Guiding Question:

How can students honor veterans’ service by practicing the historical thinking skills necessary to research the stories behind the veterans interred at national cemeteries in their own communities?
Overview
During a visit to the Dallas-Fort Worth National Cemetery, students will learn about the purpose of national cemeteries. They will see first-hand what information can be found on a grave marker and will learn how to generate research questions to learn more about the servicemember and his or her life.

Objectives
At the conclusion of this activity, students will be able to:

• Explain the purpose of a national cemetery;
• Learn how to glean basic information about a veteran from his or her grave marker; and
• Practice the process of thinking historically to develop questions to begin research.

Spotlight: Dallas-Fort Worth National Cemetery
Dallas-Fort Worth National Cemetery is the sixth national cemetery in Texas and the 118th in the national cemetery system.

Currently, more than 1.5 million veterans live in the state of Texas and approximately 460,000 reside in the cemetery’s service area. The Dallas-Fort Worth National Cemetery has developed 152 acres of the 638-acre cemetery providing 85,778 casketed sites and 31,918 columbaria/garden niches for cremated remains. Fully developed, Dallas-Fort Worth National Cemetery will provide burial space for 280,000 eligible veterans and dependents.
Standards Connections

Connections to Common Core

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

Documents Used

Primary Sources

Headstone of Dantón Demófilo Ferrero and Oneida Ferrero
Dallas-Fort Worth National Cemetery
Section 14C Site 231

Various headstones
Dallas-Fort Worth National Cemetery
Section 76

Secondary Sources

Available Emblems of Belief
National Cemetery Administration
https://www.cem.va.gov/cem/docs/emblems.pdf

Award Abbreviations
National Cemetery Administration
https://www.cem.va.gov/CEM/docs/abbreviations/Awards.pdf

Headstone and Marker Inscription Abbreviations
National Cemetery Administration
https://www.cem.va.gov/hmm/abbreviations.asp
Map, Dallas-Fort Worth National Cemetery
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veteran Profile, Private First Class Dantón Demófilo Ferrero
National Cemetery Administration
https://www.cem.va.gov/legacy/

Materials

- Map, Dallas-Fort Worth National Cemetery
- Cemetery Field Guide
- Private First Class Dantón Demófilo Ferrero Veteran Profile
- Selected Burials List
- Historical Thinking Reflection Questions

Activity Preparation

- Contact the Dallas-Fort Worth National Cemetery to let them know of your plans in case any interments are being conducted in the areas you intend to visit (Sections 14C and 76).
- Familiarize yourself with the function of a national cemetery. Burial in a national cemetery is open to:
  - Members of the armed forces killed in action as well as veterans;
  - Members of the armed forces reserves who meet certain requirements; and
  - A veteran's spouse, widow or widower, minor children, and, under certain conditions, unmarried adult children with disabilities.
- Familiarize yourself with the Dallas-Fort Worth National Cemetery Map, noting the locations of Section 14C and 76.
- Assign students to groups of two or three students each.
- Make one teacher copy of the Map, Dallas-Fort Worth National Cemetery.
• Make one copy for each student:
  ◦ Cemetery Field Guide
  ◦ Private First Class Dantón Demófilo Ferrero Veteran Profile
  ◦ Historical Thinking Reflection Questions
• Pack pencils or pens for student use.

**Procedure**

**Activity One: Field Trip Pre-Activity (15 minutes)**

• Explain that the purpose of the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) is to provide a final resting place for those who die in the military, military veterans, and certain family members.

• Establish expectations for visiting the final resting places of American veterans and their families.

• Explain that cemeteries can be a good place to learn about a person or a community through the primary source information they offer.

• Make students aware of resources on the NCA website, including the Available Emblems of Belief, Headstone and Marker Inscription Abbreviations, and Award Abbreviations.

• Discuss how a person might use information from a grave marker to generate research questions to learn more about a person at a national cemetery.

• Assign students to groups (two or three students each) for the field trip activity the following day.

**Activity Two: Initial Observation (15 minutes)**

• Arrive at the cemetery and take students to Section 14C. Allow students to observe the grave markers in Section 14C.

• Distribute the Cemetery Field Guide. Direct students to answer questions one and two in Part A.

• Debrief with students.
  ◦ Ask students to share the types of information they found. Possible answers to question two could include: men, women, spouses, killed in action (KIA), died after their time in the service was over, etc.
Lead a discussion with students about how historians could use the information on the markers to discover more about the person buried there.

- **What questions would they like to have answered?** Possible student responses could include: Why are different symbols inscribed on the grave markers? What do the abbreviations mean? Why are some buried alone? Why are some buried with spouses or other family members?

- **Where would they look to find new answers?** Possible student responses could include: National Cemetery Administration website, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) records, Ancestry.com, newspaper obituaries, Findagrave.com, etc.

**Activity Three: PFC Dantón Demófilo Ferrero Grave Marker (30 minutes)**

- Lead students to the area near Dantón Demófilo and Oneida Ferrero’s grave marker at Site 231, near the back of the section 14C.

- Direct students to record the information on the Ferrero grave marker (question three).

- Direct students to write a brief narrative (two to four sentences) of Private First Class Ferrero’s story based on the information they see on his grave marker (question four).

- Distribute a copy of Private First Class Dantón Demófilo Ferrero’s Veteran Profile to each student. Explain that the process of discovering the information they are about to hear in the profile began by knowing only what is found on his grave marker and in the National Cemetery Administration database.

- Read the Veteran Profile aloud. Ask students to circle information that appears both in the profile and on the grave marker.

- Ask student to look at the items they circled. What questions helped to generate this information? Lead a brief discussion to give students insight into the process of developing research questions.
  - Students may note that that Ferrero’s name in the profile (Dantón) differs from how it appears on the grave marker (Danton). What caused the appearance of his name to change? What research would help answer that question?
  
  - The grave marker indicates he and his wife were “Beloved Parents.” How could a historian follow up on that claim? Who would they ask?
Explain to students that all of the information in the profile came from publicly available internet sources or through databases such as Ancestry or newspapers.com. How important was the process of asking questions and thinking about where to find the answers? Help students understand that not all questions can be answered. Because an interview with his children was not an available resource, information in the profile about him as a parent is limited.

Activity Four: Selected Burials (45 minutes)

• Drive or walk to Section 76.

• Explain to students that the grave sites are ordered so that higher numbers are located closer to the administration building. Most of the markers on the Selected Burials List can be found in the rows closer to the building.

• Arrange students in previously assigned groups.
  ◦ Assign each group one of the veterans on the Selected Burials List. Direct students to write down the name of the veteran, section, and site in the spaces provided on the Cemetery Field Guide, Part B.
  ◦ Direct students to complete questions five through seven before returning to the teacher.
  ◦ Remind students of appropriate behaviors and dismiss students to locate the grave of their assigned person.

Assessment

• Direct each student to complete the Historical Thinking Reflection Questions for homework or as a quiet activity on the return journey.

• Collect the Cemetery Field Guide and Historical Thinking Reflection Questions from each student.

Methods for Extension

• Students can research the lives of the servicemembers whose graves they visited at the cemetery. Teachers can share this work on a bulletin board or as part of a Veterans Day or Memorial Day ceremony in the school or community.

• Students interested in learning more about the symbols on the gravestones can visit the Available Emblems of Beliefs link on the NCA’s website.

• Students interested in learning more about the abbreviation on the gravestones Headstone and Marker Inscription Abbreviations link on the NCA’s website.
Cemetery Field Guide

Part A

1. What type of information is available on these grave markers about individual veterans?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Date of Death</td>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>Date of Birth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>Job</td>
<td>Battle Area</td>
<td>Grave Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Personality</td>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. What patterns do you notice about the individuals represented by these grave markers as a group?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

3. Gather around grave marker 14C-231. Record the FACTS that appear on this grave marker.

4. Based on what you know, write a brief narrative about the life of the veteran interred at 14C-231.

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
Part B

5. Name of veteran: ________________________________  Section: ______  Site: ______

Make a quick sketch of the front and back of the gravestone.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Front</th>
<th>Back</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

6. Did anything about this grave marker surprise you?

____________________________________________________

____________________________________________________

____________________________________________________

7. Circle three or four facts on the grave marker you could use to write a follow-up question. Create a follow-up question for each fact and write it below. Where might you find answers to these questions? (NCA resources, Ancestry.com, internet search, newspaper article, obituary, etc.).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Follow-up Question</th>
<th>Where might you find the answer?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Selected Burials List

**Section 76, Dallas-Fort Worth National Cemetery**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Background</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adair, Bernice</td>
<td>U.S. Navy, World War II</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evans, John Clayton</td>
<td>Pearl Harbor Survivor, USS Arizona. His spouse's name (Ruth) appears on the reverse.</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houston, Emily W.</td>
<td>Lieutenant Junior Grade, U.S. Navy, World War II. Spouse of Robert C. Houston (76-448)</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>447</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houston, Robert C.</td>
<td>Lieutenant Commander, U.S. Navy, World War II and Korea. Spouse of Emily W. Houston (76-447)</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellis, Stavis</td>
<td>Officer in charge of the motorcycle escort for President Kennedy's motorcade through Dallas. His spouse's name (Juanita) appears on the reverse.</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craig, Clay A.</td>
<td>Killed in Action, Iraq</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>1306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ayres, James H.</td>
<td>Killed in Action, Vietnam. Group burial with Charles W. Stratton</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>1459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stratton, Charles W.</td>
<td>Killed in Action, Vietnam. Group burial with James H. Ayers</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>1459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cope, Troy Gordon</td>
<td>F-86 pilot during World War II and Korea. Killed in action, Korea</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>1542</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hicks, Glenn Dale</td>
<td>Killed in action, Iraq</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>1617</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garcia, J. Adam</td>
<td>Killed in action, Iraq</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>1668</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courcy, Peter John</td>
<td>Killed in action, Afghanistan</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>1658B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miller, Curtis Daniel</td>
<td>Killed in action, Vietnam, identified in 2010</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>1658J</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stone, James L.</td>
<td>Medal of Honor recipient. Prisoner of War</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>1658L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benitez, Carlos A.</td>
<td>Killed in action, Afghanistan</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>1658N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harris, Devon J.</td>
<td>Killed in action, Afghanistan</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>1658R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinson, Jr. Cloyde C.</td>
<td>U.S. Marine Corps. Killed in action, Vietnam</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>1702A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinson, Sr. Cloyde C.</td>
<td>Instrumental in the development and securing the funding for Dallas-Fort Worth National Cemetery</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>1702B</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Historical Thinking Reflection Questions

1. Write a brief narrative history of your veteran based on the information you have learned today.
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

2. Write two new follow-up questions about your veteran. Where might you find the answers?
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

3. What have you learned from visiting a national cemetery?
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

4. How has your understanding of what it means to think historically changed?
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
Private First Class Dantón D. Ferrero

Hometown: Valencia, Spain and Dayton, Ohio
Entered Service: June 20, 1916
Unit: 37th Division, 148th Infantry, Machine Gun Company
Rank: Private First Class, U.S. Army
Cemetery: Section 14C, Site 231,
Dallas–Fort Worth National Cemetery
Dallas, Texas

March 31, 1895 - April 21, 1987

RESEARCHED BY KATHY CARROLL
Before the War

Dantón Demófilo Ferrero was born in Valencia, Spain. His father, Emilio Ferrero, was active in liberal Spanish political circles and worked for the foreign division of the National Cash Register Corporation (NCR) in Spain. Ferrero’s mother, Bélan de Ságarra, was a famous Spanish political activist, poet, and writer. His family moved to Uruguay in 1908 where his mother edited a liberal newspaper. She also traveled around the world speaking at political conferences. Ferrero returned to Europe around 1909 and lived in London, England.

His mother’s growing fame created problems, and Ferrero’s parents divorced. She led a separate life, working and writing in Spain and in Latin America.

On March 22, 1911, Ferrero and his younger brother Victor boarded the SS Saint Paul in Liverpool, England, and set sail for America. The ship’s manifest lists Ferrero’s height as four feet and his age as ten years and 11 months.

His father arranged for their passage and was waiting for the boys in Dayton, Ohio, where NCR maintained its headquarters.

A January 1911 newspaper article introduced Emilio Ferrero to the Dayton community while he waited for his sons’ arrival in America in March. The article described him as a widower and a man of sophistication.

In 1912, newspapers reported Emilio Ferrero received an inheritance of $37,000 from an uncle in Spain (around one million dollars today). Emilio Ferrero assured the Dayton community that an American obsession with wealth would not change him. He continued to travel extensively for his work, and he often took his younger son Victor with him, leaving Dantón behind.
During his youth in Dayton, Dantón attended St. Mary’s School and won an award for excellence in Irish History in 1913. However, in 1915 he was arrested for stealing a bicycle. His father was out of the country on business, and he was placed in the custody of a woman in Dayton. Just over a month later, Ferrero took out an ad in the Dayton Daily News advertising himself as a language translator for hire.

Military Experience

One year later, Ferrero enlisted in the U.S. Army on June 20, 1916, and in accordance with the time, dropped the accent from his name. His military records list his birth year in 1895, indicating he may not have been truthful about his age. The United States was not yet at war, and Ferrero was still a Spanish citizen, a country which remained neutral in World War I.

When the United States entered the war in 1917, over one-third of the American population was either foreign born or a first generation American. Most of these Americans spoke a language other than English.

Before the war, Ferrero trained as part of a Machine Gun Company of the 3rd Infantry, Ohio National Guard. The National Guard unit became part of the 37th Infantry (Buckeye) Division, 148th Infantry Regiment. When the unit set sail for France on the USS Susquehanna, Corporal Ferrero was in charge of a company of men.
Vosges Mountains

The 37th Division fought in the trenches in the Baccarat sector near the Vosges Mountains in August and September. Here they encountered raids by enemy aircraft. In late September, the unit deployed as part of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive in the Forest de Hess in the Avocourt sector west of Verdun. They were briefly transferred to the St. Mihiel sector near St. Germain, France.

On October 17, they were loaded onto French trains bound for Belgium. Under the command of the king of Belgium, they held a line between Ypres and Ghent that reached from the Lys River east to the Scheldt River. The Division crossed the Scheldt on November 2. A memorial to their service stands in the town of Oudenaarde, Belgium, near where they were stationed when the war ended on November 11.

Little is known about Ferrero’s individual service during this time. He most likely encountered intense fighting during his service in France and Belgium. On June 24, 1919, Ferrero returned on the USS Huntington from Brest, France. He arrived in Boston on July 5, bound for Camp Devens, Massachusetts. No longer a corporal, Ferrero is listed as a private first class in the Quartermaster Corps.

Belgian operations map of the 37th Infantry Division, 148th Infantry Regiment, October 31 to November 1, 1918. National Archives and Records Administration (Record Group 120, Box 12, folder 237-32-6).

Station list of the 148th Infantry Regiment in the American Expeditionary Force, July to December 1918. National Archives and Records Administration (Record Group 120, Box 11, folder 237-10-7).
Veteran Experience

Upon returning to the United States, Ferrero resumed his work as a language teacher and worked at Egry Register Company in a job similar to that of his father’s at NCR. He had an active social life, and his name appeared frequently in the newspaper. He married in June 1920 and became a naturalized American citizen later that year. His son was born in August 1921.

Ferrero was involved in promoting the film industry in Dayton. The city hoped to become a second Hollywood. He enjoyed acting in local theater and film productions such as Maid of the Falls and The Jewett Case. Ferrero continued to travel for his job working for Egry. By 1930, he was no longer married or living in Dayton, and it is likely that Ferrero’s primary residence was in Spain.

In 1937 Ferrero returned from Spain with his second wife. They settled in California, and Danton worked as an interpreter and resumed his work in film. Ferrero worked for Warner Brothers, Columbia Pictures, and MGM.

Left: “The Villain of the Piece”, an article from the Dayton Daily Herald, recounting Ferrero’s role in a local film, August 10, 1922. Courtesy of Newspapers.com (20026782).

Middle: Still image featuring Ferrero from Verbena Tragica (as the Doctor), Library of Congress (8355).

Right: Still image featuring Ferrero from Monroe Doctrine (as Spanish Ambassador), 1939. Courtesy of Turner Classic Movies.
In 1939, the same year that *Gone With the Wind*, *The Wizard of Oz*, and *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* were released, Ferrero starred as the Spanish ambassador in the short film *Monroe Doctrine*. It dramatized the history of the U.S. policy limiting European influence in the western hemisphere.

Ferrero also played a doctor in the Spanish language film *Verbena Tragica*. Hollywood movie studios were trying to open up Latin American markets by producing Spanish language films. Unfortunately, many actors in these films came from a variety of Spanish speaking countries, each with its own accent and dialect. Native speakers noticed the differences, and the films were not a commercial success.

When the United States entered World War II, men registered for the draft. On February 15, 1942, Danton D. Ferrero registered as well. He listed his birthdate as 1898, but the draft registrar notes that his “birthdate [is] doubtful.” Due to the war, the film industry turned its attention to producing newsreels and films promoting American patriotism. Ferrero continued to narrate voiceovers for films by director Pete Smith, but his acting days were over.

In 1960, Ferrero married Oneida R. Paloma, a Cuban native, in White Plains, New York. They settled in Orange County, Florida. The couple had three children during the 1960s. In the 1970s Danton continued to be involved in his community giving lectures to the Rotary Club and other organizations such as the Spiritual Research Society.
Commemoration

Little is publicly known about Ferrero’s death on April 21, 1987. However, the historical record reveals life experiences that were extraordinary. He came to America as a small child with an unusual family story. He volunteered to serve in the U.S. Army although he was not an American citizen. He fought in brutal campaigns during World War I.

In 1996, Verbena Tragica was listed in the National Film Registry. It was selected by the National Film Preservation Board as a film recognized for “its importance to American cinema and the nation’s cultural and historical heritage.” Verbena Tragica represents Hollywood’s attempt to reach out to a more diverse American and foreign audience. This collection, which also includes titles like Star Wars and The Wizard of Oz, is maintained by the Library of Congress.

Danton Ferrero was interred in another location before his remains were re-interred at the Dallas-Fort Worth National Cemetery, along with those of his wife Oneida, after her death in 2003.
Bibliography

37th Division; Records of the American Expeditionary Forces (World War I), Records of Combat Division, 1917-1918, Record Group 120 (Boxes 1-12); National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.


Bibliography (con't)


"Fortune Comes to Employee of NCR Company." Dayton Herald, June 14, 1912. Newspapers.com (391782382).


"Local Shop Employee Gets Large Legacy." Dayton Daily News, June 14, 1912, Newspapers.com (22256665).


"Visitor From Spain." The Dayton Herald, January 2, 1911. Newspapers.com (391797810).