

Reflection Questions for Students

Gettysburg Beyond the Battle Museum

Developed for students, these questions may be helpful for teachers in developing pre-visit and post-visit lesson plans. Each question relates to content explored inside the museum through artifacts, stories, and immersive exhibits.

Gallery One

1. What makes up our environment?
2. How should we balance living our lives while at the same time protecting nature's resources?
3. What types of natural features last thousands, or even millions of years? Why?

Gallery Two

1. Compare and contrast the technologies used by Native peoples and those used today.
2. Only certain Native American artifacts stay preserved in the ground for thousands of years - most rot away. What types of items would have been lost to time?
3. Why were creeks and other water sources vital to Native American communities?
4. How is our impact on the environment different from the impact made by Native American communities?
5. What are some differences between history and folklore?

Gallery Three

1. William Penn, the founder of Pennsylvania, was a Quaker. How did religion play a role in the establishment of early colonies?
2. What different religious and ethnic groups settled in the new colony of Pennsylvania? What conflicts did they have with each other?
3. What hardships did early European colonists encounter in Pennsylvania?
4. If you were an early settler, what types of documents would you need to prove that you owned your land?
5. How were local residents like Mary Jemison and Richard Bard affected by the French and Indian War?
6. After seeing her family killed, how do you think Mary Jemison was able to assimilate to Native American culture?

Gallery Four

1. What purpose did taverns serve during the Revolutionary War era? What types of things serve the same purpose for our society today?
2. If you lived at the time of the American Revolution, would you have enlisted in the army to fight the British? Why or why not?
3. Freedom and independence were not guaranteed to everyone when the United States became a country. Which groups of Americans were left out?
4. Pennsylvania began the process of abolishing slavery in 1780. What did this mean for enslaved people in the commonwealth? Why might state leaders have chosen a “gradual” end to slavery?
5. As the Continental Congress met to discuss our new nation, Abigail Adams wrote a famous letter to her husband, John, asking him to “remember the ladies.” What do you think she meant by this?

Gallery Five

1. Why would Francis Scott Key have brought Clem Johnson into Pennsylvania before setting him free?
2. What common items from the mid-1800s are still found in homes today?
3. If you were escaping slavery on the Underground Railroad, what types of dangers would you have encountered?
4. Thaddeus Stevens fought for free education in Pennsylvania. Why is this an important right?
5. If you were founding a town or a county, what essential public services would you need to establish? How would you go about creating them?

Gallery Six

1. What was the primary cause of the Civil War? What other issues were at play?
2. What did freedom mean to people like Mag Palm and Kitty Payne?
3. What are some of the things Civil War soldiers wrote home about? If you were a soldier, what would you have told your parents about the war?
4. Gettysburg is only eight miles from the Mason-Dixon Line. What was the significance of this line during the Civil War? How might it have affected families, friendships, and trade?
5. Civil War soldiers carried many items with them and marched hundreds of miles. If you had to bring just three things with you while you were in the army, what would they be?

Gallery Seven

1. How did civilians (or innocent bystanders) experience the Civil War?
2. If you were a resident of Gettysburg in 1863, how would you have felt about the Confederates invading your home state?
3. Not knowing what might happen, many local citizens fled Gettysburg before the battle. Some stayed and took shelter in their homes. What would you have done? What are the pros and cons of each decision?
4. If you chose to leave town before the battle, what would you have taken with you?
5. Several civilians, including John Burns, fought in the battle to defend their homes. Was Burns heroic, foolish, or both?
6. Hundreds of citizens wrote about their experiences during the battle. Why do you think it was important for them to record their stories?
7. Why are the stories of civilians an important piece of Gettysburg's story? What can civilian stories teach us about war that we cannot learn from other sources?

Gallery Eight - Caught in the Crossfire Experience

1. What are some coping techniques families may have used during the Battle of Gettysburg? How would you have comforted your loved ones?
2. Why is it important to stay calm during an emergency?
3. Innocent civilians continue to suffer in different parts of the world. Where is this sort of scene playing out today?

Gallery Nine

1. The aftermath of the Battle of Gettysburg was horrific for local residents. What were some of the lasting effects of the battle?
2. Why might local residents have kept souvenirs from the battle, like bullets and artillery shells? What uses did they have for them?
3. How does war impact the environment? What evidence of this could be found at Gettysburg?

Gallery Ten

1. If you were in the crowd listening to Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, what might you have noticed? What parts of his speech would have been most important to you?

2. Many spectators described how Abraham Lincoln looked sad and tired during his visit to Gettysburg. What could have been causing some of this stress?
3. David Wills organized the effort to bury Union soldiers in the new “Soldiers’ National Cemetery.” Others, like Basil Biggs, helped carry out the work of moving bodies into freshly dug graves. Why do you think so many local residents felt responsible for being part of this project?

Gallery Eleven

1. The Spanish Flu was devastating at Camp Colt. What strategies did Captain Dwight D. Eisenhower use to lessen the impact of the pandemic?
2. What new weapons emerged during the First World War that resulted in an unprecedented death toll?
3. Gettysburg residents were quick to preserve portions of the battlefield forever. Other sites became tourist attractions. What is an appropriate balance between preservation and development? How does this debate continue today - not just here, but in communities around the country?
4. Adams County has become one of the largest apple-producing counties in the nation. How has the industry changed since its origins in the 1880s?

Gallery Twelve

1. Why did Dwight D. Eisenhower come to appreciate Gettysburg so much? What drew him back here after fighting in the Second World War?
2. Why have so many presidents come to Gettysburg? What is the importance of their visits?
3. Local residents have fought for a number of causes - from suffrage, to civil rights, to equal education. Where can progress still be made to promote a more fair and just society?
4. Local citizens continue to make an impact on our community, and communities across the nation. What can you do to serve yours, and to ensure that its history is passed on to future generations?