

## Letter to Jessie Gladden

Clara Barton, 1898

Clara Barton, the founder of the American Red Cross, worked tirelessly during the Civil War to support and care for sick and wounded soldiers. For her valiant efforts, she was known as the "Angel of the Battlefield." In this letter, she expresses her utmost respect and admiration for the American Soldier.

Washington, D.C., Nov. 7, 1898

Jessie L. Gladden,

P. O. Box 528,

Pueblo, Col.

Dear Madame,

*I've been near our soldiers for many years.*

I am in receipt of your request for a brief expression "relative to the noble work of our soldiers and sailors." I was with our boys constantly during the four years of our Civil War, and during the entire time of the late Spanish-American War, and being thoroughly American myself, it is needless for me to say I love and admire the American soldier, and I think him equal, if not the superior, of any warrior of any time. He is not only brave but he is generous; and when he has fought for a principle and won, he has no desire to crush his foe, but is eager to abide by the old Latin maxim of "live and let live;" and he forgets and forgives, and lends a helping hand when a disposition to do the right thing is shown. The soldiers of this country know me and my feelings for them too well to need any extended assurance of my faithfulness to them; and they know that as long as I live there will be no truer friend to them than, *I am their true friend.*

Yours sincerely,  
Clara Barton

*Note: Most often, letters of recommendation are about one individual. In this letter, however, Clara Barton describes the character of an entire group. Because of her extensive experience behind the lines with injured soldiers, her characterization is unlike any other description. It's a stellar example of an observation of positive traits of a group. In this classroom exercise, students are asked to use the foundational structure of Clara's letter—its focus on how long she has known the subjects of the letter, what she has noticed about them, and how she feels about them—to craft their own "letters of recommendation" that describe either individuals or groups.*