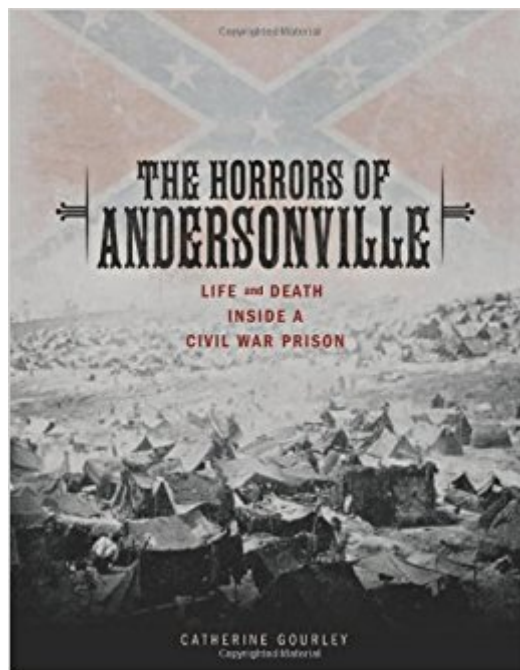




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# **The Horrors Of Andersonville: Life And Death Inside A Civil War Prison (Exceptional Social Studies Titles For Upper Grades)**



## Synopsis

The Confederate prison known as Andersonville existed for only the last fourteen months of the Civil War - but its well-documented legacy of horror has lived on in the diaries of its prisoners and the transcripts of the trial of its commandant. The diaries describe appalling conditions in which vermin-infested men were crowded into an open stockade with a single befouled stream as their water source. Food was scarce and medical supplies virtually nonexistent. The bodies of those who did not survive the night had to be cleared away each morning. Designed to house 10,000 Yankee prisoners, Andersonville held 32,000 during August 1864. Nearly a third of the 45,000 prisoners who passed through the camp perished. Exposure, starvation, and disease were the main causes, but excessively harsh penal practices and even violence among themselves contributed to the unprecedented death rate. At the end of the war, outraged Northerners demanded retribution for such travesties, and they received it in the form of the trial and subsequent hanging of Captain Henry Wirz, the prison's commandant. The trial was the subject of legal controversy for decades afterward, as many people felt justice was ignored in order to appease the Northerners' moral outrage over the horrors of Andersonville. The story of Andersonville is a complex one involving politics, intrigue, mismanagement, unfortunate timing, and, of course, people - both good and bad. Relying heavily on first-person reports and legal documents, author Catherine Gourley gives us a fascinating look into one of the most painful incidents of U.S. history.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Grade 5 Up

•To tell the story of the notorious Civil War prison, the author relies upon memoirs of soldiers who survived the camp; government documents, including the Official Records of the War of the Rebellion; and contemporary newspapers and periodicals. A history of the camp's origins is followed by an engrossing story of deterioration and despair not only for the Union soldiers housed within Andersonville's walls, but also for the Confederacy. The author focuses on six Union soldiers, including John McElroy, who was 16 when he enlisted in the Illinois Cavalry in 1862 and spent 14 months at the prison and later wrote a memoir. Others include James Madison Page, who wrote a book about Henry Wirz, commandant at Andersonville and the only Confederate officer hanged for war crimes, and John Ransom, who kept a detailed diary of his experiences. Along with Wirz, two other Confederate officers played a part in this story as well as three individuals who were associated with Wirz's trial. Combined with photographs and illustrations, the firsthand accounts and quotations make a compelling, interesting book. Numerous sidebars offer intriguing stories about hospital gangrene and surgical fevers, distribution of rations, escape attempts, and cleanliness issues such as lice. A welcome addition for all Civil War collections.

Patricia Ann Owens,  
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This well-researched book describes the notorious Confederate prison camp known as Andersonville, where more than 45,000 Union soldiers lived in deplorable conditions and some 13,000 died, beginning in 1864. After opening with an annotated "Cast of Characters" and a prologue introducing two prisoners who later published accounts of their time at Andersonville, Gourley offers a chronological account of the prison's troubling history, providing details about such matters as the choice of an unsuitable site; the crowded, unsanitary, and inhumane conditions in the camp; and the controversial postwar trial in which the prison's commandant was tried and executed. The book concludes with an epilogue, an extended "Cast of Characters Revisited," source notes, an extensive selected bibliography, and lists of recommended books, films, and Web sites. Illustrated with many captioned photos and prints and enlivened with quotes from firsthand accounts, this book provides a balanced, informative introduction to Andersonville. Grades 9-12. --Carolyn Phelan

great read

not that good. didn't hold my attention, writing was kinda boring, too bad because it is such a tragic time in our countries history should have been told better.

Purchased by school district. Didn't hear any complaints from the teacher (and I would), so assume all's good.

awesome history, great read

Catherine Gourley is an award-winning author and editor of books for young adults, with more than twenty titles to her credit. Her latest work, *The Horrors of Andersonville: Life and Death Inside a Civil War Prison*, will appeal not only to youth, but also to any Civil War buff looking for a good overview of the infamous Confederate-operated prison camp at Andersonville, Georgia. The author interweaves a fictional cast of characters, both those wearing the blue and those of the gray persuasion, to introduce the reader to the misery and suffering that marked the conditions in what was arguably the worst prisoner-of-war camp in the country during the Civil War. Skillfully telling the story of the main characters without sacrificing reality, Gourley uses sidebars to give the reader more depth and details on such topics as burying the dead, distribution of rations and supplies, President Lincoln's views on prisoner exchanges, medical conditions, real-life escape attempts, and facts and fabrications that have arisen over the years since the camp was closed and its commandant, Swiss-born Henry Wirz, became the only Confederate officer executed for war crimes. Gourley's fictional "band of brothers" must recover from the shock of being taken prisoner, endure the humiliation of initial captivity at Richmond's Belle Isle, live through the long and grueling transport to southern Georgia, and then find a way to survive (or not) at Andersonville. She introduces a number of protagonists, including members of a wicked gang of "Regulators," fellow Union prisoners, who control the social and "economic" circles within the ranks of the prisoners. Her writing style is lucid and well flowing, with believable character definition and a steady pace and style that invites the reader to turn the page and learn what happens next to the heroes and villains. The side bars can be distracting if the reader skips between the storyline and the factual details presented, but that is a minor issue and perhaps it is best to read the story and then go back and pick up the facts before a second reading for context. The book is filled with illustrations, period photographs, and other useful information, although maps would have been useful for the new Civil War reader who might not know where Belle Isle was located within the Confederacy versus Andersonville and other locations mentioned. She also could have worked in the story of the

Sultana, an overcrowded Mississippi River transport vessel that exploded and sank rapidly, killing more than a thousand exchanges prisoners, including hundreds of ill-fated soldiers from my native Ohio. All in all, Catherine Gourley's interesting book should appeal to a generation that needs to better understand our country's rich heritage, both the good and the bad. Few of the modern generation know much about the horrors of Andersonville, other than to perhaps have seen the old TNT mini-series on DVD or on-demand downloads. She is to be commended for tackling a difficult subject like Andersonville and making it come alive for the casual reader. *The Horrors of Andersonville: Life and Death Inside a Civil War Prison Camp* Catherine Gourley Twenty-first Century Books, 2010 192 pages, illustrated, hard cover with dust jacket ISBN 978-0-7613-4212-0

That well known judgment that 'war is hell' refers to far more than just the battlefield. Case in point -- civil war prison camps, the most infamous of which was a Confederate 'prison' camp for their Union Army captives and called 'Andersonville'. Although it only existed for the last fourteen months of the Civil War, Andersonville became legendary for its appalling conditions documented in the diaries of its prisoners and the trial transcripts of its commandant. Originally designed to hold 10,000 prisoners, when the war ended it contained 32,000. During the intervening fourteen months a total of some 45,000 prisoners were held, of which fully one third of them died due to the horrific conditions of their confinement. Now the whole story of Andersonville, including its politics, mismanagement, intrigues, and associated personalities is laid out in Catherine Gourley's "The Horrors of Andersonville: Life and Death Inside a Civil War Prison", a 192-page history written and illustrated specifically for young readers ages 9 to 14, making it a core addition to school and community library American History and Civil War Studies reference collections and supplemental reading lists.

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