

## Interpreting Photographs

### Background

This activity explores photographic images of soldiers and other figures connected with the 54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Regiment. Through a series of question prompts, students will analyze and respond creatively to one of the images and other written source materials provided. If time allows, students should craft facsimile nineteenth-century photograph frames in which to mount their chosen image.

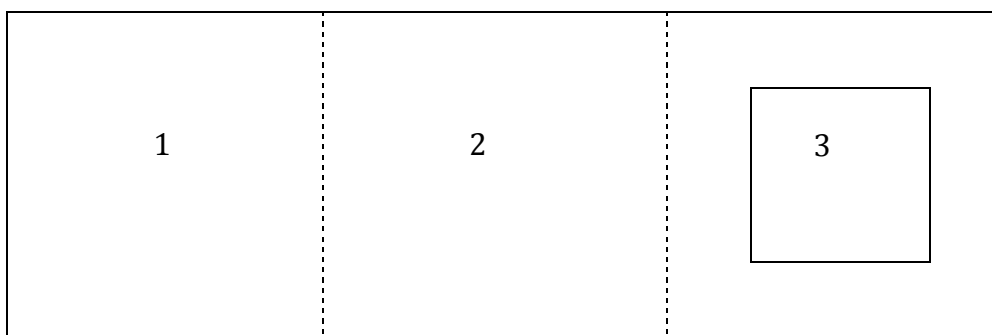
### Goal

By combining visual and written evidence, students will respond creatively, in writing or by sketching, to a chosen photograph to better understand the identities and perspectives of those associated with the 54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Regiment and the Civil War battle at Fort Wagner.

### Materials

Card stock paper (80 pound weight) in an antique finish, cut in pieces 15" x 6"  
Photocopies of soldiers and others associated with the 54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Regiment short biographical information  
Double-sided tape  
Colored drawing pencils in brown  
Scrap paper

### Preparation



Examples of nineteenth-century decorative photographic mat framing can be found on the Library of Congress Web site (see Resources list)

Card stock should be folded into thirds to form the finished portfolio size of 5 x 6 inches. Area 3 should be cut out, to create a window through which to view the photograph. Reproductions of photographs should be printed to fit the framed opening of the mount.

Digital images and information about various individuals associated with the 54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Regiment can be found on the National Gallery's Web site at:

[www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/education/teachers/teaching-packets/shaw-memorial/images.html](http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/education/teachers/teaching-packets/shaw-memorial/images.html)

## **Procedure**

Prompted by the gallery teacher, students will follow the steps in the following Image Analysis worksheet.

## **Image Analysis**

1. Begin by considering the following questions about your photograph:

Who is this person?

What might be important to this person and how can you tell?

2. When prompted, read this person's biography.

Does anything surprise you?

What stood out to you?

Knowing what you now know, why do you think this photograph was taken?

3. Taking the perspective of your person, respond creatively to the photograph

Some ideas:

- Write a letter from the perspective of this person.
- Create a short poem about what they were feeling.
- Imagine their surroundings in camp and make a small sketch.