

## Create a Medal of Honor

In 1782, George Washington established the nation's first award to recognize the bravery of American soldiers. It was a purple heart made of cloth and was called the Badge of Military Merit. But the award was not used much after the Revolutionary War. Then, in 1861, Congress created a new award—the Medal of Honor. In the Civil War, 1,520 Union soldiers, including 20 African Americans, received the medal. Today, that medal is the highest United States military award for individual bravery and is commonly referred to as the Congressional Medal of Honor.

### CALIFORNIA STANDARDS

**REP4** Students assess the credibility of primary and secondary sources and draw sound conclusions from them.

**Writing 2.1** Write biographies, autobiographies, short stories, or narratives.

**ACTIVITY** Create a medal of honor for a hero or heroine from either side of the Civil War. Write a letter recommending your hero for the medal. Then read a speech in class as you award your medal to the deserving individual.

### TOOLBOX

Each group will need:

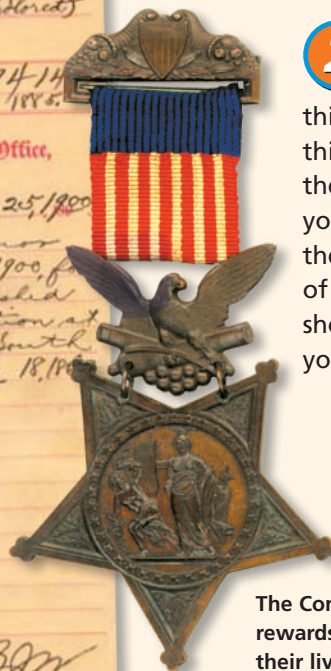
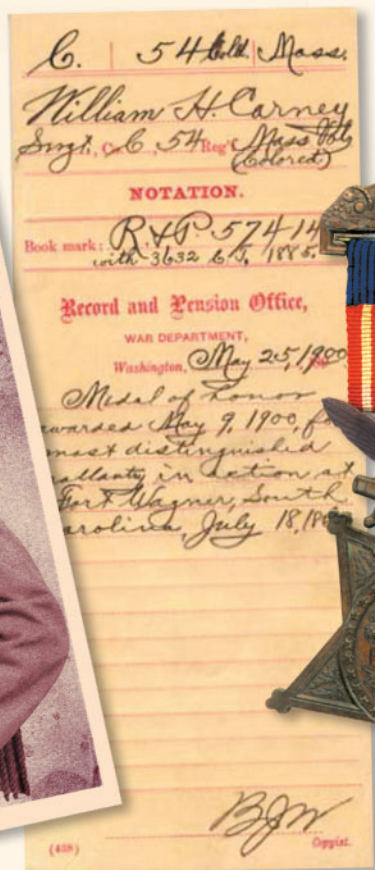
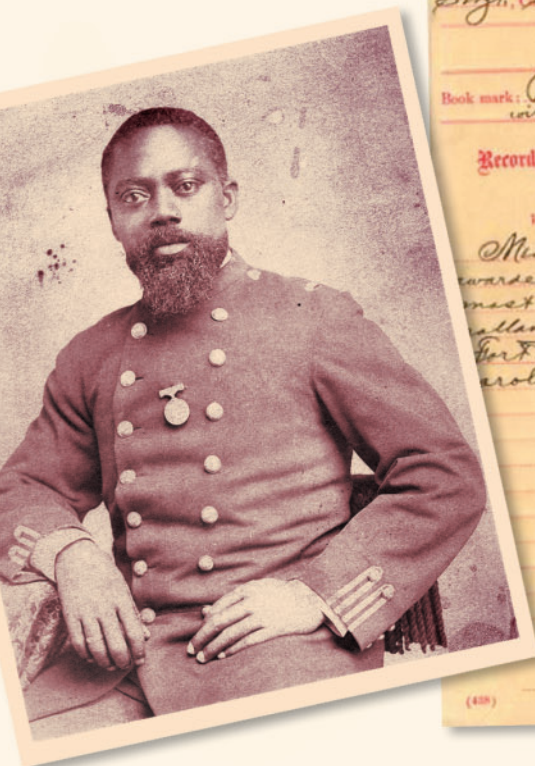
- |                                 |               |
|---------------------------------|---------------|
| tops of juice cans or cardboard | glue          |
| aluminum foil                   | markers       |
| pieces of ribbon                | scissors      |
| safety pins                     | writing paper |

### STEP BY STEP

**1 Form groups.** Each group should consist of three or four students. Each group will:

- identify a Civil War hero or heroine
- create a medal
- write a letter explaining why your group considers that person a hero
- award the medal and read a speech in class

**2 Research a hero.** First, brainstorm characteristics that you think a hero should have. Then, using this chapter, books on the Civil War, or the Internet, select an individual who you think was a hero for either side of the Civil War. Take notes on the actions of the person you selected. The actions should show how that person meets your standards for being a hero.



The Congressional Medal of Honor rewards military personnel who risked their lives, "above and beyond the call of duty." In the Civil War, 1,520 Union soldiers, including 20 African Americans, received the Medal of Honor.



## HELP DESK

For related information, see page 518 in Chapter 17.

### Researching Your Project

Visit the library to learn more about the history of military awards or go to your local historical museum to examine actual medals.

For more about military awards . . .



### Did You Know?

Since the Congressional Medal of Honor was created in 1861, 3,408 persons have received the award. Nineteen persons have received two such awards. Only one woman has received the award.

The Confederate States of America also awarded 43 of its finest men with the Confederate Medal of Honor.

The practice of awarding medals began in Europe during the Middle Ages. Kings realized that giving land to valued knights was too costly, so they gave medals instead.

**3 Design your medal.** Think about the shape, images, and words that you will use to make your medal of honor. You may want to look at the example from Chapter 17 and in Civil War books. Sketch a design of your medal in pencil.

**4 Construct your medal.** Using art supplies, construct a medal based on your design. First, construct the medal itself by using a juice can lid or a cardboard pattern. Decorate the medal by using foil and markers. Then add a ribbon and pin.

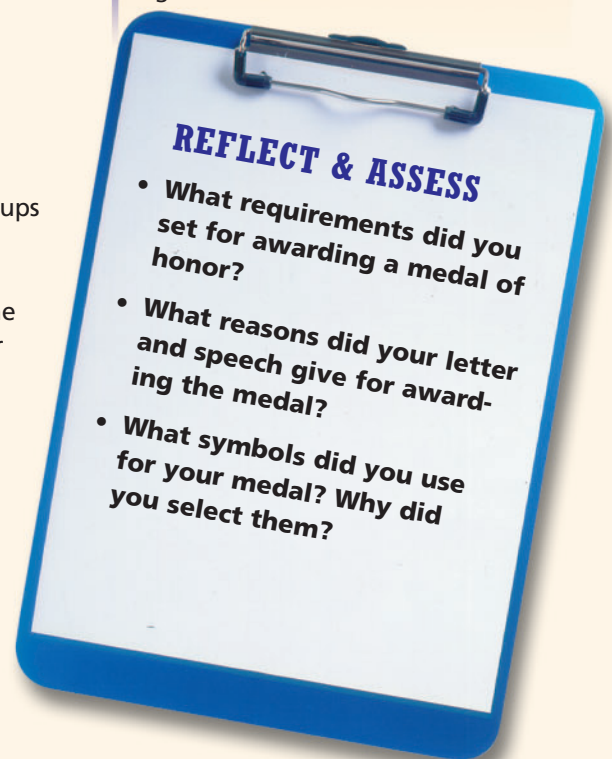
**5 Write a letter.** The letter should be addressed to the Congress of the United States of America or the Congress of the Confederate States of America. Your letter should give reasons for recommending your hero based on the person's actions. Carefully recopy your letter after you have made any corrections.

**6 Pin up the medal.** Create a Medal of Honor board with other groups in your class. Pin up all the medals you have created. Discuss with other groups the standards your group set for calling a person a hero.



## WRITE AND SPEAK

**Write a Speech** As a Civil War military leader, write a speech praising the courage and bravery of the individual who is receiving the medal. Choose another member of your group to act as the recipient of the award. Read your speech to the class as you award the medal to that person.



### REFLECT & ASSESS

- What requirements did you set for awarding a medal of honor?
- What reasons did your letter and speech give for awarding the medal?
- What symbols did you use for your medal? Why did you select them?