

Teacher's Handout 2: What did the wounded soldiers face during the Civil War?

Instructions: Respond to the following questions based on the materials presented in the “Maimed Men” exhibition section (<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/exhibition/LifeandLimb/maimedmen.html>).

1. “*The Limbs of soldiers were in as much danger from the ardor of young surgeons as from the missiles of the enemy.*” Whose quote is this? [Surgeon Julian John Chisolm \(Confederate\)](#)

What does the quote tell you about what happened to soldiers in the war after they were wounded?

Responses will vary.

2. How did the advances and limitations in Civil War medicine shape the treatment of wounded soldiers?

The surgeons were able to treat extensive wounds as well as perform multiple surgeries on a wound if needed. Amputations, about three quarters of all surgeries in the war, were often performed to save soldiers from dying from infections, such as gangrene.

However, Civil War surgeons had limited understanding of sterilization and the risk of infection. They had little practice treating major injuries from a war, but many wanted to do amputations to improve their skills. An unprecedented number of wounded soldiers resulted in surgeons working quickly, not having time to conduct delicate and time-consuming surgeries. Often wounded soldiers had to wait to be treated, undergoing repeated procedures as a result.

3. Examine the photos and illustrations in the “Maimed Men.” Explain what these images tell you about the state of medical care during the Civil War that the words alone could not? ([Depending on the assessment of the illustration of a Civil War amputee, teachers may omit or change this question.](#))

Responses will vary.

4. What new understanding have you gained about treatment of wounded soldiers in the Civil War ?

Responses will vary.