

Reading and Language Arts

Directions

Read the passage. Then answer questions 3 and 4.

Women Spymasters

- 1 Women as spies? Sure! In today's world, women spies in fact and fiction don't surprise us. But in 1861, at the time of the Civil War? Well, that's a different story.
- 2 Many women in both the North and the South wanted to contribute to the war effort. But how? Women were often seen as weak, fragile, and in need of protection from the horrors of war. Actually, these perceptions were a perfect cover for the work of a spy! And hundreds of women served as spies for whichever cause they believed in—the Union or the Confederacy.

Belle Edmondson, Confederate Spy

- 3 Belle Edmondson lived near Memphis, Tennessee. The people of Tennessee were divided in their loyalties. Many in the eastern part of the state were anti-slavery and supported the Union. In the rest of Tennessee, however, support was strong for the Confederacy. Belle Edmondson was firmly on the side of the Rebels. Edmondson smuggled supplies to Southern soldiers, even when it meant crossing through Union pickets, or groups of soldiers. Counting on the fact that Yankee soldiers did not usually search women, she hid medicines, uniform cloth, money, and messages in her clothing. Her diary reveals the risky role she played.
- 4 March 16, 1864
At one o'clock . . . I began to fix my articles for smuggling. . . made a balmoral [woolen petticoat worn under a skirt] of the grey cloth for uniform, pinned the hats to the inside of my hoops, tied the boots with a strong list in front . . . All my letters, brass buttons, money etc. in my [blouse]. Started to walk, impossible. Hailed a hack . . . arrived at pickets, no trouble at all, although I suffered horribly in anticipation of trouble. Arrived home at dusk. Worn out.
- 5 Eventually, Belle's many trips aroused suspicion. A warrant was issued for her arrest. She fled to Mississippi, where she lived for the rest of the war.



Belle Edmondson

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