

ESSENTIAL CIVIL WAR CURRICULUM

Desertion, Cowardice and Punishment

By **Dr. Mark A. Weitz**, Weitz Morgan PLLC

Resources

If you can read only one book

Author	<i>Title. City: Publisher, Year.</i>
Mark A. Weitz	<i>More Damning than Slaughter: Desertion in the Confederate Army.</i> Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 2005.

Books

Author	<i>Title. City: Publisher, Year.</i>
William Blair	<i>Virginia's Private War: Feeding Body and Soul in the Confederacy, 1861-1865.</i> New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.
Jack Bunch	<i>Roster of the Courts Martial in the Confederate Armies.</i> Shippensburg, PA: Burd Street Press, 2000.
Dora L. Costa and Matthew E. Kahn	<i>Heroes and Cowards: The Social Face of War.</i> Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2008.
Ella Lonn	<i>Desertion during the Civil War.</i> Gloucester, Mass, American Historical Association, 1928.
Thomas P. Lowry	<i>Confederate Death Sentences: A Guide.</i> Charleston: South Carolina: Booksurge Publishing, 2009.
Bessie Martin	<i>Desertion of Alabama Troops from the Confederate Army: A Study in Sectionalism.</i> New York: Columbia University Press, 1932.
Mark A. Weitz	<i>A Higher Duty: Desertion among Georgia</i>

	<i>Troops during the Civil War</i> . Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 2000.
David Williams	<i>Bitterly Divided: The South's Inner Civil War</i> . New York: New Press, 2008.

Author	Article. Magazine, Volume: Issue.
Peter S. Bearman	<i>Desertion as Localism: Army Unit Solidarity and Group Norms in the U.S. Civil War</i> . Social Forces, 70, December 1991.
Rand Dotson	" <i>The Grave and Scandalous Evil Infected to your People</i> ": <i>The Erosion of Confederate Loyalty in Floyd County, Virginia</i> . The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, 108, September 2000.
Lisa Laskin	" <i>The Army is not near so much Demoralized as the Country is</i> ": <i>Soldiers in the Army of Northern Virginia and the Confederate Home Front</i> in Aaron Sheehan-Dean, ed., <i>The View from the Ground: Experiences of Civil War Soldiers</i> . Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2007.
Aaron W. Marrs	<i>Desertion and Loyalty in the South Carolina Infantry, 1861-1865</i> . Civil War History, 50, March 2004.
James T. Otten	<i>Disloyalty in the Upper Districts of South Carolina during the Civil War</i> . South Carolina Historical Magazine, 75, April 1974.
Trevor Plante	<i>The Shady Side of the Family Tree: Civil War Union Court-Martial Files</i> . Prologue Magazine, 30:4, Winter 1998.
Brian Holden Reid and John White	" <i>A Mob of Stragglers and Cowards</i> ": <i>Desertion from the Union and Confederate Armies, 1861-1865</i> . Journal of Strategic Studies, 8:1, 1985.
Richard Reid	<i>A Test Case of the "Crying Evil": Desertion among North Carolina Troops during the Civil War</i> . North Carolina Historical Review, 58, July 1981.
Kevin Conley Ruffner	<i>Civil War Desertion from a Black Belt Regiment: An Examination of the 44th Virginia Infantry</i> in Edward L. Ayers and John C. Willis, eds., <i>The Edge of the South</i> :

	<i>Life in Nineteenth-Century Virginia.</i> Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1991.
Mark Weitz	<i>"I Shall Never Forget the Name of You": The Home Front, Desertion, and Oath Swearing in Wartime Tennessee.</i> Tennessee Historical Quarterly, Spring 2000.

NOTE ON SOURCES:

The reader will immediately notice that there is far more scholarly work on the subject of Confederate desertion than its Union counterpart. Ella Lonn’s 1928 work is the only monograph that addresses Union desertion in any depth. There are three book length studies of Confederate desertion in addition to a variety of journal articles. The articles however tend for the most part to focus on Virginia and North Carolina. The imbalance in the literature reflects in some way the notion that desertion hurt the Confederacy far more than the Union and thus the story is somehow more important. That may not be the case. Lonn argued in her study that Union desertion may have prolonged the war by preventing the North from bringing even more overwhelming numbers to bear on the Confederacy. While it is difficult to argue with the many ways that desertion undermined the Southern war effort, a study of Northern desertion and its real impact on the war would be a welcomed addition to the growing, but nevertheless sparse literature on the subject of Civil War desertion.

Organizations

Web Resources

Other Sources

Scholars

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Mark A. Weitz	mweitz@weitzmorgan.com
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