
Civil War Lesson #3: Strategies and Battles

Major Topics:

- Advantages of the Confederacy and the Union
- Military Strategies
- Selected Battles: Fort Sumter, First Battle of Bull Run, Monitor vs. Merrimack, Fort Donelson, Shenandoah, Shiloh, Antietam, Vicksburg, Fort Wagner, Gettysburg, Sherman's March to the Sea, and Appomattox

Why did the North Win?



Gettysburg, Pa. View of Little Round Top, July, 1863. Source: Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/cwp2003000193/PP/>

The third lesson asks students to consider the impact of individual sacrifice, regional geography, military leadership and tactics, and national resources on the eventual outcome of the Civil War. More specifically, students are asked to consider twelve battles that were especially important in shaping the course of the war. They will gather information on each battle, and based on its importance, will evaluate whether it was a turning point in the war.

This lesson includes a number of activities designed to improve student reading comprehension, vocabulary development, and expository writing ability. For

example, students are taught how a text is structured by comparison and contrast, as they compare and contrast the advantages of the north and the south. In their study of Confederate military strategy, students gain practice in understanding unfamiliar vocabulary in context. The concluding activity helps students understand how to marshal evidence to support an interpretation.

Procedures

Step 1: Introduce the Focus Question (Class Time: 10 minutes)



Ask students to consider the focus question, “Why Did the North Win?” Ask them to turn to a neighbor to discuss this question and come up with one or more reasons why they believe that the North won the Civil War. Write several of their reasons on the board and tell students that they will return to this question again and again throughout the course of this lesson. That their task is to develop their own answers, based upon the evidence that they will examine over the next few days. Let students know that there is not one single answer to this question and that they will need to consider a number of factors in making their interpretation, including military leadership and strategy, resources, battlefield geography, and the sacrifices of soldiers and civilians on both sides of the dispute.

Step 2: Advantages of the Confederacy and the Union (Class Time: 45 minutes)



Distribute copies of **Advantages of the Confederacy and the Union (CW3.1)**, which guides students through a textbook passage organization strategy for comparison and contrast. Explain to students that before we begin to examine the individual battles of the war, we need to consider each side’s advantages, factors that impacted the outcome of the war. This secondary text includes a number of comparisons that, if not carefully considered, pose a challenge to student comprehension. Following the model provided in the first paragraph, have students work individually or in pairs to complete the rest of the chart and related questions. Before moving forward to Step



3, compare student answers to the **Advantages of the Confederacy and the Union Key (CW3.1K.)** It is important that students understand the comparisons, as well as the significance of these advantages and challenges, before moving on. Have students return again to the lesson focus question and ask if they want to add or edit any of their answers they posted in Step 1. Record any additional responses.

Step 3: Union Strategy: The Anaconda Plan (Class Time: 25 minutes)

Project and distribute **The Primary Source Toolbox: Scott’s Great Snake (CW3.2)**. In pairs or groups of three, have students examine the document on their own and answer the questions provided.



Then ask for volunteers or select students to share their answers with the class. Finally, ask each group to speculate as to the advantages and disadvantages of this strategy. Answers may vary, but students will hopefully guess that this map shows Union general Winfield Scott hoped to encircle the Confederacy in order to win the war. Explain to students that this map is meant to represent the Anaconda Plan, in which the Union hoped to surround, or choke, the South by 1) blockading southern ports, which would limit trade and thus income for the Confederacy, and 2), driving its forces south along the Mississippi River, which would split the Confederacy in two. This two-pronged approach was called the Anaconda Plan, because, as its supporters argued, it would squeeze the south like a snake encircles its prey.

Procedures (continued)

Step 4: Confederate Strategy: Offensive-Defensive (Class Time: 45 minutes)



Distribute **The Confederate Strategy: Offensive-Defensive (CW3.3)**. Tell students that now we have a sense of the Union strategy at the beginning of the war, we need to understand the military plans of the South. Read the short excerpt from James McPherson's *Battle Cry of Freedom* aloud, highlighting the phrase "offensive-defensive." Next, have students reread the excerpt on their own (or in pairs). Finally, have students deconstruct the definition by answering the questions that follow. Circulate around the room to make sure students understand the text and can complete the assignment. (Refer to **The Confederate Strategy: Offensive-Defensive Key [CW3.3-K]** as needed).



Ask each group to speculate about the advantages and disadvantages of this strategy. The strategy did provide initial advantages to the Confederacy because defense requires fewer resources since the troops did not have to travel. The troops were also dedicated to the fight to protect their communities. However, in the long run this strategy led to the decimation of southern territory, and sometimes the Confederate army wasn't able to take advantage of Union weaknesses. Finally, have students draw their own political cartoons to represent the offensive-defensive strategy and have them share these cartoons with their neighbors.

Step 5: Making an Interpretation: Which strategy would be most effective? (Class Time: 15 minutes)



Using their notes from **CW3.2** and **3.3**, ask students to discuss the following: *Compare the military strategies employed by the Union and the Confederacy at the beginning of the Civil War. What strategy will be the most effective? Why?* Answers will vary, but should include evidence gleaned from **CW3.2** and **CW3.3** to support their argument.

Step 6: Battle Stations (Class Time: 45 minutes)



Arrange stations around the classroom with full-size copies of the written and visual primary sources in **Civil War Battle Stations (CW3.4)**, and divide students into pairs or groups of three. Tell students that they will be investigating individual battles in order to understand how the advantages and strategies of the Confederate and Union armies impacted the outcome of the war. They should seek evidence to form an interpretation on the lesson's guiding question: *Why did the North win?* Have students circulate around the stations and answer the questions

on the **Civil War Battles Evidence Collection Sheet (CW3.5)**. Have different members of the group record the answers at each station. Refer to the **Civil War Battles Evidence Collection Sheet Key (CW3.5K)** to make sure that students understand both the literal aspects of the source for each source, and its overall significance before moving on. After students finish, ask them to discuss with one or more partners their initial answers to the question: *Why did the North win?* Chart their answers on butcher paper at the front of the room.



Procedures (continued)

Step 7: Historical Contingency (Class Time: 15 minutes)



A study of Civil War battles reminds us of the importance of historical contingency – which, put simply, means that historical events are not predetermined. The course of history can change with a single decision, accident, or event. The battles that students reviewed in the Battle Station exercise provide an opportunity to explain this important concept and engage students in a “what if” discussion. For example, what if AP Hill’s division had not heard of a supply of shoes at Gettysburg? Without that errand, one could argue that the armies would have met on more equal terms and that the Union would not, at that point, have had the upper hand. Another Gettysburg example is Lee’s stubborn decision to attack on the open ground, despite Longstreet’s reluctance and Lee’s own keen judgment of military tactics. Before moving onto the final interpretation activity in this lesson, take the time to a) explain the concept of historical contingency and b) ask your students to point out the individual moments, sometimes deliberate, sometimes by chance, that impacted the course of the war. Should they need help finding these examples, encourage them, in particular, to review the following partial list: the consistent reluctance of General McClellan to fight, the examples of Gettysburg listed above (as well as Meade’s decision not to pursue the Confederates in retreat), the decision of the Confederacy to attack Fort Sumter and the fact that Confederate forces did not pursue Union troops as they fled across Bull Run back to Washington.

Step 8: Making an Interpretation: Why did the North Win? (Class Time: 50 minutes)

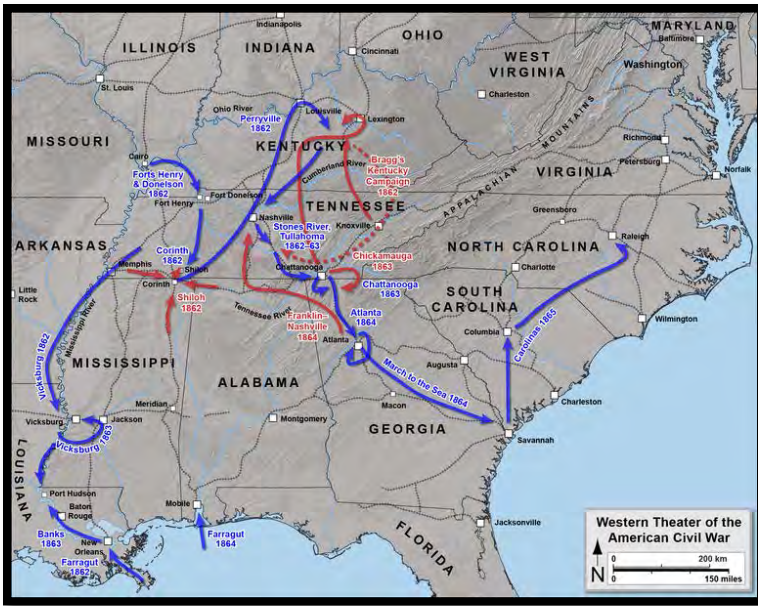


Distribute **Making an Interpretation: Why did the North Win? (CW3.6)** Tell students that they will need to review their notes from CW3.1, CW3.2, CW3.3, CW3.4, and 3.5 in order to answer the focus question. To prepare to write this interpretation, ask students to work in pairs or groups of three to organize their notes into reasons and evidence. Circulate around the room as students complete Part A in **CW3.6**, (referring to **CW3.6K – Making an Interpretation: Why did the North Win? Key** as needed). Once students have completed this summary activity, ask them to write their interpretation as directed in Part B of **CW3.6**.

Ask students if this lesson has given them any ideas or evidence about the unit focus question, “Was the Civil War a war for freedom?” Record their answers on the Freedom Wall. Make sure that they understand:

- The Civil War was very long, many soldiers died, and more were wounded. The war had a very heavy cost in human lives.
- As the war went on, people’s ideas about freedom probably changed. As some got tired of the war and wanted it to end, they were not as angry about sectional differences. Others became even more angry at the enemy after their friends died.
- After seeing the 54th Massachusetts black regiment fight at Fort Wagner, many white northerners gained respect for black soldiers and came to support abolition of slavery, and freedom and citizenship for black people.

Modifications



Map of the Western theater of the American Civil War. Drawn by Hal Jespersen in Adobe Illustrator CS5. Graphic source file is available at <http://cwmaps.com/>. This file is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0.

Advantages of the Confederacy and the Union (CW3.1)

CW6.1 is specifically designed to clarify the comparisons embedded in this relatively brief secondary source. By unpacking the text using the compare and contrast charts, students can improve their comprehension, and consider the advantages of both the Confederacy and the Union prior to the start of the war.

The Confederate Strategy: Offensive-Defensive (CW3.3)

CW6.3 provides students with a strategy that both defines a term that is not immediately obvious (offensive-defensive) and teaches an approach for students to use when confronted with unfamiliar terms in the future. Specifically, students are taught how reference devices (the

term “this”) can be used to avoid repetition and serve as a marker of the terms definition. In addition, the activity highlights a number of words that may pose a challenge to students and inhibit their understanding of the most important concept, the Confederate strategy.

Short-Track Schedule:

If time is very short, follow this schedule for a 50- to 80-minute lesson:

Step 1: Introduce the focus question, but skip having them discuss.

Step 2: Have students do the reading and the passage organization chart, but do not have them write the paragraph.

Step 3: Do all.

Step 4: Explain the Confederate offensive-defensive strategy to students rather than having them read the passage.

Step 5, 6, 7 and 8: Skip. Ask students why the North won, record their responses on the board, and have students copy the list into their notes.

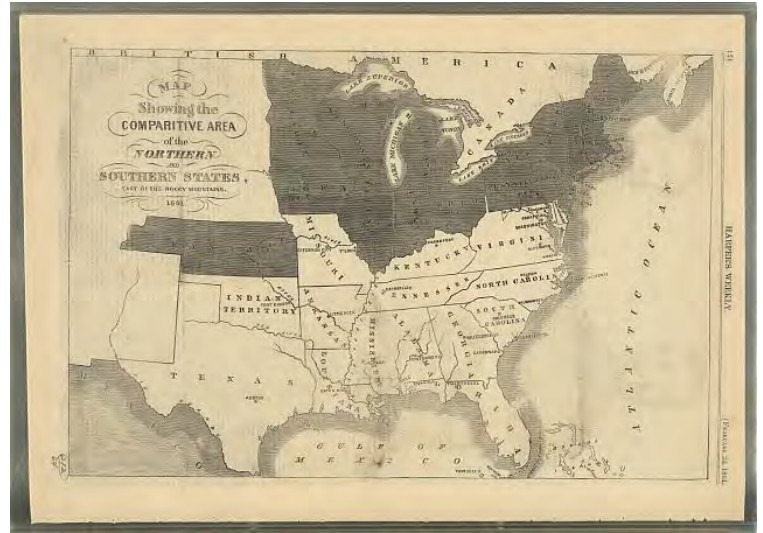
If you can devote one additional class period, set up battle stations CW3.4.3 (Monitor vs. C.S.S. Virginia/Merrimack); 3.4.7 (Antietam); 3.4.8 (Gettysburg); 3.4.9 (Vicksburg) and 3.4.11 (Sherman’s March to the Sea.) Divide students into pairs and assign each pair to begin with a certain station (in order to ensure coverage.) Then tell students that they have 30 minutes to complete at least two stations and prepare to present their answers to the class. Use the remaining class time to review the battles.

CW3.1 – Advantages of the Confederacy and the Union (p. 1 of 3)

Read the following two paragraphs carefully in order to identify the advantages of both the Union (the North) and the Confederacy (the South.)

These paragraphs are written in a compare / contrast style, which you can usually identify when you see signal words that tell you the next few words show a comparison or contrast. Words or phrases like “all the same,” “although,” “besides,” “as well,” “while,” “both,” “neither,” “compared to,” or “however,” are often used as signal words in this type of writing. In addition, the word “only” is often used as a signal, highlighting how one side is different from the other.

As you’re reading, underline words that might serve as signal terms in these two paragraphs. Then, fill in the following chart in order to provide specific details about the advantages of the Union (the North) and the Confederacy (the South.)



Map showing the comparative area of the Northern and Southern states east of the Rocky Mountains, 1861. Illus. in: Harper's weekly, v. 5, no. 217 (1861 February 23), p. 124. Source: Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2008680209/>

“Numbers tell an important story about the Civil War. Consider the North’s advantages. It could draw soldiers and workers from a population of 22 million, compared with the South’s 5.5 million. One of its greatest advantages was its network of roads, canals, and railroads. Some 22,000 miles of railroad track could move soldiers and supplies throughout the North. The South had only about 9,000 miles of track. . . .

The Confederacy had advantages as well. With its strong military tradition, the South put many brilliant officers into battle. Southern farms provided food for its armies. The South’s best advantage, however, was strategic. It needed only to defend itself until the North grew tired of fighting. Southern soldiers fought mostly on their home soil, while the North had to occupy [move in and control] large areas of enemy territory.”

Source: William Deverell and Deborah Gray White, *United States History: Independence to 1914*, California Edition (Orlando: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 2006), pp. 474-5.

CW3.1 – Advantages of the Confederacy and the Union (page 2 of 3)

Advantages of the Union and Confederacy Comparison Chart

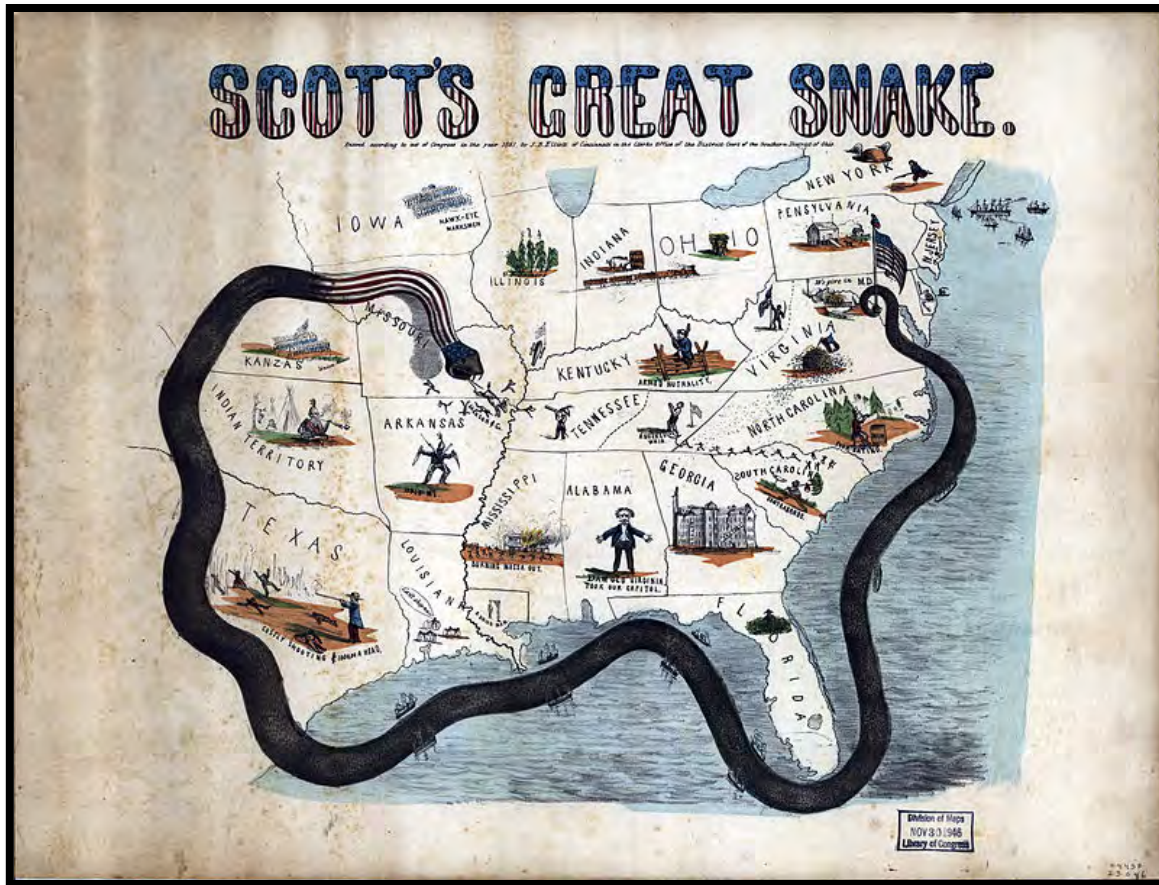
Categories	Advantages of the Union (the North)	Advantages of the Confederacy (the South)	Who has the greater advantage? Why?
Population	It (the North) could draw soldiers and workers from a population of _____	compared with _____ _____	
Transportation	_____ _____	The South had only about 9,000 miles of track. . . .	
Military		With its strong military tradition, _____ _____	
Food		Southern farms _____ _____	
Strategic	while the North _____ _____	It [the South] needed only _____ _____ Southern soldiers fought _____	

CW3.1 – Advantages of the Confederacy and the Union (page 3 of 3)

Making an Interpretation: Which Side Had a Greater Advantage in 1861?

Directions: Review your completed "Advantages of the North and the South Chart," which compares the resources of each side at the beginning of the war. Using the information from this chart as evidence to support your argument, write a one-paragraph essay that answers the question, "Which Side Had a Greater Advantage in 1861?"

CW3.2 – The Primary Source Toolbox: Scott's Great Snake



Scott's great snake. Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1861 by J.B. Elliott of Cincinnati.
Source: Library of Congress, <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gmd/g3701s.cw0011000>

1. What **strikes** you in reading this document?
What sorts of things **grab** your attention?

Make two or more observations.

2. What **puzzles** you? What don't you get? What do we need to talk about & to try to figure out?

Ask two or more questions.

3. What **patterns** do you see? How does this source relate to other sources from this time?

Identify at least one pattern.

4. What **connections** do you see? Does this source remind you of a source or issue from **modern times**?

Note one or more connections.

CW3.3 – The Confederate Strategy: Offensive-Defensive

Directions: The Confederate military strategy during the Civil War has often been described as an “offensive-defensive” strategy. The following excerpt from James McPherson’s Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era defines this term and gives specific battles in the war that provide examples of this strategy. Read the following paragraph and answer the questions that follow on a separate piece of paper in order to be able to explain this strategy in your own words.

*“The Confederates eventually synthesized [combined] these various strands of strategic theory [ideas] and political reality into what Davis called an **“offensive-defensive”** strategy. This consisted of defending the Confederate homeland by using interior lines of communication . . . to concentrate dispersed forces against an invading army and, if opportunity offered, to go over to the offensive, even to the extent of invading the North. . . . [I]t emerged [came out or began] from a series of major campaigns in the Virginia-Maryland and Tennessee-Kentucky theaters [area of warfare] during 1862, and culminated [finished] at Gettysburg in 1863.”*

-James McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era, p. 338, Oxford University Press, NY, 1988.

1. As what part of speech is McPherson using the phrase “offensive-defensive”? (Circle one: noun / adjective / verb)
2. Highlight or underline any terms or phrases that you think help define the term “offensive-defensive.”
3. The first word of the second sentence, “this,” refers back to the term “offensive-defensive” in the first sentence. In other words, instead of repeating the phrase “offensive-defensive,” the author chose to substitute “this” for the longer phrase in the second sentence. How then, does the author specifically define “offensive-defensive?” (Circle the correct phrase).
4. In the second sentence, the author refers to “interior lines of communication...to concentrate dispersed forces.” Define the words interior, communication, concentrate, and dispersed, and then rewrite the phrase in your own words.
5. In the last sentence “[I]t emerged . . . in 1863,” the author refers to a series of battles in the war. Explain what these battles might have to do with the term “offensive-defensive?”
6. Explain the Confederate “offensive-defensive” strategy in your own words.

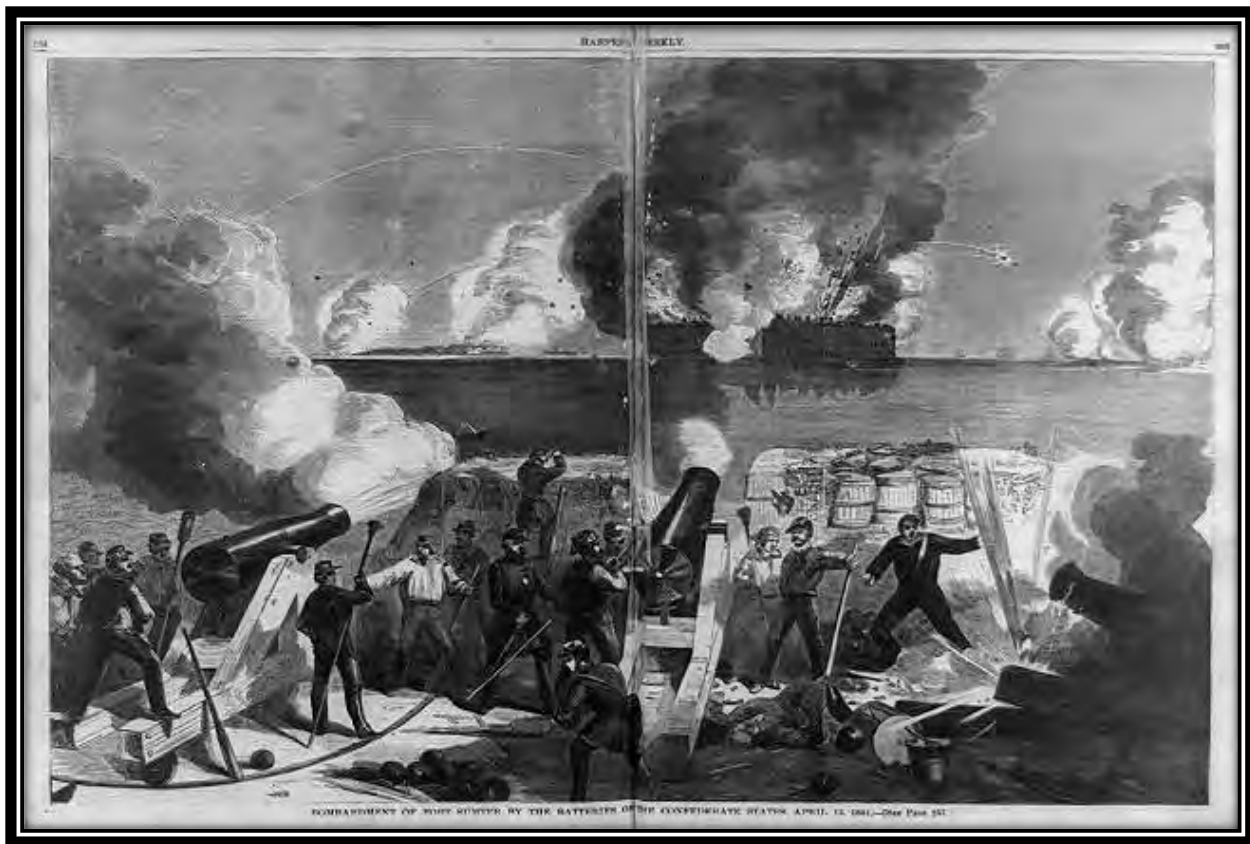
CW3.4.1 – Civil War Battle Stations

Fort Sumter (April 12, 1861)

Fort Sumter was a federal fort in Charleston Harbor, South Carolina, that needed additional supplies in April of 1861. This fort was important because it was one of two Union-controlled forts in southern territory. President Lincoln was faced with a difficult choice in April 1861. Sending a gunship to resupply the fort could be seen as an attack against the Confederacy. Not resupplying the fort could likely demonstrate weakness in the face of a rebellious south.

Lincoln decided to resupply the fort, and before his ship could get there, the Confederacy attacked. Thirty-three hours later, the fort fell to Confederate forces.

At Fort Sumter, the Confederacy was the aggressor. As a result of the South's attack, thousands of northerners joined the Union army. Lincoln initially asked for 75,000 troops. By 1862, more than 700,000 men had signed up to fight.



Bombardment of Fort Sumter by the Batteries of the Confederate Forces. Harpers' Weekly, April 27, 1861. Source: The Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/96524550/>

CW3.4.2 – Civil War Battle Stations

Bull Run / Manassas (July, 1861)



Bull Run, Virginia, view of the battlefield, July, 1861. Source: Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/cwp2003000005/PP/>

Early in the war, President Lincoln called for an attack on western Virginia. He believed that an attack at Manassas, so close to Richmond, would discourage secessionists and severely hurt the Confederate ability to fight.

In July 1861, Union General Irwin McDowell led 35,000 troops out of Washington, DC. Irwin divided his troops into two parts: 15,000 were sent to fight 11,000 Confederate troops at Harper's Ferry, leaving 20,000 Union troops to attack 20,000 Confederate troops at Manassas. This would have been a good plan if McDowell's troops were experienced, but they weren't.

The Confederate commander at Manassas was P.T. Beauregard, who had gained fame from his leadership at Fort Sumter.

Beauregard had two important advantages at Manassas. First, his spies in Washington learned that McDowell was preparing to attack. Second, McDowell's inexperienced troops moved slowly in their attack, giving Beauregard significant time to prepare.

Early in the fight, Union troops pushed the South back. These initial victories were cheered on by hundreds of spectators who had travelled to Manassas from Washington. These spectators included reporters and members of the government, as well as average citizens.

As the battle wore on, however, the Confederacy turned the tide. Later the Confederate General Thomas J. Jackson became known as "Stonewall Jackson," because his men believed he stood "like a stone wall" at the head of his troops in the face of Union attack.

During a critical moment in the fighting, two Union artillery batteries suddenly stopped firing. The batteries mistakenly believed that a regiment dressed in blue uniforms was a Union reinforcement regiment. Stonewall Jackson's Virginians took advantage of this confusion and ordered a counterattack. This counterattack was the

CW3.4.2 – Civil War Battle Stations (continued)

Bull Run / Manassas (July, 1861)

first time Union troops reported hearing an eerie scream coming from the Confederate line. This scream later became known as the “rebel yell.”

Union troops began to retreat and as panic set in, fled back across the Bull Run River towards Washington. Mysteriously, the Confederate troops did not follow and allowed many to fight another day.

The Battle of Bull Run, as the North called it, or Manassas, as the South called it,* was a major victory for the Confederacy, as it kept the Union from going after Richmond, the capital of the Confederacy, for close to a year. It was also a psychological victory for the South, as it inspired their

confidence and made clear to the Union that victory over the Confederacy would neither be quick or easy.

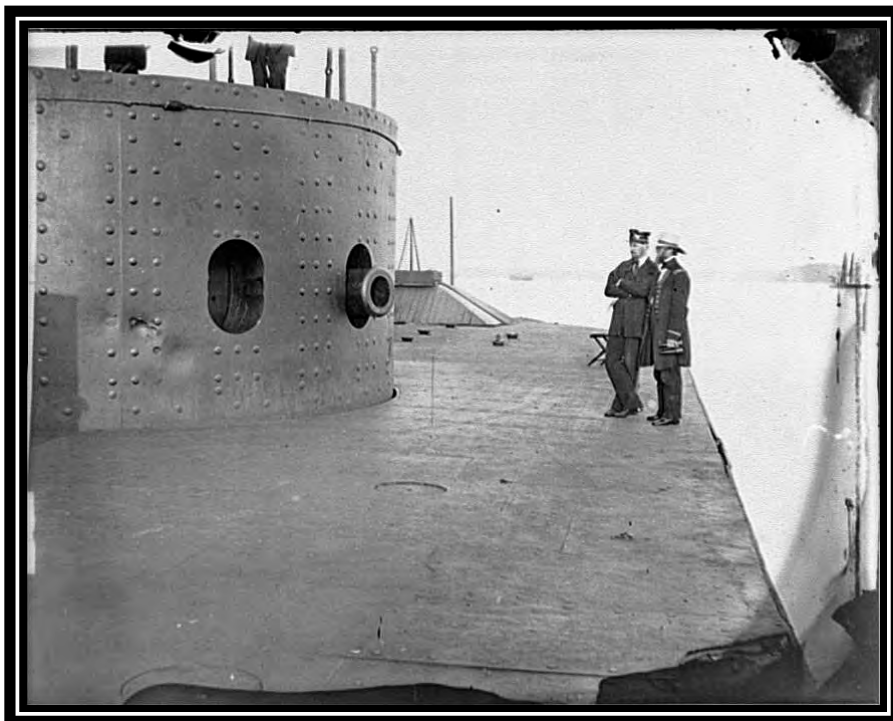


Bull Run, Va. View of Bull Run, between 1861-61. Source: Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/cwp2003000004/PP/>

*The Union often named their battles after nearby rivers. The Confederacy often named their battles after nearby towns or major roads.

CW3.4.3 – Civil War Battle Stations

U.S.S. Monitor vs. C.S.S. Virginia (formerly U.S.S. Merrimack) (March 9, 1862)



James River, Virginia, Deck and turret of U.S.S. Monitor, July 9, 1862. Source: Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/cwp2003000713/PP/>

Before the Civil War, warships were made of wood, which bombs could split and fires could easily destroy. In June 1861, the Secretary of the Confederate Navy, Stephen D. Mallory (a former US Senator from Florida who had built the Confederate Navy from scratch [nothing]), authorized [ordered] the rebuilding of a damaged Union ship, the *U.S.S. Merrimack*. Renamed the *C.S.S. Virginia*, the first ironclad ship in the Confederate fleet was covered in two inches of metal and featured [had] ten guns and an iron ram at its prow [front].

The Union Navy was also experimenting with ironclad ships. The first ironclad ship in the Union fleet was the *U.S.S. Monitor*, which was launched in January

of 1862. The *Monitor's* innovative [new] design included a flat deck, more than four inches of armor covering its propeller, the anchor, and all important machinery. The *Monitor* also had a revolving turret, or structure, mounted on its deck that housed [had inside] two eleven-inch guns, all covered in in eight inches of armor.

By April of 1862, all Confederate ports were in the hands of Union troops, with the exception of Charleston and Wilmington, North Carolina. To fight back against the Union's domination [control of the ports], the Confederacy sent the *C.S.S. Virginia* on the attack. It was very successful at first, sinking five ships.

The Union sent the *Monitor* to fight back, and the two ironclad ships met in battle on March 9, off the coast of Virginia. It was an arduous [hard] battle that neither ship won.

Although both ships were eventually destroyed in later battles, this event marked the end of wooden naval vessels [ships].

CW3.4.4 – Civil War Battle Stations

Fort Donelson (February, 1862)



Seeking for the wounded, by torch-light, after the battle. Print shows soldiers searching by torch-light through a wooded area for wounded soldiers after a Rebel assault on Schwartz's battery during the Union siege of Fort Donelson, Tennessee. Harpers' Weekly, March 8, 1862. Source: The Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2004669212/>

Coming off a recent victory at nearby Fort Henry, Union General Ulysses S. Grant surrounded the Confederate forces hunkered down [staying] at Fort Donelson along the Cumberland River in Tennessee. Although the Confederate forces nearly escaped in a daring breakout, Grant and his troops were able to counterattack [attacking against an attack] to gain the upper hand. By the end of the day, almost 1,000 men had died and 3,000 more were wounded and lay suffering on the freezing ground outside the fort. During the night, a number of Confederate commanders, including the infamous Nathan Bedford Forrest, who would later prove to be a thorn in Grant's side, escaped. In the morning of February 16, the Confederate general asked for terms of surrender. Grant's response: unconditional surrender or face an incoming attack.

The 13,000 Confederates surrendered, and Grant became a hero in the north. After this victory, Grant had more success in the west, and later captured the first Confederate capital at Nashville.

CW3.4.5 – Civil War Battle Stations

Shiloh (April 6, 1862)

Following the Fort Donelson victory, the Union was overconfident and thus surprised when they were attacked at the woods near Shiloh in southwestern Tennessee. Union General William Tecumseh Sherman remarked, "My God, we're attacked," after his orderly [servant soldier] was unexpectedly [by surprise] killed.

Sherman recovered, however, and for the next twelve hours, his leadership was as one historian wrote, "cool and courageous." Leading from the front of his troops, Sherman was wounded, and had three horses shot out from underneath him.

Despite the heavy losses the Union sustained [had] in the first day of surprise battle, Grant counterattacked [attacked the attackers] the next day, sending his 40,000 troops to battle against P.T. Beauregard's 25,000 soldiers. Later in the day, Grant's troops were reinforced [made stronger] with additional [more] troops. By the afternoon, the Confederacy was in retreat. The Union did not follow as the casualties [dead and wounded soldiers] from the battle were overwhelming [too much].

The Battle of Shiloh was the bloodiest battle of the war thus far. More than 20,000 soldiers died or were wounded. Some historians argue that this battle was the beginning of "total war" for both the Union and the Confederacy. It also marked the end of Southern control of the Mississippi Valley.



The battle of Pittsburgh, Tenn. April 7th, 1862. General Ulysses S. Grant leading a charge on the Rebels at Pittsburgh, Tennessee. Currier and Ives. Source: Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/90709391/>

CW3.4.6 – Civil War Battle Stations

Shenandoah (May, 1862)

Confederate General Stonewall Jackson led 17,000 men through a series of battles in the Shenandoah Valley. Jackson's troops benefitted from their knowledge of the geography of the Valley, outmaneuvering [hiding and escaping from] more than 30,000 Union troops who were chasing them.

Shenandoah was significant [important] because it kept the pressure off the Confederate capital, Richmond. It also resulted in the capture of more than 2,000 Union prisoners and 10,000 rifles for the Confederate cause.



The war in the Shenandoah Valley - burning the bridge near Mount Jackson, by order of the Rebel General / from a sketch by our special artist, Mr. Edwin Forbes. Print shows Confederate troops, under the command of General Stonewall Jackson, burning the bridge over the north fork of the Shenandoah River, June 4, 1862. Source: Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2003668326/>

CW3.4.7 – Civil War Battle Stations

Antietam (September, 1862)



Gathered together for burial after the Battle of Antietam. C. 1862. Photographer: Alexander Gardner. Source: Library of Congress: <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2011648595/>

Following another loss at Bull Run in August of 1862, Union forces were on the run, not far from the capital of Washington, DC. The Confederate President Jefferson Davis, and Military General, Robert E. Lee, saw an opportunity to continue their victories by marching to Maryland. Lee crossed the Potomac River with 55,000 men and hoped that the people of Maryland would rise up in support of the Confederate cause. Unfortunately for Lee, there was no popular uprising (revolt.) He next divided up his troops in order to capture a Union military post.

On September 13 in a field near Frederick, Maryland, two Union troops found a copy of Lee's orders to divide his troops into four parts wrapped around three cigars. Union General McClellan did not move quickly to act upon this advantage, however. He waited almost eighteen hours to begin to move his troops to attack Lee. Lee used this time to reorganize, having learned from a Maryland citizen about the Union's discovery of his orders.

On September 17, the two forces finally met at Antietam Creek, near Sharpsburg. By the time they fought, the armies were relatively well-matched. The southerners were on the defense and the Union attacked. The fighting was horrible; by the end of the day, 6,000 troops had died, and 17,000 more were wounded. Lee fled with only 30,000 troops, and the Union army did not go after him, probably because of the devastation [destruction] they had seen the day before. Union General McClellan had won a strategic victory at Antietam, but had yet again wasted an opportunity to destroy the Confederate forces once and for all.

CW3.4.8 – Civil War Battle Stations

Gettysburg (July 3, 1863)



Gettysburg, Pa. Confederate dead gathered for burial at the edge of the Rose woods, July 5, 1863. Source: Library of Congress: <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/cwp2003000202/PP/>

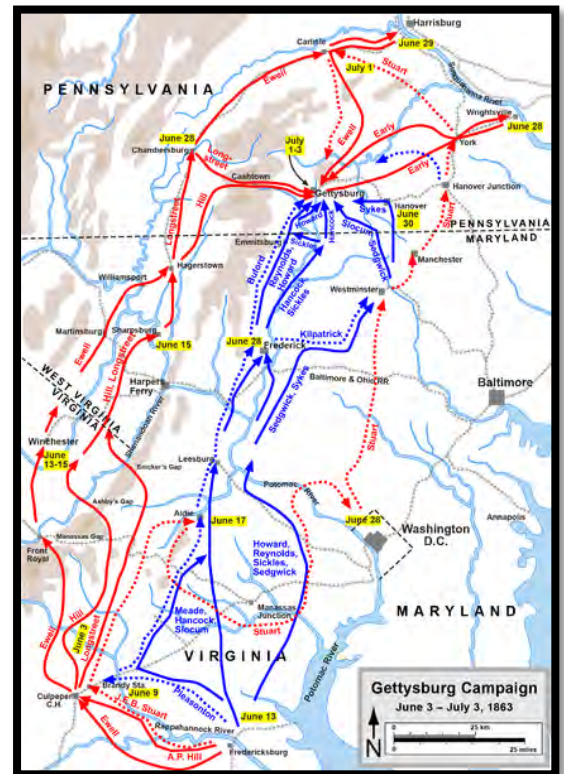
In May 1863, the Union suffered [had] an important loss at Chancellorsville. The Confederacy, under the leadership of Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson, defeated a larger Union force in a bloody and horrific battle. The Confederacy lost 13,000 men at Chancellorsville, including Stonewall Jackson, and the Union lost 11,000. The South's win at Chancellorsville likely led to overconfidence among the Confederates – they believed that they couldn't lose.

Confederate General Robert E. Lee then directed [led] his troops north, in order to take advantage of the momentum [progress] they'd built from Chancellorsville. He brought together 75,000 men who were well-fed and had high morale. Lee planned to follow Grant's practice of living off the land [taking food and what the troops needed from the farms and houses along the way]

and demoralize [discourage] the Union by defeat in their own territory. At the same time, President Lincoln directed his latest General, George Gordon Meade, to find and destroy Lee's army.

As the Confederate troops marched north, a division [a group of 17,000 to 21,000 soldiers commanded by General A.P. Hill heard that there was a supply of shoes in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. When they arrived, they did find shoes, as well as two Union brigades [a group of 2,500 to 4,000 soldiers] under the leadership of John Buford. Buford quickly sent for reinforcements [more troops], as he had fewer men and weapons than the Confederate division. For two hours, Buford's troops held off the larger southern force, until they were reinforced by men from John Reynolds' tough brigade. By the afternoon of July 1, there were 24,000 Confederate soldiers fighting 20,000 Union troops. Reinforcements continued to arrive from both the Northern and Southern armies.

The battle was at first a stalemate [tie], since the Confederacy had



Map of the Gettysburg Campaign of the American Civil War. Drawn by Hal Jespersen at <http://www.posix.com/CWmaps/> This file is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported license.

CW3.4.8 – Civil War Battle Stations (continued)

Gettysburg (July 3, 1863)

more men, but the Union had the better position – the high ground from which they could defend and not have to attack. Lee’s trusted subordinate, General Longstreet, argued that the higher ground advantage was simply too much for the Confederate troops to overcome, but Lee continued on and even put Longstreet in charge of attacking Cemetery Ridge. Although they suffered horrendous [terrible] losses, the Union troops continued to use the high ground, pushing back Confederate attacks at the two Round Top hills. Of particular note was the courage of the 20th Maine regiment, commanded by a former professor at Bowdoin College, Joshua Chamberlain. After one-third of his troops were killed, Chamberlain found himself without any ammunition. Instead of surrendering, Chamberlain ordered his troops to fix bayonets and charge against the advancing Confederate troops, who were overwhelmed by Chamberlain and his men, maintaining Union control of Little Round Top.

On July 3rd, 15,000 Confederate troops launched a massive attack across open ground toward the Union defenses. It was a courageous and ultimately doomed effort, as the Union’s territorial advantage [holding the high ground] made the southerners easy targets. Almost half of the southern force was killed in this advance and retreat.

Lee took the loss hard, blaming himself and offering his resignation to the Confederate President Jefferson Davis (Davis refused to accept it). George Meade continued the Union tradition of not taking advantage of southern retreat. What was left of the Confederate forces retreated south without chase from Union troops.

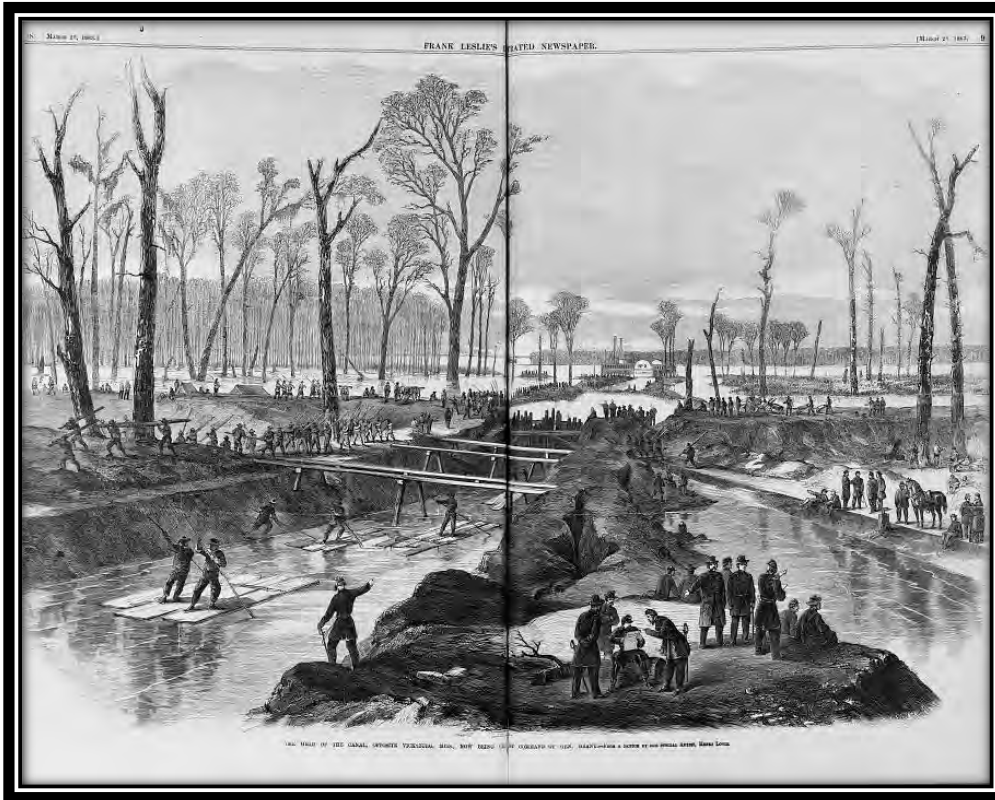


Gettysburg, Pa. The center of the Federal position viewed from Little Round Top. 1863.
Source: Library of Congress <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/cwp2003000195/PP/>.

More than 23,000 Union troops died at Gettysburg. The South lost 28,000 men, more than a third of Lee’s army. In addition, the South lost the confidence they had gained at Chancellorsville. Gettysburg, along with Vicksburg, is often seen as the turning point of the war – the beginning of the end for the South.

CW3.4.9 – Civil War Battle Stations

Vicksburg (July 4, 1863)



In the late fall and early winter of 1862, Union General U.S. Grant unsuccessfully campaigned [fought battles] for control of Mississippi, and, in particular, for the capture of Vicksburg, Mississippi. Grant's efforts were hampered [made more difficult] by Confederate leader Nathan Bedford Forrest, whose cavalry first raided, and then escaped from, Union troops multiple times. In late December, Grant called off his campaign and began to retreat to Tennessee. On his way back, his troops, who did not have access to Union supply lines, were forced to "live off the land," securing food and supplies however they could from the local countryside during their retreat.

The head of the canal, opposite Vicksburg, Miss., now being cut by Command of Gen. Grant / from a sketch by our special artist, Henri Lovie. Print shows Union troops and contrabands constructing a canal near Vicksburg, Mississippi, March 1863. Source: Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2003668335/>

These losses did not sit well with Grant [he didn't like to lose], so in the spring of 1863, he returned to Mississippi and launched a campaign that would cement [build] his reputation as a feared military leader. First, he marched his men along the Mississippi to a point below Vicksburg. Union gunboats then joined in the plan, sailing down the river in front of the fortified city. On April 30th, his troops crossed the river, near the entrance to the city. Instead of heading north into Vicksburg, Grant then directed his troops east to Jackson, Mississippi, which fell on May 14. Next, Grant and General Sherman took out smaller confederate forces at Champion's Hill and Black River, leaving Vicksburg the remaining target.

CW6.4.9 – Civil War Battle Stations (continued)

Vicksburg (July 4, 1863)

For the next eighteen days, Grant's troops marched 180 miles, winning five battles and destroying the troops guarding Vicksburg. He then launched a major attack on the city itself, which was pushed back. Finally, Grant ordered a **siege** of the city – preventing anyone from going in or out and continually launching artillery into the city itself. The people of Vicksburg suffered terribly for six weeks, hoping to hold out for Confederate reinforcements that never came. People were starving, dying of disease and injury. On Independence Day, July 4, 1863, Vicksburg surrendered.

The battle was a major victory for the Union, demonstrated the North's ability to fight without access to supplies, and meant that Mississippi River was now in Union hands.

CW6.4.10 – Civil War Battle Stations

Fort Wagner (July 18, 1863)



Interior of Fort Wagner, Morris Island, South Carolina, between 1861-69. . . Source: Library of Congress: <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/cwp2003005500/PP/>

On July 18, 1863, two Union brigades [a group of 2,500 to 4,000 soldiers] attacked Fort Wagner, on Charleston harbor. The attack was led by Colonel Robert Gould Shaw, the son of leading abolitionists from Boston. Shaw commanded the 54th Massachusetts Regiment, an African-American regiment [a group of 3,000 to 5,000 soldiers], whose story was the basis for the film *Glory*.

The Union lost this battle when the Confederacy repulsed [fought off] the Union attack against the fort. Shaw died in battle, along with almost half of his troops. However, the battle affected public opinion in the North, with more citizens recognizing the contributions of African-American soldiers, the cause of abolition, and the

resolve to win the war. This position was strengthened when the Confederacy refused to return Shaw's body to his family, noting that "we have buried him with his niggers." Shaw's father's response maintained the moral high ground: "We hold that soldier's most appropriate burial place is on the field where he has fallen."

CW3.4.11 – Civil War Battle Stations

Sherman's March to the Sea (November - December, 1864)



On November 15th, 1864, Union General William Tecumseh Sherman's troops set fire to Atlanta. Next, Sherman set out with 60,000 troops for Savannah, Georgia's best sea port. Along the way, Sherman's men looted the countryside, taking or destroying everything of potential value as they travelled to the sea. They tore up railroad tracks, vandalized homes, and destroyed farms.

After taking Savannah, Sherman continued to pillage [loot] the South, moving next to South Carolina. Union troops burned the city of Columbia, South Carolina, to the ground.

Sherman's tactics, which are often referred to as "total war," were designed to break the spirit of the Confederacy – to take the war to the average southerner in the hopes that they would no longer be willing to fight.

"Old Tecumseh" Himself. Portrait of William Tecumseh Sherman. Photographer: George Barnard. Source: Library of Congress: <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2003653366/>

CW3.4.12 – Civil War Battle Stations

Appomattox Courthouse (April 9, 1865)

By April 9, 1865, Robert E. Lee only had 35,000 troops left to fight the Union's 120,000 soldiers. The Confederate forces were tired, hungry, and demoralized. One week earlier, Abraham Lincoln and U.S. Grant had walked through the streets of the captured Confederate capital, Richmond. On the 9th, Lee and his troops tried to escape from Union forces near Appomattox Courthouse, but were not able to do so.

Lee surrendered to Grant at the home of Wilmer McLain, a former resident of Manassas, who had moved his family to Appomattox after the first battle of the war, Bull Run, came to close to his home. Grant agreed to let Lee and his men go home, in return for their surrender. These soldiers would not, as many Confederates feared, be tried for treason. They also were allowed to keep their horses.



McLain's House, Appomattox Court-House, Virginia where the capitulation was signed between Generals Grant and Lee / negative by T.H. O'Sullivan, positive by A. Gardner. 1865. Source: Library of Congress: <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2007685834/>

CW3.5 – Civil War Battle Evidence Collection Sheet (p. 1 of 2)

Directions: in order to understand the course of the war, your job is to investigate twelve separate battles that defined the war. At each Battle Station, you'll need to collect some basic information about the battle, including the victor, date, location, and the battle's impact on the outcome of the war. At each of these stations, you'll also need to consider and reconsider your answer to the question: Why did the North win?

Name	Date	Location	Leadership	Victor	How did they win?	Did this battle have an impact on the outcome of the war? If so, how?

CW3.5 – Civil War Battle Evidence Collection Sheet (p. 2 of 2)

Name	Date	Location	Leadership	Victor	How did they win?	Did this battle have an impact on the outcome of the war? If so, how?

CW3.6 – Making an Interpretation: Why Did the North Win?

Directions: Now that you’ve had the opportunity to consider the course of the war, the advantages of each side, and the tactics employed by military leaders, your task is to make an interpretation answering the question: Why did the North win? For this, we must also consider why the Confederacy lost, despite their set of advantages. Look at the advantages and strategies of each side and the results of the battles, to answer the two questions below. Finally, use this evidence to write a one-paragraph answer to the question: Why did the North win? Use specific evidence about the strategies and battles

	Reasons	Evidence
Confederacy Why did the Confederacy lose?	<i>Example: When the Union pursued “total war” throughout the South, the Confederacy didn’t have the resources to continue the war.</i>	<i>Example: Union General Sherman and his troops destroyed much of the southern countryside, including key cities of Atlanta, Savannah, and Columbia. Under Sherman, Union troops tore up railroad tracks, burned homes and businesses, and took food and valuables.</i>
Union Why did the Union win?		