

Hands-On History: Lessons Of War, Lessons Of Art

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Review

HANDS-ON HISTORY

Lessons of war, lessons of art

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Clayton, Nancy and Spellman, Susan. *Draw History: Civil War.* Lowell House Juvenile, ISBN 737301597

The collaboration of writer Nancy Clayton and illustrator Susan Spellman has resulted in **Draw History: Civil War**, a noteworthy book that combines historical facts with step-by-step art lessons.

Clayton, whose writing progresses smoothly from the first to the last page, slips at times into the voice of a practiced storyteller. In perfect parallel, the handsome illustrations provided by the highly published artist, Spellman, lend balance to Clayton's text.

The combination of art and history works so well that young readers initially interested in the text will be encouraged to pick up their pencils and sketch, while young artists initially interested in the artwork likely will be encouraged to put down their pencils and read. **Draw History** offers a useful tool for educators who wish to integrate art and history lessons into a cross-curriculum program.

The book is divided into six sections; each offers clear instructions for drawing figures and objects associated with the Civil War and includes lucid histories of the items.

For example, in the "Transportation" section, the steps for drawing Robert E. Lee's favorite horse, Traveller, are coupled with stories such as the day the horse saved Lee's life. Clayton writes: "After the war, General Lee wrote a special description of Traveller for an artist who wanted to paint [Lee with his horse], saying, If I were an artist like you, I would draw Traveller with fine proportions and quick eye to describe his endurance of the dangers through which he passed." Keeping those words in mind and studying Spellman's

instructions, a young artist could reproduce such a horse with "fine proportions and quick eye."

The first section of the book, titled "Buildings and Places," requires nothing more than a ruler to complete drawings of typical buildings, bridges, and towers. In particular, the pages devoted to the famous Beanpole Bridge will surely interest readers.

The remaining five sections seem to lean on the premise that someone who can draw an oval, square, and triangle can draw anything. These sections are titled: "The Big Guns," "Transportation," "War on the Water," "People," and "An Animal." Included are subjects such as: the battlefield cannon, the Napoleon; Lincoln's funeral train engine, the Nashville; the "Ghost Ship" *Alabama*; various soldiers, sailors, and officers of the Union and Confederacy; and Sallie, the courageous mascot of the 11th Pennsylvania Infantry Regiment. Wartime flags unfurl on the book's final page.

All in all, **Draw History** is an appealing book for readers and artists, young and old.

Maureen Stack Sappey, who resides in Chestertown, Maryland, with her husband and four children, is the author of Letters from Vinnie, A Rose at Bull Run, Dreams of Julia -- Dreams of Ships, and Yankee Spy.