

ABOUT THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

Introduction

The American Civil War took place from 1861 to 1865. This bloody war took more American lives than any other war in history. Abraham Lincoln called the nation “a house divided.”

Causes of the War

The war had many causes, but the major issue was slavery. Originally, all 13 American colonies had slavery. After the War of Independence, slavery slowly came to an end in the industrial North. But the South’s economy depended on large cotton plantations worked by slaves.

In 1860, Abraham Lincoln was elected president. President Lincoln believed that slavery was wrong. An antislavery movement grew in the North. The federal government outlawed the importation of new slaves and tried to limit the use of slavery in the South. Southerners felt that their country was turning against them. One by one, Southern states seceded, or left, the Union. The eleven states formed the Confederate States of America.

The War Begins

The U.S. government, led by President Abraham Lincoln, insisted that states were not permitted to secede. This led to war. On April 12, 1861, Confederate troops fired on Fort Sumter in South Carolina, a U.S. military post. A bloody battle between the North and the South began.

North v. South

Each side had different advantages in the war. The North had more people, money, factories, and railroads. The Northern troops were equipped with better arms, munitions, and supplies. The Union navy was able to set up blockades at Confederate ports so that needed supplies could not get in. But the South had experienced military generals. It also had physically fit soldiers, strong from working on farms. Nearly all the battles were on Southern soil, so the Confederate soldiers knew the terrain well.

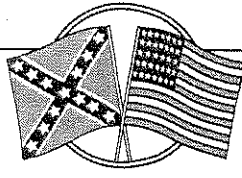
Southerners felt deeply that they were fighting for states’ rights and for their way of life. Northerners felt they were fighting to keep the country together and to abolish slavery.

The Tide Turns

In the beginning of the war, the South won many important battles. But in 1863, the North had two important victories: Gettysburg and Vicksburg. The South never recovered.

In 1865, Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrendered to Union General Ulysses S. Grant. The Union victory eventually led to the abolition of slavery throughout the United States.

Less than a week after the war ended, Abraham Lincoln was assassinated by a Southern sympathizer.



ABOUT MAJOR BATTLES

Introduction

At the beginning of the American Civil War, most Northerners did not think that the war would last longer than three months. After all, the North was larger and stronger. But when the Confederates won battles early on, people realized that the war was going to be a long and bloody struggle.

The Appalachian Mountains divided the war into two main theaters, or military areas. The Western Theater was located between the mountains and the Mississippi River. The Eastern Theater stretched from the mountains east to the Atlantic Ocean. A smaller military area west of the Mississippi River saw some minor action.

The Eastern Front

Major battles on the eastern front mostly took place in Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. Famous battles which the South won were: the First Battle of Bull Run, the Second Battle of Bull Run, the Battle of Chancellorsville, the Battle of Seven Days, and the Battle of Fredericksburg. Decisive victories for the North included the Battle of Gettysburg, the Battle of Antietam, and the Battle of Petersburg.

The Western Front

Major battles on the western front occurred in Tennessee and along the Mississippi River. The Northern forces dominated this theater, winning such famous battles as the Battle of Chattanooga, the Battle of Shiloh,

and the Siege of Vicksburg. The Battle of Chickamauga, fought in 1863, was the Confederacy's last major victory of the war.

A Battle of Wills

In the final year of the war, the troops of Union General Ulysses S. Grant and Confederate General Robert E. Lee met several times on the battlefields.

In May 1864, in the Battle of the Wilderness, both men's troops suffered major losses and neither could claim victory. Grant was determined to win, though. He pushed toward Richmond, the Confederate capital.

At the Battle of Spotsylvania Court House, the armies of Grant and Lee fought again. There was no victory for either side.

At the Battle of Cold Harbor, just north of Richmond, Virginia, the two generals sent their troops into battle yet again. About 50,000 Union troops attacked 30,000 Confederate soldiers, who were in trenches. Grant lost 12,000 men that day. In June 1864, at the Siege of Petersburg, Virginia, Grant finally pinned down Lee's troops.

Surrender

When fighting on other fronts weakened the South even further, General Lee knew the cause was lost. On April 9, 1865, the two great generals met at Appomattox Court House in Virginia. General Lee surrendered to General Grant, and the war was officially over.

Fort Sumter

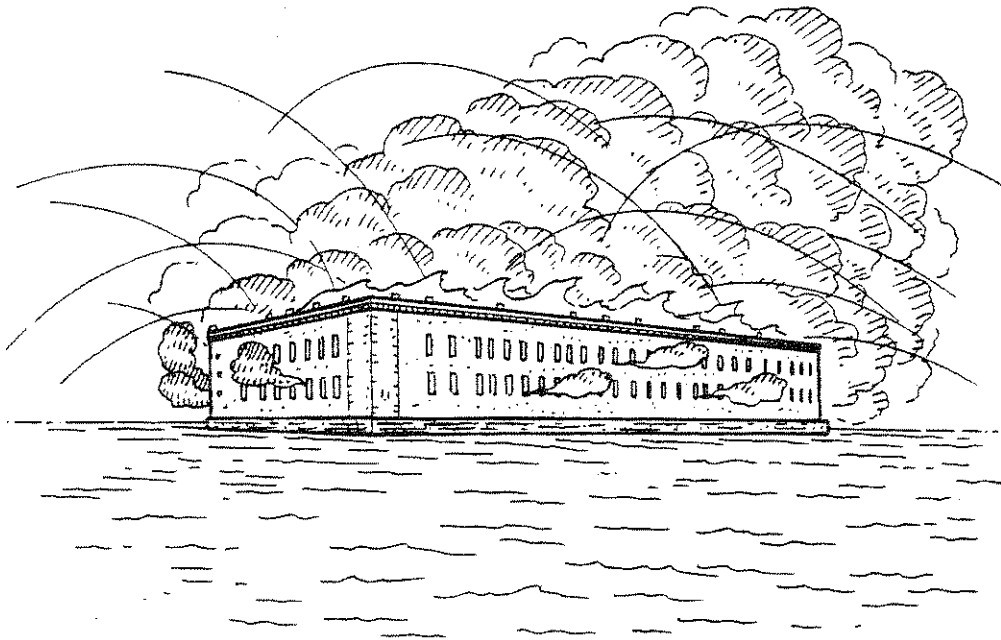
Fort Sumter was a U.S. fort located on an island in the harbor of Charleston, South Carolina. The fort was commanded by Major Robert Anderson.

When South Carolina seceded in 1860, the Union claimed the fort as U.S. property. The Confederacy thought it was part of its new country and wanted the Union men out. Confederate officials ordered Major Anderson to evacuate the fort. Anderson sent messages to Lincoln that he had only a six-week supply of food. Lincoln chose to send warships to resupply the fort. The Confederate officials saw this as a threat.

Before the Federal warships could reach Charleston, Anderson was again asked to surrender. When the major refused, President Davis ordered Southern forces to open fire.

At 4:30 a.m. on April 12, 1861, Fort Sumter became the site of the first shot fired in the Civil War. The next day, heavy cannon fire set the fort on fire. Major Anderson's men tried to defend it, but they were outnumbered. After 34 hours of shelling, Major Anderson surrendered the fort. Amazingly, neither side lost a man during the artillery fire.

The Federal flag was lowered on the afternoon of April 12. Fort Sumter remained under Confederate control until the war ended.



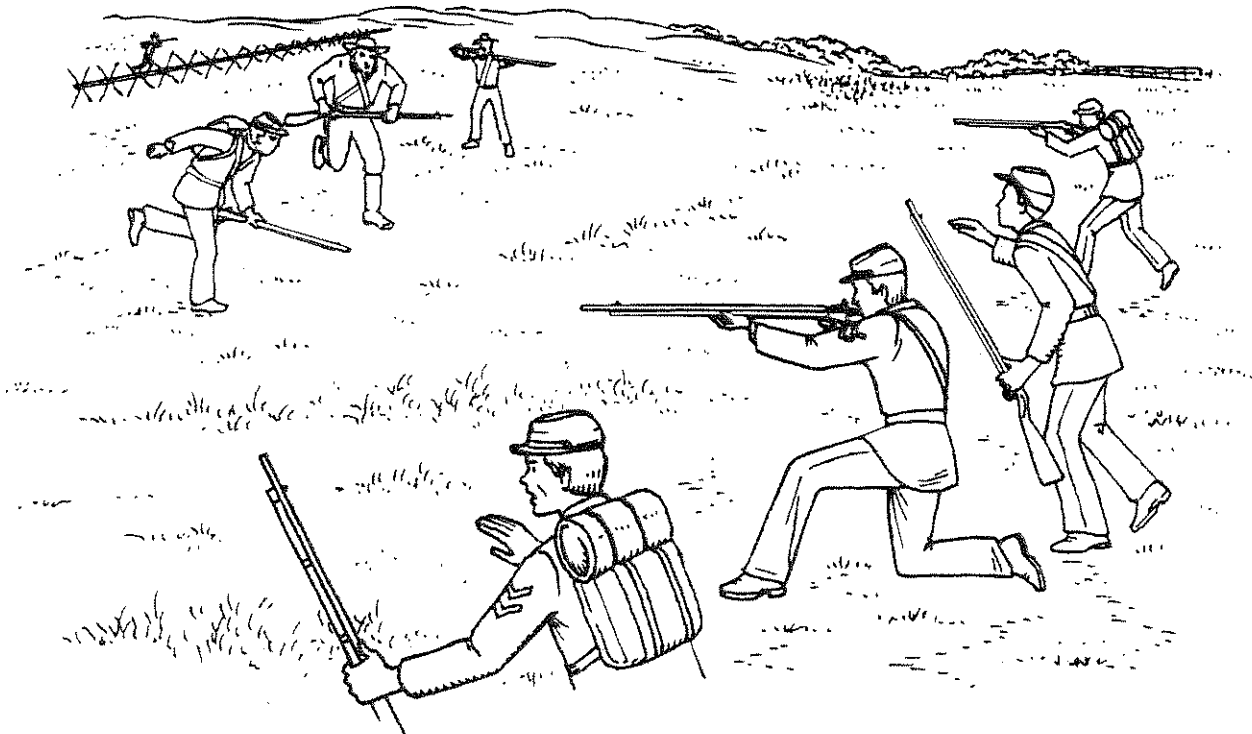
First Bull Run

On July 21, 1861, the **First Battle of Bull Run** was fought. It was the first major land battle of the Civil War. Confederates called it the Battle of Manassas, after the town of Manassas along the Bull Run Creek in Virginia.

Union General Irvin McDowell's inexperienced army of 28,000 soldiers advanced on Confederate General P.G.T. Beauregard's smaller forces. But before McDowell could attack, General Joseph Johnston's Confederate troops arrived to provide reinforcement for Beauregard's men.

The North launched several attacks, and it looked as if the Union army was going to break through the Confederate lines. During one attack, the troops of Confederate General Thomas Jackson held their ground so strongly that Jackson earned the nickname "Stonewall."

After stopping the Union attacks, the Confederates counterattacked, and the Union troops were forced to retreat to Washington, D.C. General McDowell was blamed for the Union loss in the First Battle of Bull Run and was replaced by General George McClellan.



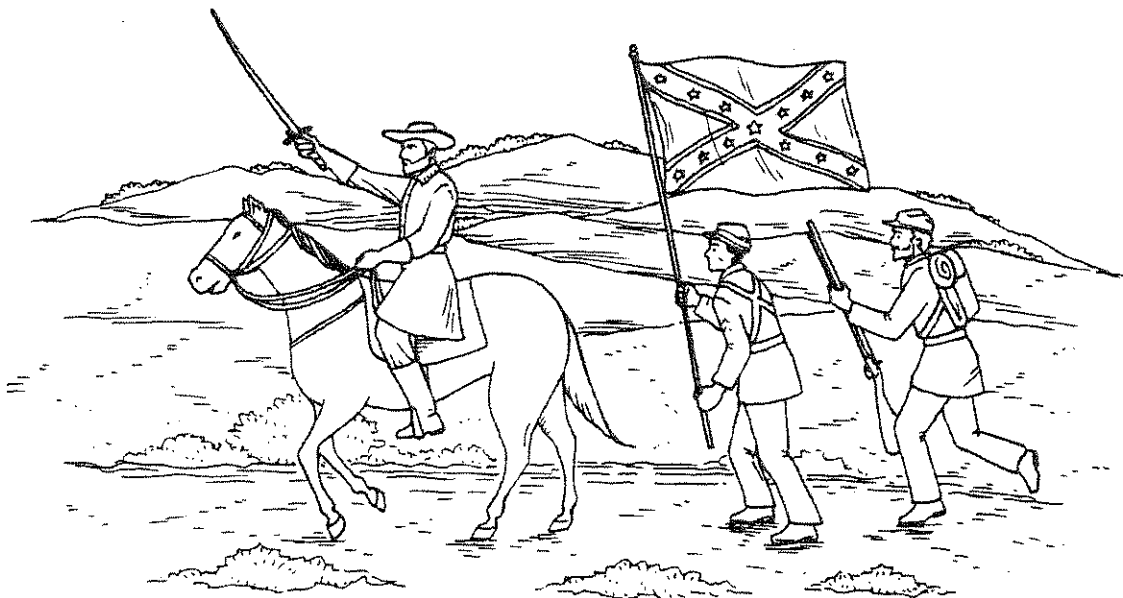
Gettysburg

The **Battle of Gettysburg** occurred from July 1 to July 3, 1863, near the town of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Fighting broke out when Confederate troops ran into Union cavalry west of Gettysburg. General Robert E. Lee rushed 25,000 soldiers to Gettysburg, and the Union army was pushed back. They regrouped, though, and 80,000 additional Union soldiers arrived that night.

On July 2, General Lee's offensive began. In the late afternoon and into the evening, bloody battles were waged. Confederate troops made several assaults, but they were met with heavy Union fire. By the end of the day, neither army had made much headway.

On July 3, General Lee ordered Confederate cannons to open fire to help pave the way for about 15,000 soldiers to storm the hill. To fool the Confederates into thinking their cannons were knocked out, the Union army ceased firing. The Confederates charged across an open field, and Union cannons and rifle volleys killed many of them. The remaining Confederate soldiers charged ahead, and there was a fierce hand-to-hand fight. The Confederates were pushed back down the hill.

The tide of the war turned that day, but the Northern victory came at a terrible price. Confederate casualties in dead, wounded, and missing soldiers were more than 25,000. Union casualties were about 23,000 men.



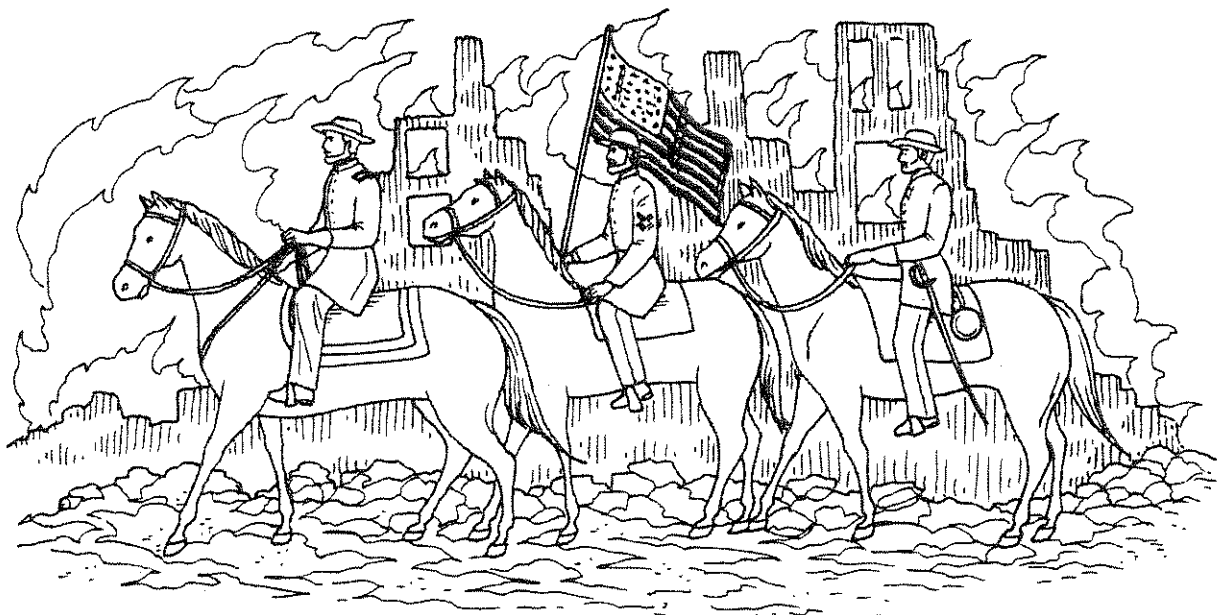
Sherman's March

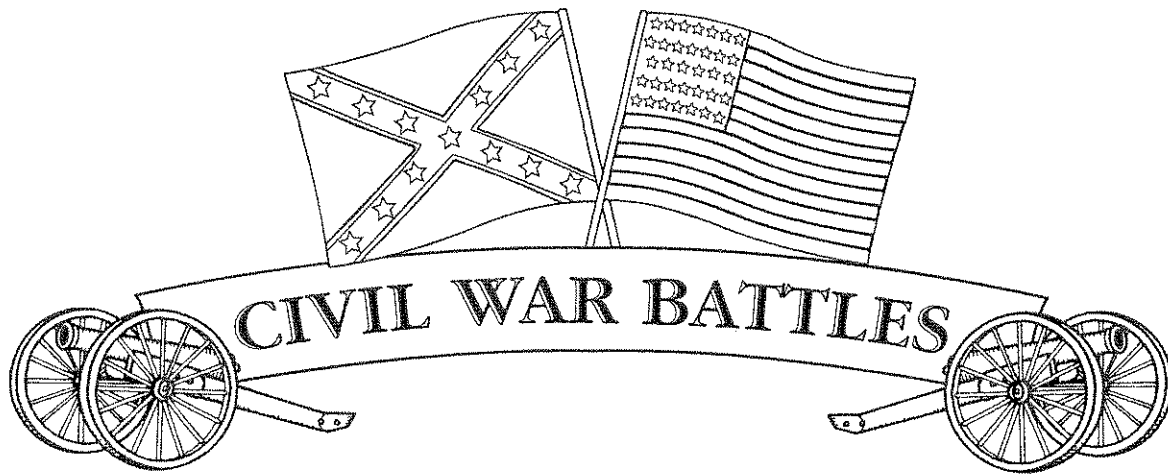
Having taken occupation of Atlanta and forcibly evacuated the city's residents, Union General William T. Sherman and his 62,000 troops began the **March to the Sea** in November 1864. Sherman's army marched in two columns 25 to 60 miles wide from Atlanta to the port of Savannah. They destroyed railroads, bridges, telegraph lines, manufacturing plants, and plantations along the way.

Sherman's army was so large that it faced little resistance. When they reached Savannah, they met 10,000 Confederate soldiers who were defending the port. Following a lengthy artillery battle, Confederate General William J. Hardee abandoned the city. Sherman entered the port on December 22, 1864.

From Savannah, Sherman marched north through the Carolinas to meet General Grant's troops. Along the way, Sherman's troops continued the policy of "slash-and-burn." This meant that they seized or destroyed all important property along their path.

General Sherman's slash-and-burn policy has always been controversial. Some historians think his military strategy was excellent. He destroyed the Confederacy's ability to wage further battle, and that hastened the end of the war. Others find the policy too destructive to civilian life. To burn crops, kill livestock, and destroy homes should not be a military objective.





Name _____ Date _____ Block _____

Major Civil War Battles

Complete the following while you learn about major Civil War battles.

Fort Sumter

Who: _____

What: _____

Where: _____

When: _____

Result: _____

First Battle of Bull Run

Who: _____

What: _____

Where: _____

When: _____

Result: _____

Battle of Gettysburg

Who: _____

What: _____

Where: _____

When: _____

Result: _____

Sherman's March to the Sea

Who: _____

What: _____

Where: _____

When: _____

Result: _____
