

Introduction to Lucy Nichols Story: Biography and Coloring Sheet Activity

“Who Was Lucy Higgs Nichols?”

Objective: This lesson serves as the introduction to the unit of instruction on the life of Lucy Higgs Nichols. The lesson is a quick overview of the Lucy Nichols story aimed at elementary students, but adaptable for middle and high school students as well. The lesson begins with a quick prior knowledge assessment of the Civil War and introduces Lucy Nichols to students. The lesson finishes with a read aloud and discussion questions attached to a coloring sheet of Lucy’s only known image.

National Council for the Social Studies Curriculum Standards for Social Studies:

II: Time, Continuity, and Change; III: People, Places, and Environments; IV: Individual Development and Identity; X: Civic Ideals and Practices

Indiana Standards for Education:

5th Grade: 5.1, 5.2, 5.3

8th Grade: 8.1.10, 8.1.16, 8.1.21, 8.1.25, 8.1.26, 8.3.2

Kentucky Core Content Standards:

5th Grade: SS-05-5.1.1, 5.2.4, 2.3.1, 2.3.2

8th Grade: SS-08-2.1.1, 2.3.1, 4.1.1, 4.2.3, 4.3.2, 5.1.1, 5.1.2, 5.2.4

- Materials:**
- 1.) The Story of Lucy Read Aloud (2 pages)
 - 2.) Lucy Nichols Biographical Questions
 - 3.) Lucy Nichols Coloring Sheet
 - 4.) Chalk/White/Smart Board or overhead projector

Introduction: Begin the lesson by writing the following words on the board:

SLAVERY; FREEDOM; UNION; CONFEDERACY; CIVIL WAR. Once the students have entered the classroom, either have them write the words in their journal or daily writing book and detail what they think each word means. If there is no journal, begin an open class discussion allowing individual students the opportunity to give their own definition for each word. The class can either decide upon its own definitions, or after a period of time the teacher can explain (define) each term. Once this is complete, ask the students if they can figure out what the day’s topic will be based on the words on the board.

Procedures:

- 1.) Complete the introductory activity.
- 2.) Explain to the students that today they will be learning about the American Civil War by investigating the life of former New Albany resident, Lucy Higgs Nichols. If this is the introduction to the entire unit, explain that the class will be studying Lucy’s life from a variety of perspectives over the next few days. If it is a stand-alone lesson, continue on as planned.

- 3.) Hand out the biographical sketch questions and Lucy Nichols coloring sheet to the students.
- 4.) Begin and read aloud of *The Story of Lucy*, authored by Carnegie Center director Sally Newkirk. The teacher can either read the story out loud to the students or call upon students to read one paragraph at a time. Also, teachers can make copies of the story and hand them out for each individual student or student groups. As students listen to the story, they are assigned to answer the biographical sketch questions listed on the front side of the worksheet. Using a colored pencil will produce the best results as to not bleed through to the coloring sheet side.
- 5.) Once the story has been read, go over the answers to the questions to assure clarity. A classroom discussion can follow.
- 6.) After the questions and discussion are complete, students can color Lucy Nichols' image. Feel free to inform the students that this is one of only two known images of Lucy Nichols.

Evaluation:

- 1.) The class can simply turn in the completed question and coloring sheet for points assigned by the teacher.
- 2.) Students can take turns sharing their coloring page with the class while telling what they believe was the most interesting part of the story.
- 3.) The coloring sheets can go on display to inform other teachers, students, and administrators of the curricular activities in class. If the teacher attempts the entire unit, the coloring pages can be combined with the remaining materials (map and storyboard/ graphic cartoon) for a unit display.

LUCY HIGGS NICHOLS

April 10, 1838–January 29, 1915



Tell Me About Lucy Higgs Nichols

Name: _____

Date: _____

Listen to the following story read aloud by your teacher (or classmates) and answer the following questions:

The name of the important person is

This person was born in

This person is important because

Two interesting facts about this person are

What are two questions that you would like to ask this person:

1.) _____

2.) _____

The Story of Lucy

Lucy Higgs Nichols was born on April 10, 1838 in Halifax County, North Carolina. She was a slave who was owned by Reubin Higgs. He also owned Lucy's parents, her brother, Aaron and her sister, Angeline.

Lucy's owners moved the families several times. They left North Carolina and moved to Mississippi. After several years, they moved to Tennessee. In 1861, when Lucy was 23 years old, she was separated from her brother and sister. They never lived together again. That's what living in slavery was like. It made Lucy very sad.

The very next year, Lucy decided to run away from slavery. She took her daughter and ran nearly three miles to where Union soldiers were camped. This was during the Civil War and these men were from Indiana, mainly New Albany. They protected Lucy and her daughter. They wouldn't give her back when her owner came to the camp and demanded they return her to him and to slavery!

Lucy stayed with these soldiers who were in a regiment called the 23rd Indiana Volunteers. She cooked and washed for them. Most importantly, she became a nurse. She took care of them when they were sick or hurt in battle. She was with them in many terrible battles for three years. During one of the battles, Lucy's daughter Mona died. She was only a few years old. The soldiers buried Mona and covered her grave with flowers. This was a very sad time for Lucy.

Finally, the war ended in 1865. Members of all of the Union armies marched in a parade in Washington D.C. For two days, 150,000 soldiers marched in front of the White House. The men of the 23rd Indiana marched in this parade. Lucy marched right by their side!

Lucy needed a place to live. Her friends in the 23rd Indiana Regiment invited her to come back to New Albany with them. Lucy did just that. They even made her an honorary member of their group called the Grand Army of the Republic, or the GAR. She made many other friends, including John Nichols, who she married in 1870. They lived on Naghel Street.

As Lucy got older she had health problems and was not able to work. Congress passed a law that said Civil War nurses could apply for a pension. A pension is

money that the government would pay people to thank them for their service. But would the government pay a former slave for being a nurse? It had not been done before!

Lucy's friends in the 23rd said they would help her get a pension. They wrote letters to the government describing how she had nursed the men who were sick or hurt. Two times the government turned her down her application, so fifty-five men of the 23rd signed a letter they sent directly to the United States Congress. Finally, in 1898, after six years of Lucy and the men writing letters, Lucy Nichols received her pension through a Special Act of Congress! She received \$12 a month for the rest of her life.

Lucy died in 1915. Her friends from the GAR arranged for her funeral. She was buried with full military honors next to her husband, John. There were articles about Lucy in the New Albany newspaper and in newspapers across the country, even the New York Times!

Lucy was special for many reasons. She was a brave young woman who decided to create a better life for herself and her daughter by escaping from slavery. She was a "good, true and faithful" nurse who took special care of the soldiers. She was a good citizen who earned the respect and affection of people in New Albany, many even called her "Aunt Lucy." And she was one of a very few former slaves whose service during the Civil War was rewarded with a pension from the United States government.