

## Activity—Civil War & UGRR program

### Civil War Drum Calls

**Objective:** Students will learn the importance of drummers and drum calls during the Civil War, and will learn to respond to calls for meals, battle formation, and lights out.

**Materials:** None

### Backstory:

Drum calls or signals were the way basic orders were conveyed to Civil War troops. Each company of 100 men had two musicians: two drummers or a drummer and a fifer. The drummers beat the rhythm for the soldiers as they marched, but that was only a small part of their job. The troops were trained to respond to drum calls for daily camp activities like reveille (wake up), meals, roll call, retreat (end of duty), and lights out. They were also trained to respond to drum calls in battle, including the orders to fire and cease firing. Though the minimum legal age for regular enlistment was 18, musicians could enlist at age 12, because they were usually not involved in action.

### *Example Civil War Drum Calls:*

(Key: ---- indicates short beats, \_ \_ \_ indicates long beats)

- Breakfast (--\_--\_--\_--\_)
- Battle Formation (-----)
- Retreat (---\_ \_ --- \_ \_ --- \_ \_ --- \_ \_)

***OPTIONAL: Music Theory Reinforcement***

Short beats are Quarter notes (♩) and long beats are Half (♩) notes, in the Breakfast and Battle Formation Calls. Both can be read in 4/4 time

Short beats in the Retreat Call are Triplets (♩) and long beats are Quarter notes (♩). This call can be read in 3/4 time.

- Breakfast Call

(--\_--\_--\_--\_) OR || ♩♩♩ | ♩♩♩ | ♩♩♩ | ♩♩♩ ||

- Battle Formation Call

(-----) OR || ♩♩♩♩ | ♩♩♩♩ | ♩♩♩♩ | ♩♩♩♩ ||

- Retreat Call

(---\_---\_---\_---\_---\_---\_---\_---\_---\_---) OR || ♩♩♩ | ♩♩♩ | ♩♩♩ | ♩♩♩ ||

## Activity: Lead Students in a Drum Call

*Educator or parent led activity. Students will listen and then identify a drum call.*

- Ask students to imagine that they are Civil War soldiers, and you are their company musician.
- Demonstrate for the students the drum calls for Breakfast, Battle Formation, and Retreat, having them repeat each call after you demonstrate it.
- Test their skills by having them respond correctly to calls with a pantomime:

Breakfast Call (--\_--\_--\_--\_)

Response: students pretend to eat a bowl of cereal

Battle Formation (-----)

Response: students march in place

Retreat (---\_ \_ --- \_ \_ --- \_ \_ --- \_ \_)

Response: students pretend to sleep

