and cast the Rebel cannon, shot and shell that have carried death to many a brave defender of our nation's honor. These warehouses have been the receptacle of munitions of war, stored to be used for our destruction. This city, next to Richmond, has furnished more material for war than any other in the South. However, it exists no more as a means for injury to be used by the enemies of the Union.

R3 Thank you Major Nichols. Elijah?

ANCH We have one last interview. Nellie is standing by with a Georgian resident. Nellie?

R2 Yes, I'm with Dolley Sumner Lunt, a plantation owner in Covington, Georgia. Mrs. Lunt, what exactly have you experienced at the hands of the Union troops?

LUNT I had heard that the Yankees went to neighbor Montgomery's on Thursday night at one o'clock, searched his house, drank his wine, and took his money and valuables. As we were not disturbed, I walked after breakfast, up to Mr. Joe Perry's, my nearest neighbor, where the Yankees were yesterday.

R2 Did you see anyone?

LUNT Saw Mrs. Laura [Perry] in the road surrounded by her children, seeming to be looking for some one. She said she was looking for her husband, that old Mrs. Perry had just sent her word that the Yankees went to James Perry's the night before, plundered his house, and drove off all his stock, and that she must drive hers into the old fields. Before we were done talking, up came Joe and Jim Perry from their hiding-place. Jim was very much excited. Happening to turn and look behind, as we stood there, I saw some blue-coats coming down the hill. Jim immediately raised his gun, swearing he would kill them anyhow.

R2 What did you do?

LUNT 'No, don't!' I said, and ran home as fast as I could. I could hear them cry, 'Halt! Halt!' and their guns went off in quick succession. Oh God, the time of trial has come!

R2 Did they come to your house?

LUNT Like demons they rush in! My yard was full. To my smoke-house, my dairy, pantry, kitchen, and cellar, like famished wolves they come, breaking locks and whatever is in their way. The thousand pounds of meat in my smoke-house is gone in a twinkling, my flour, my meat, my lard, butter, eggs, pickles of various kinds - both in vinegar and brine - wine, jars, and jugs are all gone. My eighteen fat turkeys, my hens, chickens, and fowls, my young pigs, are shot down in my yard and hunted as if they were rebels themselves. Utterly powerless I ran out and appealed to the guard.

R2 What did he say?

LUNT "I cannot help you ma'am. It is orders."

R2 How long did this last?

LUNT Sherman himself and a greater portion of his army passed my house that day. All day, as the sad moments rolled on, were they passing not only in front of my house, but from behind; they tore down my garden palings, made a road through my back-yard and lot field, driving their stock and riding through, tearing down my fences and desolating my home - wantonly doing it when there was no necessity for it. They left me thirty thousand dollars poorer than yesterday morning. And a much stronger rebel!

ANCH Afterward: General Sherman presented the seaport of Savannah, Georgia, as a Christmas gift. Beautiful Savannah surrendered and was spared the torch. Sherman's victory at Atlanta helped Lincoln win reelection, while his "March to the Sea" broke the back of the confederacy. Lee would surrender at Appomattox only four months later.