

Civil War Reading & Discussion Guide for Military History

This is a Civil War Unit designed for honors-level junior and seniors at Park Tudor School (an independent college preparatory school). All seniors have already studied the American Civil War in either a regular or AP-level course the previous year. Current juniors will have just completed their study of the Civil War. This is still a work in progress.

Due to limited time, it is impossible to cover all the significant military aspects of the Civil War. Therefore, specific generals and selected engagements have been chosen which will allow advanced students to get a basic understanding of the war at operational and strategic levels as well as learning about the evolution of tactics as a result of changing technology. Students will also compare and contrast leadership styles of various generals as the war evolves into total war in 1863-1865.

Note: there are **two sample lessons**. One involves the **use of new technology with the Minié-ball rifle** (pages 4-6) and the second deals with **McClellan's operations following the battle of Antietam** (pages 15-22). There is also a sample assignment calendar on page 23.

A portion of the national standards are also appropriate for Civil War military history:

STANDARD 2: The course and character of the Civil War and its effects on the American people & Historical Thinking Standards

Standard 2A

The student understands how the resources of the Union and Confederacy affected the course of the war.

- Compare the human resources of the Union and the Confederacy at the beginning of the Civil War and assess the tactical advantages of each side.
- Identify the innovations in military technology and explain their impact on humans, property, and the final outcome of the war.
- Identify the turning points of the war and evaluate how political, military, and diplomatic leadership affected the outcome of the conflict.

Standard 2B

The student understands the social experience of the war on the battlefield and home front.

- Compare the motives for fighting and the daily life experiences of Confederate with those of white and African American Union soldiers.
- Compare the human and material costs of the war in the North and South and assess the degree to which the war reunited the nation.

Historical Thinking Standards

1. Chronological Thinking
2. Historical Comprehension
3. Historical Analysis and Interpretation
4. Historical Research Capabilities
5. Historical Issues-Analysis and Decision-Making

In a three-week survey of the American Civil War (based loosely on the Mil Art course taught at USMA), the following themes will be covered in varying degrees:

- Causes of the war / initial year of the war 1861
- Impact of technology on war strategy (Minié-ball rifle)
- Union and Confederate war aims

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- Capabilities and strategies
- Command styles of Lee & Grant
- Mobilization differences (Lee & McClellan)
- Military geography
- The influence of Napoleonic warfare (Napoleon's "distributed maneuver" was the first stage of modern warfare)
- Impact of technology on strategy, operations and tactics
- "Decisiveness" of Vicksburg and Gettysburg (second stage of modern warfare or "sustained/continuous operations")
- Changing aims and the emergence of a concept of total war (with Grant & Sherman)

- **Online resources:**
 - Evolution of Civil War medicine (see: <http://www.sonofthesouth.net/leefoundation/civil-war-medicine.htm> and museum for Civil War medicine: <http://www.civilwarmed.org/index.cfm>)
 - Consulting letters, diaries and newspapers: <http://etext.virginia.edu/civilwar/>
 - Primary source for Lincoln documents: (<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/l/lincoln/>)
 - You may also want to look also up online specific maps for engagements located at the Library of Congress. Go to: http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/civil_war_maps/
 - West Point maps: <http://digital-library.usma.edu/collections/maps/civmaps/>
 - There is also the National Park Service Battlefield site: <http://www.nps.gov/archive/anti/home.htm>
 - See also *Harper's Weekly* accounts for specific battles and commanders: <http://www.sonofthesouth.net/> Click on the appropriate year, then month and week for sketches and news.
 - James McPherson webcast: http://forum.wgbh.org/wgbh/forum.php?lecture_id=3491
 - Overall Civil War online site: <http://sunsite.utk.edu/civil-war/warweb.html>
 - Civil War weapons technology: http://www.chipublib.org/003cpl/civilwar_catalog.html
 - Civil War technology: overview by Richard D. Moorehead "[Technology and the American Civil War](#)". Military Review. May-June 2004.

Assignments for 11/13 through 11/20:

I. The American Civil War - The First Year (April 1861 - April 1862)

Reading assignment begins on 11/13:

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Handout 1, pt. 1: *War in the Western World* (WWW), Chap. 11, pp. 331- 358. See also texts: *Common Defense*, pp. 162-189; skim *America's First Battles*, pp. 81-108.

Lesson Overview: The outbreak of the American Civil War in 1861 initiated what would become America's deadliest war. While springing from the same society, there were several factors that would cause the military organizations of the two sides to embark on different strategies in pursuit of their respective objectives. The initial battles and campaigns of the war would set the tone for the military operations that would follow.

Lesson Objectives: By the end of this lesson you should understand the following lesson objectives and be able to discuss in class the associated questions:

1. Compare and contrast the relative strengths and weaknesses of the Union and the Confederacy following the outbreak of war in 1861.
 - How well did the respective sides take these factors into consideration in formulating their initial plans and strategies?

North vs South 1861

	NORTH	SOUTH
Population	23 million	8.7 mil (4 mil slave)
Annual Industrial Output	\$ 1.5 billion	\$ 155 million
Industrial Workers	1.3 million	110,000
Railroad Mileage	22,000	9,000
Financial Institutions	Strong	Weak
Disposable Wealth	High	Low

2. Analyze the initial strategies and campaign plans of the opposing sides.

- How much of a role did political considerations play in the formulation of these plans and strategies?

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Why was Manassas critical? It represented the end of 90-day enlistments and Confederate forces were near Washington, D.C. There was pressure on to deal with this threat. It was supposed to be the battle to decide the war and end the brouhaha about succession. Manassas was critical rail junction. Why did the Confederates not go onto Washington, D.C.?

3. Identify the lessons learned from the Battle of First Bull Run/Manassas. (*America's First Battles*, pp. 81-108.)

Pre- and in-class reading assignments for 11/13:

II. The American Civil War: Ending the Limited War (1862)

Assignment: Text: *Common Defense*, pp. 189-202; Handout 1, pt. 2: WW, Chap. 12, pp. 359 – 389; Handout 2: Bevin Alexander, *How Wars are Won*, pp. 61-66; Handout 3: D. Frye, *Antietam Revealed*, pp. 1-5 and additional random pages; Handout 4: R. Weigle, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy*, “Napoleonic Strategy,” pp. 112-113; Handout 5: (also Weigle), “Strategy of Annihilation,” p. 138.

Lesson Overview: In the spring of 1862 the Union Army, now under George B. McClellan began a second campaign to seize Richmond. The skillful generalship of Robert E. Lee and Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson not only ensured that this Union offensive would fail but eventually allowed the Confederates to move north. While Union forces rebuffed both Lee’s Maryland campaign and Braxton Bragg’s invasion of Kentucky, the growing intensity of the war caused both sides to reexamine their objectives and the means and methods they were willing to employ to pursue victory. McClellan attempted to gain control of the Peninsula near Richmond.

Teaching Objective #1: Understand Lee’s strategic vision (emulation of Napoleon and W. Scott); how he is able to “reverse the tide of the war” in such a short period.

-Lines of Communication; mass on the decisive point; central position and interior lines.

-Limitations: increasing lethality of weapons; inability to effectively assault field fortifications.

A military historian, Martin van Creveld, believes it is important to understand how war is fought (strategy & tactics), especially with the advent of new technology. Thus, to understand why the American Civil War evolves from a limited war to a total war, one has to look at the role of technology. In addition to the advent of the telegraph, the Spenser rifle, iron clads, and to the increased use of the railroad, perhaps the most significant new technology was the implementation of the Minié-ball rifle.

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Teaching Objective #2: Understand how Stonewall Jackson's tried to win the war for the South with the "defend-then-attack" principle. This tactic useful was due to the use of the Minié-ball rifle. Read Handout 2: Bevin Alexander, *How Wars are Won*, "The Civil War: Countering a New Weapon," pp. 61-66; Also review document in Commanger's *Civil War Archive* pp. 227-229.

"Old Tactics, New Guns"

In the Mexican War, soldiers "formed up in close-order lines, two men deep, and moved forward to attack the enemy standing in identical formations. With muskets this made sense. Soldiers had to approach within a hundred yards . . . before muskets had much effect. Both attackers and defenders also fought standing up, because reloading single-shot muskets and rifles was virtually impossible lying on the ground. Attacking forces thus *had* to remain exposed. . . . They did not build fortifications, and, once the Minié-ball rifle came into existence, were shot down in appalling numbers" (Alexander, 61-62).

"One reason for the Civil War's terrible loss of life was that officers' strategy had not caught up with changes in military technology. . . ." The former smoothbore rifle had been replaced with a rifled musket that "could shoot at more than 1000 yards and had an accuracy range of about 400 yards." Unfortunately, "most of the army officers on both sides had been trained at West Point, where they learned the tactics that dated back to the Napoleonic Wars. . . . Even as late as the summer of 1863, generals on both sides clung to these old tactics at the cost of thousands of lives." (From Rachel Seidman, *The Civil War: A History in Documents*, p. 107)

- How did the implementation of the Minié-ball rifle change the tactics of war?
- Why was it necessary to move away from limited war to total war?

"Stonewall" Jackson changed his tactics following the Seven Days (June 26-July 2, 1862) campaign. Since the Minié-ball rifle "could inflict terrible casualties on the attacker, the solution was to defend. Once heavy casualties had been inflicted on the enemy, [then it was time] to attack" (Alexander, 62-63).

- How did this new weapon affect the soldier in deployed in typical ranks?

To better understand the impact of this rifle, read an account by a Union soldier at Antietam in 1862. See handout #2 (a) by Henry Steele Commanger (ed.), *Civil War Archive*, "How it Feels to be Under Fire," pp. 227-229.

- What tactic was the Sixth Georgia Regiment using against the 19th U.S. Colored Infantry?
- In what type of formation was the narrator moving?
- What was his impression of the Minies?
- Why were the men glad to have reached the east wood?

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- How did the narrator choose to remember this battle?

Not all generals recognized this strategy. As late as the 1864 engagement at Cold Harbor, for example, Gen. Grant practiced out-dated tactics. Read the comments from survivors of the battle from the 8th New York Heavy Artillery Regiment as reported to the local hometown papers. One soldier wrote:

During the night the rain fell heavily. The morning was chilly, cloudy and dark. We were awakened and had just time to sling on our things, when the order for “Charge” came and the 8th - twelve hundred — instantly, bravely, and freely mounted and were over our works, with arms at trail, bayonets fixed, and on the “double-quick step”. Order was tolerably preserved, but in our company [H] there was a tendency to crowd to the right, and it was more like a crowd or rabble (being sometimes six or seven deep) than two ranks as there should have been. Braver hearts never rushed to battle, and never was a charge more deadly and of so little avail.” Another shared the following: “Soon after the charge was ordered, and in an instant the whole regiment was over the breastworks, and charging through the swamps on the enemy’s breastworks. When about half way through, knee deep in mud, the rebs poured on a most destructive fire of grape, shell, cannister and musketry that I ever supposed could be and we finally had to retreat, leaving behind most of our dead and wounded on the field, the band was engaged in carrying off the wounded on stretchers, but after we retreated those that were on the field wounded had to lay there until after dark. – We were engaged all that night in carrying off the wounded and then did not succeed in getting them all, the rest lying there until the next night. . . .

[Source: Kathryn Lerch, (manuscript) *A Military & Social History of the 8th New York Heavy Artillery Regiment: 1862-1865.*]

In a matter of thirty minutes, more than 7,000 Union soldiers were dead. Grant is reported to have said after the battle: “I regret this assault more than any one I have ever ordered.” For more information on this battle, see pages 10-11.

- How might these massive losses have eventually changed Grant’s future strategies?

Prepare for discussion of Peninsula Campaign on 11/14:

Peninsula Campaign April – May 1862

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Lesson Objectives: By the end of this lesson you should understand the following lesson objectives and be able to discuss the associated questions:

- Compare and contrast the generalship of George B. McClellan and Robert E. Lee during the conduct of operations in the Eastern Theater in 1862.
- How did McClellan's relationship with President Lincoln affect the conduct of the Peninsula Campaign?
- Why did McClellan's Peninsula Campaign fail? [Study map of Peninsula Campaign along with the reading materials]

"No one but McClellan could have hesitated to attack."
- Johnston to Lee on McClellan's failure to attack in the Peninsula.

Reading day on 11/15 and assignment for Antietam due on 11/16:

Battle of Antietam

Preceded by the Seven Days battle and 2nd Manassas, the Union was beaten back to where they were originally. Lee decides to invade the North. Should Lee have done this? McClellan was a good organizer and trainer, even if dilatory. Half of Lee's troops moved to Harper's Ferry and the rest to Sharpsburg and South Mountain. Understand the significance of the "Lost Orders". [Study a map to understand the relationship between these three points.]

Teaching Objective #3: Demonstrate how Antietam represents the "high tide" of the Confederacy. Read additional handout of excerpts from James McPherson's *Antietam: The Battle that Changed the Course of the Civil War*: preface, xv-xvi, introduction, pp. 3-9, 150-156.

For primary sources, go online and search *Collected Works of Lincoln*, Vol. 5. (<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/l/lincoln/>) Students will utilize primary source documents for this exercise. [See documents on pages 14-22.]

- Why did Lee invade Maryland in 1862? Why did this invasion fail? Why Antietam? (foreign recognition, relieve Virginia, gain support in Maryland)
- Could the battle at Antietam have been the reverse of the battle at Saratoga? In other words, what impact did the Confederate loss have on the development of British and French affairs with the Confederacy?

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Student assignment #1: Design your own leadership / strategy comparison chart for Lee & McClellan.

Student assignment #2: **McClellan's Operations Following Antietam: Cause for Alarm?** [See expanded assignment beginning on page 14]

Read through Lincoln-McClellan documents and answer the related questions.

- What military issues did Lincoln have to contend with at the same time he was thinking about the timing for the Emancipation Proclamation?

Assignment for Fredericksburg is due on 11/19 [Thanksgiving break until 11/25]

III. Moving Towards Total War in 1863

Assignment: *Common Defense* (review earlier reading). Handout 1, pt. 3 : WWW, Chap. 13, pp. 391-398; skim 398-405. Handout 6: *Battling the Elements*, pp. 33-39; Handout 4: "Napoleonic Strategy," pp. 113-114. Read also news reports of this battle: <http://www.sonofthesouth.net/leefoundation/civil-war/1863/battle-of-fredericksburg.htm>

Lesson Overview: Unable to break the Confederacy's power through military action alone, the Union increasingly expanded the totality of its war efforts against the South. The Confederacy, meanwhile, continued to seek the ever-elusive decisive battle that would force the Union to accept the Confederacy's independence.

Summary: War becoming more total. Despite Lee's success, the South is beginning to face surmounting odds as the North gets its war machine rolling, bringing its huge superiority in manpower and industry to bear – a disparity made even more glaring by the growing effects of the North's naval blockade and the South's continued lack of foreign recognition. Furthermore, Lee's "successes" come at a terrible cost in human lives, making the war a game of attrition the South can ill-afford to wage given the North's manpower advantages.

Warning Order: The increasing lethality of the battlefield (Fredericksburg); and another attempt by Lee to gain the decisive, "Napoleonic" victory against the Union (Chancellorsville).

Lesson Objectives: By the end of this lesson you should understand the following lesson objectives and be able to discuss the associated questions:

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Fredericksburg “Mud March”

Explain the disaster at Fredericksburg in January 1863. Give details about the terrain and weather and how it contributed to a Union defeat. [optional: check the West Point map collection: <http://digital-library.usma.edu/collections/maps/civmaps/> and online newspaper accounts for *Harper's Weekly*.

Chancellorsville and Vicksburg assignments due on 11/26:

Battle of Chancellorsville

Explain why it was so difficult to achieve a decisive, war-ending battle (*a la* Austerlitz) during the American Civil War. Read the National Park Service online report for Chancellorsville:

<http://www.nps.gov/archive/frsp/chist.htm>

- Was such a battle possible? Why or why not?

Assignment: Analyze the conduct and outcome of the Battle of Chancellorsville. Locate and read a couple of newspaper articles representing the Union and the Confederacy. Why might reports in northern newspapers have given Lee valuable military information?

- How was the Union able to prevent the total destruction of its army during this battle?

Assignment: Evaluate the Civil War as a total war. Chart or map out the plusses and minuses on both sides in the engagement at Chancellorsville. What went wrong on the Union side? What disaster also befell the Confederacy? What happened to the German regiments?

- What were the primary reasons for the war escalation and increasing totality of the American Civil War?

Assignments from 11/26 through 11/30:

IV. Vicksburg and Gettysburg in 1863

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Assignment: Handout 1, pt. 4 : WWW, Chap. 13, pp. 406-410 (Vicksburg); pp. 410-417; 424. (Gettysburg) Handout 2: *How Wars are Won*, pp. 67-71; Handout 7: *Vicksburg is the Key*, pp. 205-209; Handout 5: “Strategy of Annihilation,” pp. 135-136 & 138-139; Handout 7: article by J. Glatthaar, in Gabor Boritt’s (ed.), *The Gettysburg Nobody Knows*, “The Common Soldier’s Gettysburg Campaign,” pp. 3-30.

Lesson Overview: The summer of 1863 would witness the climactic battles of the American Civil War which would unalterably shape the outcome of the war. With its simultaneous defeats at Vicksburg and Gettysburg in July, the Confederacy found itself reeling under the increasingly relentless military pressure which Union forces began to apply on all fronts. By November of 1863, the Confederate failure to retake Chattanooga opened the deep South to the threat of continued Union offensives.

Lesson Objectives: Begin analyzing Grant’s leadership skills at Vicksburg. By the end of this lesson you should understand the following lesson objectives and be able to answer the associated questions:

Siege of Vicksburg

Explain the significance of the Vicksburg Campaign.

- Why was Vicksburg so formidable?
- Why was Vicksburg so important to both the Union and the Confederacy?

Analyze the conduct and outcome of Union operations in the Western Theater in 1863.

- Why was the control of these waterways so important to the Union war effort in the western theater?
- Why was Grant so successful in the western theater?

Assignments for Gettysburg (Day 1) due 11/27, (Day 2), due 11/28, and (Day 3) due 11/30:

Battle of Gettysburg July 1-3, 1863

Written assignment: Evaluate Robert E. Lee as a commander at the operational level of war. Generate a comparative chart analyzing Lee and Grant as commanders.

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- How does the Gettysburg Campaign show Lee at his best and worst in terms of the operational level of war?

“The enemy is there and I am going to attack him there.”
- Lee to Longstreet before final attack at Gettysburg

“The art of war is simple enough. Find out where your enemy is. Get at him as soon as you can. Strike at him as hard as you can and as often as you can, and keep moving on.”
- Ulysses S. Grant

Assignments for 12/3 through 12/5:

V. The American Civil War - Total War, 1864-1865

Assignment: Handout 1, pt. 5: WWW, Chap. 14, pp. 427-444, 456-457. [Additional reading handouts may be added]

A. Army of the Potomac

Lesson Overview: The rise of Grant to the command of the Union Army in early 1864 coincided with a coordination of the Union war effort throughout all theaters of war at a level which the Union had no previously been able to achieve. On land and at sea, the Confederacy found itself unable to match the still- growing might of the military juggernaut being created in the North. Under Grant's leadership, the Union pressed its advantage until victory was finally achieved.

- What was Grant's plan in 1864?
- What did he see as the Confederate center of gravity?
- Was he a butcher?

Read a newspaper following the assault at Cold Harbor on June 3, 1864. (<http://www.sonofthesouth.net/leefoundation/civil-war/1864/june/cold-harbor-battle.htm>) See also newspaper articles for a New York artillery regiment at Cold Harbor (8th NY Heavy Artillery): <http://www.dmna.state.ny.us/historic/reghist/civil/artillery/8thArt/8thArtCWN.htm>

Lesson Objectives: By the end of this lesson you should understand the following lesson objectives and be able to discuss the associated questions:

Analyze Grant's plan for ending the war in 1864: The Wilderness to Petersburg – May and June 1864

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- Considering the objectives of the three major campaigns he directed Meade, Sherman, and Sheridan to conduct, what do you think Grant felt was the South's center of gravity at this time?
- What happened at Cold Harbor? Why did Grant regret he had engaged the enemy here in a direct assault?
- Why could the assault at Cold Harbor be considered a part of Grant's annihilation strategy? How did this battle change the nature of operations later for Grant?
- After such a loss as Cold Harbor, why was Grant not removed from head of the Army of the Potomac? Why did Cold Harbor not make national headline? Clue: it was an election year!

1864 & Election Year

Source from 1999 lecture by Gabor Boritt: Lincoln "doubts about the future – at a Cabinet meeting in August 1862, a week after CSA Gen. Early has come within 2 miles of the White House. The war has moved from 1861 . . . 1862 . . . 1863 . . . 1864. Countless thousands of people have died. Part of the country is devastated, above all Tennessee and Virginia. There is not an end to the war. Every newspaper lists casualties from that town, so you will see who died yesterday. Lincoln is with the Cabinet [and] at this time Lincoln elaborately folds up a piece of paper, asks his secretary John Hay to pass it around and have Cabinet members sign over the seal so that it cannot be opened. No one knows what is in the document and it will not be opened until after the election. He does win the election because the soldiers and army votes for him. Do they love him?"

Boritt is not so sure about that—"The soldiers voted for him because they have put in years and years of fighting and they do not want to say it was a waste. (Soldiers could vote by proxy and did not have to go home to vote.) They want to see it to an end. On November 8th [Lincoln] opens the document from August. It says: 'It looks to me for some weeks that this administration is not going to be reelected, and if it is not reelected, it is my duty to attempt to save this country between now and when Gen. McClellan will become president.' There would be time between November and March (1865) to do this. . . . Lincoln would abide with whatever the people wanted."

B. Sherman's Georgia Campaign of 1864

Analyze the increasing totality of the war as demonstrated by Sherman in Georgia.

- Was the Union justified in striking at the South in this manner? Why or why not?

"Lee's army will be your objective point. Wherever Lee goes, there you will go also."
- Grant's instructions to Meade

"In pushing up the Shenandoah Valley . . . it is desirable that nothing should be left to invite the enemy to return."
- Grant to Sheridan, 5 Aug 1864

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“Until we can repopulate Georgia, it is useless for us to occupy it . . . I can make this march, and make Georgia howl.”
- Sherman to Grant, 9 Sep 1864

Summation final day 12/7:

VI. Evaluate the Civil War as a Total War

Lesson Overview: Your readings in *Warfare in the Western World* have suggested that the Civil War started off as a limited war and progressed over time to become a total war. This interpretation is not shared by all Civil War historians.

Lesson Objectives. By the end of this lesson you should understand the following lesson objectives and be able to answer the associated questions:

Analyze the increasing totality of the Civil War from both a military and political perspective in 1864.

- Despite the popular use of the phrase “unconditional surrender,” what were the only two non-negotiable terms Lincoln insisted upon in the Confederacy’s surrender?

Assess the difficulties faced by Civil War commanders within the context of the previous conflicts you have studied in your military history class:

- How did Sherman’s handling of non-combatant issues compare to the problems faced by the British in the South during the American Revolution, or by French Armies during the Napoleonic era?
- Was the Civil War total war?

VII. The American Civil War - Why did the Union Win?

Lesson Overview: The end of the Civil War saw the start of a debate as to why the South lost that is still being carried on by professional historians and history buffs to this day. Undoubtedly, during your study of the Civil War, you have drawn some of your own conclusions as to why the Union emerged victorious in this conflict. The reading for this lesson will allow you to assess some of

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the better known arguments for why the Confederacy lost the Civil War. Also, go to the online webcast of James McPherson: http://forum.wgbh.org/wgbh/forum.php?lecture_id=3491

Lesson Objectives: By the end of this lesson you should understand the following lesson objectives and be able to discuss the associated questions:

Summarize the various arguments outlined by McPherson that others have used to explain the outcome of the Civil War.

- Into what categories does McPherson divide explanations for the outcome of the Civil War? How do these categories differ?
- What does McPherson consider to be the essential factor missing from these approaches? Do you find this critique persuasive?

Summarize McPherson's explanation for the outcome of the Civil War. Why does McPherson consider the battle of Antietam more significant than Vicksburg or Gettysburg?

Assess the various explanations for the outcome of the Civil War.

- Which explanation do you find to be the most credible? Why?

Final assignment (in lieu of a movie review) 20 points **Due 12/07/07:** Craft a 1-2 page annotated bibliography which is based on written sources, films, JSTOR journals, and other online resources. The purpose of the bibliography is to provide the optimal resource for the critical study of one small aspect of the American Civil War. This study may focus on a commander, a battle, or other military or social element which relates to the war. For example, if one wanted to study 19th and 20th century accounts of the battle of Cold Harbor (June 1864) what should be included to give a balanced perspective and why? One might want to mention commanders involved, maps, newspaper accounts, original letters, secondary sources, etc.

Extra credit option: Movie Review (10 points) due no later than 12/14

The one-page movie review must be a critique of a film relating to the authenticity of its portrayal of a particular event (battle) or commander. The movies *Glory* and *Gettysburg* are recommended for review.

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Expanded Student Assignment 2:

Lincoln – McClellan Correspondence

McClellan’s Operations Following Antietam: Cause for Alarm?

Assignment: To get an overview of the issue, read the following essential questions first, then read through this series of telegrams which were exchanged between Lincoln and McClellan. [If time is limited, use only documents 2 and 3.] Skim the one in April 1862, but read more carefully those sent immediately following the battle of Antietam in October 1862. Respond to the document-specific questions. (Note, the spelling in the documents has not been altered and reflects the writing style of the Civil War-era.) Finally, be prepared to discuss these essential questions in class.

1. Would you consider Lincoln a “micro-manager”? Why or why not?
2. What was McClellan’s typical excuse to Lincoln?
3. Would you consider the relationship of Lincoln as the commander-in-chief and McClellan as the commanding general to be strained? What specific examples can you cite?
4. As a military man, what might McClellan have been thinking about Lincoln’s continual questions?
5. What examples do you see in the five documents that would eventually lead to McClellan’s dismissal?
6. What does these communiqués from Lincoln suggest about the role of Lincoln as a war president? Give specific examples.
7. How might McClellan have responded to these suggestions?

The selected documents are from the *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*. (Volume 5) There is also a citation for their primary location in the *Official Records of the War of the Rebellion* [known as OR, with a volume and part, plus page number.] Another good source is Andrew Delbanco (ed.), *The Portable Lincoln*, pp. 242-244. You may also go to the following website to search for any other references to Lincoln and other war matters. <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/l/lincoln/>

Document 1: Preview of Problems with McClellan

**To George B. McClellan [1]
Major General McClellan. Washington,
My dear Sir. April 9. 1862**

Your despatches complaining that you are not properly sustained, while they do not offend me, do pain me very much.

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Blenker's Division was withdrawn from you before you left here; and you knew the pressure under which I did it, and, as I thought, acquiesced in it---certainly not without reluctance.

After you left, I ascertained that less than twenty thousand unorganized men, without a single field battery, were all you designed to be left for the defence of Washington, and Manassas Junction; and part of this even, was to go to Gen. Hooker's old position. Gen. Banks' corps, once designed for Manassas Junction, was diverted, and tied up on the line of Winchester and Strausburg, and could not leave it without again exposing the upper Potomac, and the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. This presented, (or would present, when McDowell and Sumner should be gone) a great temptation to the enemy to turn back from the Rappahanock, and sack Washington. My explicit order that Washington should, by the judgment of all the commanders of Army corps, be left entirely secure, had been neglected. It was precisely this that drove me to detain McDowell.

I do not forget that I was satisfied with your arrangement to leave Banks at Mannassas Junction; but when that arrangement was broken up, and nothing was substituted for it, of course I was not satisfied. I was constrained to substitute something for it myself. And now allow me to ask ``Do you really think I should permit the line from Richmond, via Mannassas Junction, to this city to be entirely open, except what resistance could be presented by less than twenty thousand unorganized troops?" This is a question which the country will not allow me to evade.

There is a curious mystery about the number of the troops now with you. When I telegraphed you on the 6th. saying you had over a hundred thousand with you, I had just obtained from the Secretary of War, a statement, taken as he said, from your own returns, making 108,000 then with you, and en route to you. You now say you will have but 85,000, when all en route to you shall have reached you. How can the discrepancy of 23,000 be accounted for?

As to Gen. Wool's command, I understand it is doing for you precisely what a like number of your own would have to do, if that command was away.

I suppose the whole force which has gone forward for you, is with you by this time; and if so, I think it is the precise time for you to strike a blow. By delay the enemy will relatively gain upon you---that is, he will gain faster, by fortifications and re-inforcements, than you can by re-inforcements alone.

And, once more let me tell you, it is indispensable to you that you strike a blow. I am powerless to help this. You will do me the justice to remember I always insisted, that going down the Bay in search of a field, instead of fighting at or near Mannassas, was only shifting, and not surmounting, a difficulty---that we would find the same enemy, and the same, or

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equal, intrenchments, at either place. The country will not fail to note---is now noting---that the present hesitation to move upon an intrenched enemy, is but the story of Manassas repeated.

I beg to assure you that I have never written you, or spoken to you, in greater kindness of feeling than now, nor with a fuller purpose to sustain you, so far as in my most anxious judgment, I consistently can. But you must act. Yours very truly

A. LINCOLN

Annotation [1] ALS, DLC. See Lincoln to McClellan, April 6, supra, for excerpts from McClellan's dispatches.

Document 1 Questions:

1. Why is Lincoln “pained”?
2. Why did Lincoln’s level of satisfaction fluctuate?
3. What was Lincoln’s concern about the defenses of Washington, D.C.?
4. How did McClellan explain the discrepancy in numbers?

Document 2: “Slow to Move” after Antietam or Problems of Command

**Major General ← McClellan → Executive Mansion,
My dear Sir Washington, Oct. 13, 1862.**

You remember my speaking to you of what I called your over-cautiousness. Are you not over-cautious when you assume that you can not do what the enemy is constantly doing? Should you not claim to be at least his equal in prowess, and act upon the claim?

As I understand, you telegraph Gen. Halleck that you can not subsist your army at Winchester unless the Railroad from Harper's Ferry to that point be put in working order. But the enemy does now subsist his army at Winchester at a distance nearly twice as great from railroad transportation as you would have to do without the railroad last named. He now wags from Culpepper C.H. which is just about twice as far as you would have to do from Harper's Ferry. He is certainly not more than half as well provided with wagons as you are. I certainly should be pleased for you to have the advantage of the Railroad from Harper's Ferry to Winchester, but it wastes all the remainder of autumn to give it to you; and, in fact ignores the question of time, which can not, and must not be ignored.

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Again, one of the standard maxims of war, as you know, is "to operate upon the enemy's communications as much as possible without exposing your own." You seem to act as if this applies against you, but can not apply in your favor. Change positions with the enemy, and think you not he would break your communication with Richmond within the next twentyfour hours? You dread his going into Pennsylvania. But if he does so in full force, he gives up his communications to you absolutely, and you have nothing to do but to follow, and ruin him; if he does so with less than full force, fall upon, and beat what is left behind all the easier.

Exclusive of the water line, you are now nearer Richmond than the enemy is by the route that you can, and he must take. Why can you not reach there before him, unless you admit that he is more than your equal on a march. His route is the arc of a circle, while yours is the chord. The roads are as good on yours as on his.

You know I desired, but did not order, you to cross the Potomac below, instead of above the Shenandoah and Blue Ridge. My idea was that this would at once menace the enemies' communications, which I would seize if he would permit. If he should move Northward I would follow him closely, holding his communications. If he should prevent our seizing his communications, and move towards Richmond, I would press closely to him, fight him if a favorable opportunity should present, and, at least, try to beat him to Richmond on the inside track. I say "try"; if we never try, we shall never succeed. If he make a stand at Winchester, moving neither North or South, I would fight him there, on the idea that if we can not beat him when he bears the wastage of coming to us, we never can when we bear the wastage of going to him. This proposition is a simple truth, and is too important to be lost sight of for a moment. In coming to us, he tenders us an advantage which we should not waive. We should not so operate as to merely drive him away. As we must beat him somewhere, or fail finally, we can do it, if at all, easier near to us, than far away. If we can not beat the enemy where he now is, we never can, he again being within the entrenchments of Richmond.

Recurring to the idea of going to Richmond on the inside track, the facility of supplying from the side away from the enemy is remarkable---as it were, by the different spokes of a wheel extending from the hub towards the rim---and this whether you move directly by the chord, or on the inside arc, hugging the Blue Ridge more closely. The chord-line, as you see, carries you by Aldie, Hay-Market, and Fredericksburg; and you see how turn-pikes, railroads, and finally, the Potomac by Acquia Creek, meet you at all points from Washington. The same, only the lines lengthened a little, if you press closer to the Blue Ridge part of the way. The gaps through the Blue Ridge I understand to be about the following distances from Harper's Ferry, towit: Vestal's five miles; Gregorie's, thirteen, Snicker's eighteen, Ashby's, twenty-eight, Mannassas, thirty-eight, Chester fortyfive, and Thornton's fiftythree. I should think it preferable to take the route nearest the enemy, disabling him to make an important move without your knowledge, and compelling him to keep his forces together, for dread of you. The gaps would enable you to attack if you should wish. For a great part of the way, you would be practically between the

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enemy and both Washington and Richmond, enabling us to spare you the greatest number of troops from here. When at length, running for Richmond ahead of him enables him to move this way; if he does so, turn and attack him in rear. But I think he should be engaged long before such point is reached. It is all easy if our troops march as well as the enemy; and it is unmanly to say they can not do it.

This letter is in no sense an order. Yours truly A. LINCOLN.

Annotation [1] ADFS, DLC-RTL. On October 16, 8:30 A.M., ← McClellan → acknowledged Lincoln's letter "just received from Colonel [Delavan D.] Perkins. . . . I go to the front. . . . This may delay my reply." (OR, I, XIX, I, 16).

On October 17, ← McClellan → replied as follows:

"Your letter of the 13th . . . and reached me yesterday morning by the hands of Colonel Perkins.

"I had sent out strong reconnaissances . . . and as sharp artillery fire was heard, I felt it incumbent to go to the front. I did not leave Charlestown until dark, so that I have been unable to give Your Excellency's letter that full and respectful consideration which it merits at my hands.

"I do not wish to detain Colonel Perkins beyond this morning's train; I therefore think it best to send him back with this simple acknowledgment of the receipt of Your Excellency's letter. . . . I promise you that I will give to your views the fullest and most unprejudiced consideration, and that it is my intention to advance the moment my men are shod and my cavalry are sufficiently renovated to be available. . . ." (Ibid.).

No further reply has been found, but ← McClellan → continued to delay and sought changes in the order of October 6 (see note, Lincoln to ← McClellan →, October 7, supra). On October 21, Halleck telegraphed ← McClellan that the president "directs me to say that he has no change to make in his order of the 6th instant. If you have not been and are not now in condition to obey it, you will be able to show such want of ability. The President does not expect impossibilities, but he is very anxious that all this good weather should not be wasted in inactivity. Telegraph when you will move, and on what lines you propose to march." (OR, I, XIX, I, 81).

Questions Document 2:

1. What is Lincoln's mood? Why? How does his style of writing show this?
2. In what ways is McClellan over-cautious? What problems does McClellan cite?
3. What are Lincoln's counter-suggestions? In what manner are these suggestions made?
4. What is meant by Lincoln's last sentence? Why is Lincoln sarcastic?

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5. What examples does Lincoln use regarding terrain and distances to compare McClellan with other forces? To answer this, chart out a map to show what Lincoln means by an arc versus chord-line.

Document 3: "Sore-tongued horses"

To George B. McClellan → [1]

Washington City, D.C.

Majr. Genl. ← McClellan → Oct. 24 [25]. 1862

I have just read your despatch about sore tongued and fatigued horses. Will you pardon me for asking what the horses of your army have done since the battle of Antietam that fatigue anything? A. LINCOLN

Annotation [1] ALS, IHi. Lincoln obviously misdated this telegram, since ← McClellan →'s despatch to Halleck transmitting a report of Colonel Robert Williams of the First Massachusetts Cavalry was not received at the War Department until 12 M., October 25.

Williams reported as follows: "I have in camp 267 horses . . . of these, 128 are positively and absolutely unable to leave the camp, from the following causes, viz, sore-tongue, grease, and consequent lameness, and sore backs The horses, which are still sound, are absolutely broken down from fatigue and want of flesh" (OR, I, XIX, II, 485-86).

← McClellan replied to Lincoln at 6 P.M. October 25, as follows:

"In reply to your telegram of this date, I have the honor to state, from the time this army left Washington, on the 7th of September, my cavalry has been constantly employed in making reconnaissances, scouting, and picketing. Since the battle of Antietam, six regiments have made a trip of 200 miles, marching 55 miles in one day, while endeavoring to reach Stuart's cavalry.

"General Pleasonton, in his official report, states that he, with the remainder of our available cavalry, while on Stuart's track, marched 78 miles in twenty-four hours.

"Besides these two remarkable expeditions, our cavalry has been engaged in picketing and scouting 150 miles of river front ever since the battle of Antietam, and has made repeated reconnaissances since that time, engaging the enemy on every occasion, and, indeed, it has performed harder service since the battle than before. I beg that you will also consider that this same cavalry was brought from the Peninsula, where it encountered most laborious service, and was, at the commencement of this campaign, in low condition, and from that time to the present has had no time to recruit.

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``If any instance can be found where overworked cavalry has performed more labor than mine since the battle of Antietam, I am not conscious of it." (OR, I, XIX, II, 485).

Questions Document 3:

1. What is Lincoln's tone in the opening of the letter? Explain why Lincoln was so exasperated by McClellan. What had McClellan failed to do? Why?
2. Which logical reports should we believe, those stated by Lincoln or McClellan's. Who could one assume would really know the details?
3. Was the excuse of "sore-tongued" horses a way for McClellan not to lose face?

Document 4: Continued Problems of Operation

To George B. McClellan → [1]
Executive Mansion, Washington,
Maj. Gen. ← McClellan → Oct. 26. 1862. [11:30 A.M.]

Yours in reply to mine about horses received. Of course you know the facts better than I, still two considerations remain. Stuart's cavalry outmarched ours, having certainly done more marked service on the Peninsula, and everywhere since. Secondly, will not a movement of our army be a relief to the cavalry, compelling the enemy to concentrate, instead of "foraging" in squads everywhere?

But I am so rejoiced to learn from your despatch to Gen. Halleck, that you begin crossing the river this morning. A.
LINCOLN

Annotation [1] ALS copy, DLC-RTL. ←

McClellan replied at 9 P.M., "I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your telegram of this morning. You will pardon me for most respectfully differing with you in regard to the expression in your dispatch 'Stuart's cavalry has done more marked service on the Peninsula and everywhere since.' I cannot resist the strength of my own conviction that some one has conveyed to your mind an erroneous impression in regard to the service of our cavalry, for I know you would not intentionally do injustice to the excellent officers and men of which it is composed

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“With the exception of the two raids by Stuart, I am unconscious of a single instance where the rebel cavalry has exhibited any superiority over ours. The fact that Stuart outmarched Pleasonton in his last raid is easily accounted for. It is said that he received a relay of fresh horses when he crossed the river at McCoy's Ferry. From that point he had extra lead horses to take the places of those that gave out on the road, besides which he stole some 1,000 horses in Pennsylvania, which contributed toward giving him another relay. Notwithstanding all this, he dropped a great many broken-down horses along the road. Pleasonton made his entire trip without a change of horses.

“After this statement of facts has been placed before you, I feel confident you will concur with me that our cavalry is equally as efficient as that of the rebels.” (OR, I, XIX, II, 490-91).

**To George B. McClellan → [1]
Executive Mansion, Washington,
Majr. Gen. ← McClellan →. Oct. 27. 1862**

Yours of yesterday received. Most certainly I intend no injustice to any; and if I have done any, I deeply regret it. To be told after more than five weeks total inaction of the Army, and during which period we had sent to that Army every fresh horse we possibly could, amounting in the whole to 7918 that the cavalry horses were too much fatigued to move, presented a very cheerless, almost hopeless, prospect for the future; and it may have forced something of impatience into my despatches. If not recruited, and rested then, when could they ever be? I suppose the river is rising, and I am glad to believe you are crossing. A. LINCOLN

Annotation [1] ALS, IHi.

Questions for Document 4:

1. What was McClellan's understanding of Jeb Stuart's cavalry disposition?
2. What is the tone of McClellan's response to Lincoln's assertion that Confederate cavalry forces had out-marched those of McClellan?

Note, if you wish to visualize better the arguments presented by these two men regarding the post-Antietam movements, feel free to design your own “map” or table. This may help you in our class discussion as well.

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Sample Calendar

Military History Class Work, Assignments & Resources– November-December 2007-2008					
Week of . . .	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
November 12	11/12 In-class essay on Napoleon	11/13 American Civil War overview Parts I & II ACW First Year & Ending Limited War	11/14 American Civil War: Peninsula Campaign May 1862	11/15 Reading time for Antietam and/or Project planning period	11/16 Project progress report #2 (updated outline) Battle of Antietam: Turning Point in the War?
November 19	11/19 Part III Moving towards total war: (a) Fredericksburg Mud March	11/20 Part III (b) Chancellorsville	No school	No school	No school
November 26	11/26 Part IV Vicksburg & Gettysburg	11/27 Reading time for Gettysburg and/or project	11/28 Gettysburg Day 1 & 2	11/29 Reading or Project planning period	11/30 Gettysburg Day 3
December 3	12/3 Part V (a) Grant's Overland campaign <i>Semi-final draft of project essay due</i>	12/4 Reading or project period	12/5 Part V (b) Sherman in Georgia	12/6 Reading or project	12/7 Parts VI & VII Summation Civil War & <i>Final Assignment due</i>
December 10	12/10 Project week	12/11 Project week – presentations begin (2)	12/12 Project week presentations begin (2)	12/13 Project week presentations begin (2)	12/14 Project week presentations begin (1)
Exams	<i>Final Draft of project due (80 points essay & 20 points presentation)</i>	Student reports	Student reports	Student reports	Student reports
Online Resources	Civil War <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Evolution of Civil War medicine (see: http://www.sonofthesouth.net/leefoundation/civil-war-medicine.htm and museum for Civil War medicine: http://www.civilwarmed.org/index.cfm) ○ Consulting letters, diaries and newspapers: http://etext.virginia.edu/civilwar/ 				

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- Primary source for Lincoln documents: (<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/l/lincoln/>)
- You may also want to look also up online specific maps for engagements located at the Library of Congress. Go to: http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/civil_war_maps/
- West Point maps: <http://digital-library.usma.edu/collections/maps/civmaps/>
- There is also the National Park Service Battlefield site: <http://www.nps.gov/archive/anti/home.htm>
- See also *Harper's Weekly* accounts for specific battles and commanders: <http://www.sonofthesouth.net/> Click on the appropriate year, then month and week for sketches and news.
- James McPherson webcast: http://forum.wgbh.org/wgbh/forum.php?lecture_id=3491
- Overall Civil War online site: <http://sunsite.utk.edu/civil-war/warweb.html>
- <http://www.jatruck.com/stonewall/gettysburg.html>

BIG IDEAS: The Military Lessons of ACW

- 1) Unlike the generals of 1861-1863, who were restrained by their desire to maintain the essential contours of antebellum society unchanged, Grant & Sherman *saw the war in its totality*, & *synchronized the Union war effort to achieve effective mass* by targeting enemy armies, resources, & will on a number of axes of advance simultaneously—a “broad front” strategy that *concentrated* Union resources *in time* rather than space, winning the war of attrition.
- 2) Thus, the war was not won, nor are modern total wars normally won, at any *one* level of war, or in any *one* geographic region (the East or the West, VA or the MS Valley), or by concentrating effort against any *single* enemy center of gravity.
- 3) Lessons & conclusions:

Technological advances do not necessarily mean more decisive warfare.
Nor do technological advances necessarily mean greater totality. Policy—politics—does.

Indeed, mutual technological advances commonly lead to stalemate at a higher level of intensity (resource mobilization) & lethality—as was the case with the railroad powered “continuous operations” in 1864-65.

The Civil War inaugurated an era of defensive dominance that lasted through WWI, if not WWII & beyond—but victory ultimately required offensive action, a combination that led to wars of attrition.