

Union victories at Gettysburg and Vicksburg marked a turning point in the war.

Southern Victories

SS.8.A.5.3, SS.8.A.5.5, SS.8.A.5.6, LA.8.1.6.1, LA.8.1.6.2

What factors contributed to the early success of the Confederate forces?

The military leadership of Generals Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson was a key factor in the Confederates' military success in the East. With their knowledge of the land and ability to inspire troops, these two often defeated larger Union forces.

The Battle of Fredericksburg

After Antietam, Robert E. Lee moved his army out of Maryland into Virginia. This encouraged newly named Union commander, General Ambrose Burnside, to march his troops toward the Confederate capital at Richmond. Lee intercepted the Union army near Fredericksburg. Lee's forces dug trenches in hills south of the town. This gave them the advantage of higher ground from which to fight. On December 13, 1862, Union forces attacked. Lee's **entrenched** (ihh • TREHNCHT) troops drove them back with heavy losses. Devastated, Burnside resigned.

Victory at Chancellorsville

In May 1863, Lee met Union forces led by General Joseph Hooker in the Battle of Chancellorsville. General Lee again showed daring and a brilliant command of tactics. Although Hooker had twice as many men, Lee divided his forces. Some Confederate troops confronted the main Union force. Others under the leadership of Stonewall Jackson secretly marched to a spot on the far end of the Union line. The risky plan worked perfectly. Jackson's army surprised the Union force with a crushing attack on its **flank** (FLANGK), or side. Lee struck from the front. Caught between the two Confederate forces, Hooker eventually withdrew his men.

The Confederate victory came at a high cost. In the confusion of battle, Confederate soldiers fired on and wounded Stonewall Jackson by mistake. Surgeons amputated Jackson's arm, prompting Lee to say, "He has lost his left arm, and I have lost my right." Worse, Jackson developed pneumonia. After a week of suffering, he died. His death cost the South one of its great leaders. It also affected the morale of its army and its citizens.

Problems With Union Leadership

In contrast, Union leadership in the East disappointed the president. In less than a year, a frustrated Lincoln saw three different generals try and fail to lead the Union to victory.

The first, Major General George McClellan, commanded the Union forces at the Battle of Antietam in March 1862. Although he was expert at preparing for battle, he was overly careful and slow to act. Said Lincoln, "If McClellan doesn't want to use the army, I'd like to borrow it for a while." The last straw came when, after victory at Antietam, McClellan failed to obey Lincoln's order to follow the retreating Confederate troops and destroy them.

Lincoln pushed his next commander, General Ambrose Burnside, to take aggressive action. Burnside quickly lost the president's favor after his crushing loss at Fredericksburg.

Next, Lincoln appointed Major General Joseph Hooker, who had often been critical of other generals. Hooker's attitude matched the president's. "May God have mercy on General Lee, for I will have none," he declared. Despite Hooker's confidence, Lee's much smaller army crushed Hooker's forces at Chancellorsville. Hooker soon resigned.

Lincoln's next commander needed to prove himself quickly. Major General George Meade assumed command three days before one of the war's great battles.

Explaining Why was Lincoln frustrated with the Union generals?

African Americans in the Civil War

SS.8.A.1.3, SS.8.A.5.3, SS.8.A.5.5, SS.8.A.5.6, SS.8.A.5.7, LA.8.1.6.3

What role did African Americans play in military efforts?

At first, both the North and the South barred African Americans from serving in their armies. As time passed, the North relaxed its rules.

Excluded in the South

Even though African Americans made up more than 30 percent of the smaller Southern population, Confederate leaders would not allow them to enlist. Only in the last days of the war, when defeat drew near, did they consider it. Confederate leaders feared that once armed, African American soldiers would attack their fellow troops or even begin a general revolt.

Enlisted in the North

At first, President Lincoln resisted calls to enlist African Americans in the Union army. He feared that such a policy would be unpopular in the border states.

By 1862, though, it was clear that the North needed more soldiers in order to defeat the Confederacy. Many African Americans were eager to fight. As a result, Congress decided to **reverse** past policy and allow the formation of all-African American regiments.

These new Union soldiers were in a tough position. Many white Union regiments doubted their fighting ability. Others resented them. Many Southern troops also especially hated the Union's African American soldiers. They often focused their fiercest fire on African American regiments.

Despite this, African Americans joined. By the end of the war, they made up about 10 percent of the Union army. Some were freed people from the North. Others had fled enslavement in the South. These men fought hard and effectively, too. As one white Union officer wrote about an all-African American Kansas regiment:

"They make better soldiers in every respect than any troops I have ever had under my command."

— General James G. Blunt

The 54th Massachusetts

The best-known African American regiment was the 54th Massachusetts. Founded in 1863, the 54th was under the command of Colonel Robert Gould Shaw, who came from a Boston abolitionist family. Later that year, the 54th served on the front lines in an assault on Fort Wagner in South Carolina. Confederate gunfire caused nearly 300 casualties in the 54th alone, including Colonel Shaw. Though the Union could not capture the fort, the 54th became famous for the courage and sacrifice of its members. It would also serve with distinction in other battles, such as the Battle of Olustee in Florida.

Determining Cause and Effect Why did Lincoln hesitate to enlist African Americans?

Connections to TODAY

African American Soldiers

Beginning with the Revolutionary War, African Americans have had a long history of serving with distinction in the United States military. When the draft ended in 1973, African American enrollment in the armed forces increased. Today, African Americans make up about 17 percent of the active forces and 15 percent of the Reserves and National Guard. [SS.8.A.1.3](#)

The Tide Turns

[SS.8.A.5.3](#), [SS.8.A.5.5](#), [SS.8.A.5.6](#)

How was the Battle of Gettysburg a turning point in the war?

In spring of 1863, the Confederates had the upper hand. Their victory at Chancellorsville ruined Union plans to attack Richmond. Lee was emboldened. He decided to take the war once more into the North, hoping to impress France and Britain.

The Confederate strategy was similar to that of the colonies in the Revolutionary War. Though far outnumbered, the colonies won the support of France—and the war. Now, France and Britain missed the goods—especially cotton—Southern planters had once supplied. If the Confederates appeared to be winning, those nations might help.

The Battle of Gettysburg

In July 1863, a small town in southern Pennsylvania became the site of one of the most decisive battles in the Civil War. Gettysburg was not a capital, a key port, or the location of a fort. It was almost an accident that such serious fighting took place there.

The Confederates entered the town looking for supplies. General Lee hoped to avoid fighting in a landscape he did not know well. It was there, however, that he encountered the enemy. When Lee's troops crawled out of Gettysburg four grueling days later, they had suffered 25,000 casualties. The Union—the victor—lost 23,000.

The battle started at 7:30 A.M. on July 1. Outnumbered Union troops retreated to a section of high ground called Cemetery Ridge. Reinforcements arrived for both sides. On the second day of fighting, Southern generals tried to drive Union forces from hills named Round Top and Little Round Top. In furious fighting, Union forces under General George Meade held their positions.

The next day, Lee ordered an attack designed to "create a panic and virtually destroy the [Union] army." First, the Confederates fired nearly 140 cannons at the Union lines. Then, General George Pickett led thousands of Confederate troops in an attack on the Union's position at Cemetery Ridge. Putting themselves directly in the line of fire, they advanced across open land in what came to be remembered as Pickett's Charge.

At first, it seemed that Pickett's Charge might work. The Confederates broke the first line of Union defense. In the end, however, half of those who started the attack lay dead or wounded on the ground. Lee later wrote, "The army did all it could. I fear I required of it impossibilities."

Gettysburg ended the Confederates' hope of gaining help from Britain and France. The South had hoped to receive two ironclads from the British and use them to sweep Union shipping from the Atlantic. However, in October 1863, the British government decided not to release the ships.

The Siege of Vicksburg

On July 4, the day that Lee retreated from Gettysburg, the Confederacy suffered another major blow. The important river city of Vicksburg, Mississippi, fell under the control of Union troops led by Ulysses S. Grant.

Grant had first attacked Vicksburg in April. His army surrounded the 30,000 Confederate troops there. In May, Grant began a siege of the town, preventing food and supplies from reaching the Confederates. Union gunships on the river supported Grant's 77,000 troops by firing thousands of shells into the city.

The siege lasted 47 days. There were more than 9,000 Confederate and 10,000 Union casualties, and many soldiers died of disease or starvation. Despite heavy losses of soldiers, fewer than 20 citizens of Vicksburg were killed in the long siege.

A few days after Vicksburg fell, the Confederacy lost Port Hudson in Louisiana, its last stronghold on the Mississippi River. The Union had split the South in two. Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas were now cut off. The tide of the Civil War had turned.

Lincoln's Address at Gettysburg

On November 19, 1863, officials and citizens gathered to dedicate the Soldiers' National Cemetery at Gettysburg. At the ceremony, former governor of Massachusetts Edward Everett delivered a two-hour speech. After him, President Abraham Lincoln spoke for about two minutes. In 272 words, Lincoln honored the soldiers and their cause, and stated his vision for the country.

"These dead shall not have died in vain. . . . Government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth."

—from the Gettysburg Address

Reactions to Lincoln's Gettysburg Address were mixed. Everett, along with the *New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, and *Springfield (Mass.) Republican*, thought the speech was a success. The *Republican* wrote, "His little speech is a perfect gem; deep in feeling, compact in thought and expression, and tasteful . . . in every word and comma." It remains one of the most enduring and powerful speeches in American history.

Summarizing How did the events at Vicksburg change the tide of the war?

LESSON 4 REVIEW

Review Vocabulary

1. Use the following words in sentences about the Civil War.

a. entrench

b. flank

LA.8.1.6.1

Answer the Guiding Questions

2. **Explaining** Why was the Battle of Chancellorsville important?

SS.8.A.5.6

3. **Making Inferences** Why do you think some leaders called for African Americans to be allowed to fight in the Civil War?

SS.8.A.5.3

4. **Evaluating** Why was Gettysburg a turning point for the South?

SS.8.A.5.6

5. PERSONAL WRITING You are a soldier who fought at Gettysburg. Write a letter to a loved one at home, describing the battle scene, how you felt, and what the outcome was.

SS.8.A.5.6