Questions to Guide Discussion of What Constitutes a Civil War

1. What is a civil war?

A short and simple definition is supplied by *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*. It defines *civil war* as “a war between factions or regions of the same country.”

*Wikipedia* defines *civil war* as “a war in which the competing parties within the same country or empire struggle for national control of state power.”

2. Over what sorts of issues might two sides within the same country go to war?

Possible answers include religion, ethnicity, and distribution of wealth.

3. How is a civil war different from a big protest in the streets?

4. How is a civil war different from a riot or violent uprising?

5. Do a minimum number of people have to die in the conflict before we call it a civil war?

Answers will vary.

6. How long must a conflict last before we call it a civil war?

7. Have we studied any civil wars so far in our history class? What about the Revolutionary War with its patriots and loyalists? Explain.