

Chapter 21: The Civil War

1. Early Battles

Bad Start

The **Confederacy** had the best chance of winning the war at the beginning. They had the best generals and an army that quickly learned how to fight.

President Lincoln appointed General George B. McClellan to raise an army and train it for battle. McClellan rose to the challenge and created the Army of the Potomac. The Union army moved into Virginia to capture Richmond, the capital of the Confederacy.

Confederate general Robert E. Lee, despite being outnumbered, defeated McClellan and pushed him out of Virginia after several weeks of fighting. Then, Lee invaded Maryland.

Antietam and Emancipation

On September 17, 1862, Lee and McClellan met along Antietam Creek. From morning to evening the two armies fought three times making it the bloodiest day of the war. Lee and his exhausted men retreated to Virginia but McClellan refused to pursue him.

Lincoln met with McClellan at Antietam a few weeks later and decided that McClellan lacked the initiative to continue in command. In November, Lincoln replaced McClellan with another general.

Although Lee's army survived to fight another day, Lincoln considered the Battle of Antietam the victory he needed to issue the Emancipation Proclamation. On January 1, 1863, all enslaved people in rebelling states were forever free. In addition, the Proclamation encouraged the enlistments of African Americans into the **Union** armed forces. By the end of

the war, African Americans made up ten percent of all Union soldiers.

Now, it became a war to keep the Union together and to end slavery. As a result, Britain and France began to pull support from the South. The failure of Lee to win at Antietam and the North officially fighting to end slavery made it difficult for Europeans to support the Southern cause.

2. Vicksburg

Anaconda Plan

At the beginning of the war, soon to retire general Winfield Scott drew up the Anaconda Plan. It called for a naval **blockade** of the South, taking control of the Mississippi River, and capturing Richmond.

In the West, General Ulysses S. Grant captured a Confederate army and continued moving south taking large stretches of the Mississippi River. Meanwhile, Admiral David Farragut moved up the Mississippi River from the Gulf of Mexico forcing the surrender of New Orleans and other strategic locations.

Vicksburg

The city of Vicksburg was the last Confederate stronghold on the Mississippi River. Beginning in May 1863, Grant began his attack against the city. After nearly two months of constant shelling, Vicksburg surrendered to Grant on July 4, 1863.

With the Union capture of the Mississippi River, the Confederacy was split in two and Union forces could use the river as a highway to send men and supplies into the heart of the South.

3. Election of 1864

The South Reels

Robert E. Lee invaded Pennsylvania hoping to destroy the Union Army of the Potomac. From July 1-3, 1863, Lee and the Union army fought at Gettysburg, the biggest battle of the war. Lee lost and had to retreat back to Virginia.

The North had industry that could produce lots of war goods, railroads to move men and supplies, and a large population to replace killed or wounded soldiers. The South lacked all of these. Their ability to fight a long war began to collapse.

Atlanta

As the presidential election of 1864 approached, Lincoln fought depression. According to the polls, he was going to lose the election. The war had stalled for the Union.

Lincoln had appointed General Ulysses S. Grant commander of all Union forces. Grant took command of the Army of the Potomac and fought a series of bloody battles against General Lee in Virginia. The **casualties** shocked the North causing many to call for an end to the war and let the South go.

As September approached, a Union army under the command of General William T. Sherman was driving toward Atlanta, Georgia. By early September he took the city and renewed hopes that the North might still win the war. With this military victory, Lincoln gained enough support from the public and soldiers to become the first president since Andrew Jackson to win a second term. The North was going to finish fighting this war.

4. The End

Sherman's March to the Sea

With Grant and Lincoln's blessing, Sherman burned much of Atlanta to the ground and then marched his army through Georgia cutting a 60 mile wide path of destruction. He destroyed farms, tore up railroads, and burned towns. He resupplied his soldiers on the coast and then turned north and headed into South Carolina and caused more destruction.

Sherman's march did much to destroy the South's will to fight. Confederate soldiers on the front lines received letters from loved ones asking them to return home. Many soldiers **deserted**—left the army without permission.

Appomattox

Unable to hold his position at Petersburg against Grant's overwhelming forces, Robert E. Lee retreated. Grant captured Richmond and surrounded Lee's shrinking army. Without any choice, Lee surrendered to Grant at Appomattox Court House on April 9, 1865. Small battles occurred elsewhere until May 13, when the war essentially came to an end.

The Lincoln Conspiracy

John Wilkes Booth led a group of men who intended to destroy the Union government. On April 14, attempts to kill General Ulysses S. Grant, Vice President Andrew Johnson, and Secretary of State William Seward failed for different reasons. However, Booth managed to shoot Lincoln while he watched a play at Ford's Theater. Lincoln died the next day.