

THE LANGUAGE OF THE CIVIL WAR

Nearly 150 years have passed since the Civil War, and in that time, our language has changed quite a bit. Below are a few of the terms that were frequently used during and after the Civil War. Use these terms to complete the following exercise.

1. What have you just done if you've met the elephant? _____
2. Many of the soldiers were sick with diarrhea. What are the two slang terms in this list for diarrhea? _____
3. If a soldier got his big ticket, what did he get to do? _____
4. Where would you find a Sherman's Hairpin? _____
5. What would you do if you heard peas on a trencher? _____
6. On a separate sheet of paper, write sentences using eight of these terms.

Ague: A nonspecific term for chills and fever, often but not always occasioned by malaria.

Alvine flux: another medical phrase for diarrhea.

Bait: to to give food or drink to an animal, especially a horse.

Big ticket: A document certifying a soldier's honorable discharge from Federal forces.

Blockade-runner: A vessel whose mission was to thwart the Federal Blockade of Southern ports. Many blockade-runners, including some of the finest and swiftest, were British owned and operated. Before the Union navy increased in size, blockade-runners kept the South supplied with weapons and goods from Europe.

Bumblebee: a bullet.

Carpetbagger: A Northern political or economic adventurer who went to the South during the post-war reconstruction period (1865-1870). The reference was to a carryall made of carpet materials

Coosh: softened hardtack fried in bacon grease.

Dead cart: an ambulance.

Elephant: A designation for combat, regardless of its scale. To see or meet the elephant was to have been in combat for the first time, one's baptism under fire.

Gump: a fool or dolt.