



**AMERICAN
BATTLEFIELD
TRUST ★ ★ ★**



**Antietam Battlefield Field Trip
Lesson Plan: Module 1**

American Battlefield Trust, 2022

This is an individual module from the Antietam Battlefield Field Trip Lesson Plan. It has been formatted for ease of use or printing options for stand-alone learning experiences.

We strongly recommend viewing the PDF of the entire Field Trip Lesson Plan to find maps, touring tips, and extra resources. If you want just one file, this PDF is for you. It includes all modules (lesson plans and activities), the maps, and the supplemental historic photos in one easy download.

These lesson plans are listed according to their locations on the National Park Service's Self-Guided Auto Tour route. Please consult the [Antietam National Battlefield's Self-Guided Auto Tour map](#) when planning your visit with these lesson plans and battlefield investigations.



American Battlefield Trust Field Trip Lesson

Antietam: Dunker Church

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

What was the role of the Dunkers and their church in the Battle of Antietam? Should their church have been used as a hospital in the aftermath of the battle? Should Dunkers who were eligible to serve in the military be allowed an exemption from service because of their religious views?

OVERVIEW

The Dunker religion was founded in Germany at the turn of the 18th century. As this religious group split from the Protestant and Catholic congregations, they were not well received. They were forced to meet and practice their beliefs in areas that tolerated their split from the other religions. The Dunkers were appropriately named after their practice of baptism, which fully immersed their members. Over time, the religion grew and spread, now officially known as the Church of the Brethren.

As Dunkers immigrated to America, they originally settled in Pennsylvania before eventually moving elsewhere. A large population of Dunkers had migrated southward from their original settlements in Pennsylvania to in and around the town of Sharpsburg, Maryland.

The Dunker religion is based around a modest lifestyle, pacifism, and the opposition of enslaving people. This pacifism was demonstrated through refusal of military enlistment and service in both the North and South. Ironically, the war came to them, with the bloodiest single-day battle of the Civil War centering around their place of worship.

The structure you are now at – the Dunker Church – sustained heavy damage during the battle and was also used as a make-shift field hospital for wounded soldiers. After the battle, the structure fell into great despair and in 1921, a storm demolished what remained of the original structure. The land was purchased in the early 1950's by the Washington County Historical Society. They later donated the site to the National Park Service and the church was rebuilt on the original site using as much original material as possible.

OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Knowledge (Describe)
 - a. Recall defining factors of the Dunker religion.
 - b. List common features of Dunker churches.
2. Comprehension/Application/Analysis (Explain)
 - a. Discuss how their views on slavery may have been controversial based on their location at the time of the war.



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- b. Formulate an opinion as to whether the church should have been used as a field hospital during and after the battle.
3. Evaluation (Interpret)
 - a. Form and defend an opinion as to whether or not Dunkers should have been allowed to not serve in the army during the war.
 - b. Draw conclusions as to what the fighting around the Dunker Church looked like during the battle.

BATTLEFIELD LOCATION

Antietam National Battlefield Auto Tour Stop #1- Dunker Church/ Hagerstown Pike

American Battlefield Trust Antietam Virtual Tour – Dunker Church Segment

<https://www.battlefields.org/visit/virtual-tours/antietam-360-virtual-tour>

NPS Website Virtual Tour:

<https://www.nps.gov/anti/learn/photosmultimedia/virtualtour.htm>

ACTIVITIES

Motivational Activity:

1. Gather students in the Dunker Church if it is open. To provide students with a historical reference as to how religious services were conducted, have male students sit on one side of the church and female students sit on the other side.
2. Provide students with an overview of the Dunker religion and the Dunker Church at Antietam. This can be located in the Overview section above.

Procedure:

1. After you have provided the overview, facilitate a discussion focusing on the following:
 - a. The Dunkers' views on slavery.
 - b. Allowing men to be exempt from serving in the military during a time of conflict based solely on their religious views.
 - c. Since the location of the Dunker Church was heavily fought upon, allow students to discuss and express their views on the church being used as a field hospital.
 - i. Is this a conflict of interest?

Summary Activity:

1. After the class discussion, allow students to move their seats based on their opinion.
 - a. Have students who defend the right to abstain from fighting sit on one side and students who oppose the right to abstain from fighting sit on the other side.
 - b. After the students have chosen their side, finish the lesson by facilitating a discussion about the division in the class.



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RESOURCES**Teacher:**

- Snyder, Keith. *Antietam Remembered: A Walking Tour*. Sharpsburg: Western Maryland Interpretive Association.
- Walker, K. M., and Kirkman, K. C. *Antietam Farmsteads: A Guide to the Battlefield Landscape*. Sharpsburg: Western Maryland Interpretive Association, 2010.
- American Battlefield Trust “The Dunkers: A Religious Community Caught in the Throes of War”
<https://www.battlefields.org/learn/articles/dunkers>
- American Battlefield Trust In4 Video: Religion <https://youtu.be/DLQe22xjN6s>
- National Park Service Website
 - <https://www.nps.gov/anti/learn/historyculture/dunkerchurch.htm>

Students:

- Snyder, Keith. *Antietam Remembered: A Walking Tour*. Sharpsburg: Western Maryland Interpretive Association.
- National Park Service Website
<https://www.nps.gov/anti/learn/historyculture/dunkerchurch.htm>
- American Battlefield Trust “The Dunkers: A Religious Community Caught in the Throes of War”
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STANDARDS**Social Studies - National Council for the Social Studies**

- Theme 1: Culture
- Theme 2: Time, Continuity, and Change
- Theme 3: People, Places, or Environments
- Theme 5: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
- Theme 6: Power Authority and Governance



BATTLE QUOTES — DUNKER CHURCH

“For a time the loss of life was fearful. We had never seen anything like it.”

A Massachusetts soldier

“On one side of this turnpike lay rows of the union dead,-in some instances taking in every man in the line-while on the opposite side lay the dead Confederates, equally thick, showing how terribly in earnest these lines had been which lay on each side of the narrow road and shot at each other. A terrible sight to go into battle over!”

Historian of the 19th Massachusetts Infantry

“Suddenly, loud above the rattle of musketry and the roar of the artillery, that historic rebel yell was heard. To those who have never heard it I will simply say that it is indescribable; but if ten thousand fiends were unchained and let loose it could not be more unearthly.”

James Larkin, 72nd Pennsylvania Infantry

“The noise of the musketry and artillery was so great that I judged more by the gestures of the general as to the disposition he wished me to make than by the orders that reached my ears.”

Oliver O. Howard’s description of Sumner riding toward him in the West Woods

“We were in the hottest part of the fight under Jackson, and for me to give an idea of the fierceness of the conflict, the roar of musketry, and the thunder of artillery is as utterly impossible as to describe a thousand storms in the region of Hades. The Malvern Hill fight was a circumstance....[Federals] fought better than they ever did before.”

A South Carolina soldier

“On a field shrouded with smoke, the church alone was the only visible landmark. And so, this Dunker Church stood out as a beacon by which commanders took their direction and men found their way through the smoky chaos of battle. May it stand in peace as it did in war, as a beacon to guide those searching their way through the darkness. May it stand throughout all ages as a symbol of mercy, peace, and understanding.”

Maryland Governor Millard Tawes, Re-dedication of the Dunker Church, Sept. 2, 1962





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