

## Response to Whole-Group Discussion Question D

*Question:* From the moment she signed on to serve in the army, almost two years ago to the day, she's successfully disguised herself as an infantry soldier. Many of the men in her regiment early on suspected she was really a female, just as many knew for certain that there was a woman standing along with them in the battle lines.

The hardest part was for her to disguise her figure, and that was done either with padding or by putting on a tight-fitting military blouse. It helped that she was a tall female and that she had narrow hips. Loreta Janeta Velazquez claimed, "Indeed, after I had once become accustomed to male attire, and to appearing before anybody and everybody in it, I lost all fear of being found out, and learned to act, talk, and almost think as a man."

Now, after two years, the fact that there is a woman in the regiment comes to your attention. You know her from the ranks, and she's a familiar face. If you were the commanding officer, describe in detail the decision you would make regarding the presence of a female in the battle lines.

### Sample Document Answers

According to Lt. Col. Fremantle, after meeting a woman who had served as a soldier, (he) was told by the men that. . .

"her sex was notorious to all the regiment, but no notice was taken of it so long as she conducted herself properly. They also noted that she was not the only representative of the female sex in the ranks."

According to Eileen Conklin,

"It is interesting to note that in almost every instance of detection. . . , it was an officer, rather than a man in the ranks, who 'detected' the presence of the female soldier. . . . The average length of service [of 60 known women who fought throughout the Civil War] before detection was two years. Most women re-enlisted after detection. Contrary to contemporary assumptions the majority of women did not enlist with a man, be it brother, husband, father, lover. . . . A stronger commitment shines through her [to serve her country]."

Conklin describes General William Hays' report:

"The unidentified body of a female Confederate soldier was discovered by a burial detail on the west side of the stone wall at the angle on Cemetery Ridge. A participant in Pickett's Charge, she was one of the 12,000 courageous souls that stepped off Seminary Ridge and marched across a mile of open ground through a hell of enemy fire. The fact that her body was found in such an advanced spot is testimony to her bravery."