**Life as a soldier in the Civil War Assignment**

One soldier described life as a soldier as: “Soldiering is 99% boredom and 1% sheer terror.” Soldiers spent weeks, sometimes months between battles. Read the following letter excerpts and answer the questions that follow to get a better idea of what life as a soldier would have been like.

**Excerpt 1:** Months on months they were without a change of underclothing, or a chance to wash that we had worn so long, hence it became actually coated with grease and dust, moistened with daily perspiration under the broiling sun. Pestiferous vermin swarmed in every camp, and on the march-- Nothing would destroy the little pests but hours of steady boiling,and of course, we had neither kettles, nor the time to boil them,

1. What are the conditions described in the letter?
2. How might these conditions impact the health of the soldiers?

**Excerpt 2:** This war is deadly. During the battle, Billings and I were fighting side by side when I looked over to see half of his head gone. I looked down at my jacket to see his brain spattered all across my uniform. There are dead lying all over the battle field and after a gruesome battle they become almost unrecognizable. These new rifles and mini ball bullets are deadly – this war is not for the weak of heart.

1. What new technology (mention 2) are discussed in the letter?
2. How do you think families at home felt when photographs of the dead on the battlefield were printed in newspapers? How would this affect support for the war?

**Excerpt 3:**  Various were the devices adopted by the boys to relieve the boredom after weary battles. On these occasions, as time was allowed, stories were told, games were played, letters were written home, or we would sing a familiar song. It would often occur, when we were tired and dusty from a long day of fighting that we would sing, "Old Festive", when suddenly you would hear the screams of: "Don’t saw my leg off! Oh God, NO!” that would bring you back to the reality of our situation.

1. What did soldiers do to entertain themselves? (provide 4 examples)
2. What is happening at the end of the letter? Why was this common during the Civil War?

**Excerpt 4:**  It is a well-known fact, and a most disgraceful one, that when General Lee crossed the Potomac fully ten thousandof his men were barefooted, blanketless,and hatless!The roads were lined with stragglers limping on swollen and blistered feet, shivering all night, (for despite the heat of the day the nights were chilly), for want of blankets; and utterly devoid of underclothes--if indeed they possessed so much as one shirt!

1. Is the letter from a Union Soldier or a Confederate soldier? How do you know?
2. What were conditions like for this soldier?
3. How might these conditions impact the soldier’s motivation?

**Excerpt 5:** I have no misgivings about, or lack of confidence in the cause in which I am engaged, and my courage does not halt or falter. I know how strongly American Civilization now leans on the triumph of the Government and how great a debt we owe to those who went before us through the blood and sufferings of the Revolution. And I am willing—perfectly willing—to lay down all my joys in this life, to help maintain this Government, and to pay that debt.

1. Why is the soldier willing to fight?
2. What previous war does he compare the Civil War to?