

# In-Archives Handout - Visual Culture of the Civil War

by Jennifer Wingate



Part of an in-archives exercise at <http://www.teacharchives.org/exercises/civil-war-envelopes>

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**Group 1:** Scrapbook of Civil War envelopes, 1861-1865; William Irwin Martin Civil War envelopes, 1974.259, box 1; Brooklyn Historical Society.

\*\*Please follow the handling instructions given by archives staff. **The album is fragile**, and Prof. Wingate or a BHS staff member may need to help turn pages.\*\*

You may work on these exercises as a group, but each student should fill in his or her own worksheet.

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1) In the spring of 1861, printers in the North and the South began to produce patriotic envelopes that expressed support for their respective causes.

Looking through the scrapbook, identify a Union envelope design that helped make a case for Northern rejection of secession (destruction of the Constitution, threat to the future of the nation, etc. - See Boyd, Chapter 1).

Take a photo and describe the elements that help articulate and give visual form to Northern views.

Can you identify a Confederate envelope? If so, take a photo of one and describe what you see that helps you identify it as such.

2) Printers used the images of Presidents Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis as “vehicles to rally citizens to the cause as well as to articulate the issues for which both presidents and soldiers fought.” (See Boyd, Chapter 3). Images of the two presidents helped create a shared public understanding of the men and helped personalize the issues at stake.

Try to identify one Union OR one Confederate envelope that features an image of Lincoln or Jefferson. Analyze the representation of the man. Is he isolated on the envelope or surrounded by other images and designs? Why?

3) What other kinds of images do you see that Boyd discusses in the excerpts you read for today? Depictions of African Americans? Soldiers? Women? List three types by giving one or two sentence descriptions.

a)

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b)

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c)

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4) Choose one envelope that you find especially interesting. Each member of the group should choose his or her own. Take a photo and prepare to give a presentation about your chosen envelope using Boyd to help you in your analysis of the imagery, what it was intended to convey and what causes it was intended to promote. Post a summary of what you will present on the class blog (category: Patriotic Envelopes).