

The Emancipation Proclamation and the Civil War

Battle of the Ironclads. The Union's blockade of the South developed slowly. The North captured several key islands along the Southern coast early in the war to use as bases for the blockade fleet. But the thousands of miles of Southern coast could not all be watched. Eventually, the navy began to concentrate on the few Southern ports that had dock facilities to handle cotton bales, the South's currency in trade. This and the eventual capture of these ports made the blockade increasingly effective.

The South countered by using fast, dark-colored ships to run the blockade. The ships would take cotton from the South to British ports in the West Indies to trade for manufactured goods. The demand for luxury items in the South made the risky voyages very profitable. A ship owner could make a profit if his vessel made just two successful trips before it was captured. Eventually, Jefferson Davis' government insisted that half of all cargo space on the ships be used for war material, not silks and perfume.

The South tried to break the blockade. They almost succeeded, using the captured Union steamship *Merrimac*. When the Union withdrew from Norfolk Navy Yard shortly after the outset of the Civil War, the Union Navy sank the *Merrimac* to keep it from falling into enemy hands. The Confederates recovered and salvaged the steam-powered ship, and modified it by covering it with iron plates. They rearmed and renamed the ship the *Virginia* and used it with devastating effect to attack the wooden ships that blockaded Chesapeake Bay. The Union ships' cannon fire bounced harmlessly off of the steel-covered ship.

Fortunately, the Union had also developed an ironclad vessel. The *Monitor* arrived in time to confront the *Virginia* when it made its second appearance in the bay. The two ships fought an inconclusive four-hour battle because neither side had developed armor-piercing artillery shells. Out of both ammunition and resolve, the ships returned to their home ports. Eventually, the Union Navy claimed the battle's victory because the blockade was not broken. Later, both ships were lost. The Confederacy destroyed the *Virginia* (*Merrimac*), and the North lost the *Monitor* and its crew in a storm off the coast of Cape Hatteras. The battle of the *Monitor* and the *Merrimac* was the first battle in history to be fought between armor-plated ships.



| The *Monitor* and the *Merrimac*

Peninsular Campaign. McClellan had finally agreed to attack in the spring of 1862. He decided against a direct attack to the South. Instead, he had his entire army transported by sea to the peninsula between the York and the James River on Chesapeake Bay in Virginia. He hoped to outflank the Confederates and capture Richmond, which would be about 70 miles from his landing point. Lincoln reluctantly approved the plan, but insisted that a large number of troops be left behind to defend Washington.

McClellan landed safely with more than 100,000 men and in April of 1862 began to march toward Richmond. They confronted the Confederate army under the command of Joe Johnston in the inconclusive two-day battle of Fair Oaks (Seven Pines). Johnston was wounded and Robert E. Lee was given command of the Confederate forces which he called the Army of Northern Virginia.



| Lincoln and McClellan meeting at Antietam



Stonewall Jackson used a smaller Confederate force to tie up McClellan's reinforcements around Washington in the Shenandoah Valley. Moving quickly and winning several small battles, Jackson convinced the Union high command that an attack on Washington was taking place. After fighting enough to insure the Union troops would remain there looking for him, Jackson slipped away and joined up with Lee.

Using information gained by Jeb Stuart's cavalry, which made a spectacular ride all the way around McClellan's army, Lee attacked on June 26th. The Seven Days' Battles raged from June 26th to July 1st with a series of savage battles in what are now the suburbs of Richmond. Lee succeeded in forcing McClellan to retreat to the James River. McClellan believed he was hopelessly outnumbered and refused to take the offensive again. He was finally ordered to return his army to Washington in the hopes it could be used from there.

Second Bull Run. While McClellan was in Virginia, the army around Washington was under the command of John Pope. Pope advanced toward Richmond in July, believing that McClellan’s army on the peninsula would keep Lee too busy to stop him. But Lee realized the caliber of his opponents. Lee was certain that McClellan would be too busy moving his army to interfere with the Confederate army for a time, so Lee left a small force on the peninsula and led the rest of the army north to deal with Pope before McClellan’s troops could join him. Lee sent Jackson to circle around Pope and cut his lines of supply and communication. As Lee expected, Pope turned his army and tried to find Jackson to do battle. Then Lee brought the Army of Northern Virginia to Jackson’s aid.

The Battle of Second Bull Run went badly for the Union. Pope was very confused. He had finally cornered Jackson on August 29th after an exhausting search and had attacked him hard. Jackson managed to hold on for that

day, and the next day Lee arrived. Pope never knew he was there until the Confederate army attacked from the side (flank). The Union army was routed.

That summer was the beginning of Lee’s spectacular reputation as a general. Robert E. Lee was a devout Christian man from an aristocratic, but not very wealthy, Southern family. He gained several properties by his marriage into the family of George Washington’s wife. He did not really believe slavery was just, but like so many in his day, he owned slaves and accepted “the institution.” He fought for the Confederacy because he would not fight against his home state of Virginia. Most experts agree that he was the best general on either side during the Civil War. As at Second Bull Run, he routinely took chances, and he out-maneuvered and out-fought his Union opponents. By the end of the war, the soldiers of the Confederacy loved him and trusted him completely, even when he was wrong.



Antietam. Lee decided it was time for the Confederacy to go on the offensive. A rebel victory in Union territory might convince Britain to recognize the Confederacy and convince the North to give up the war. So Lee and his army moved into Maryland, heading for the capital of Pennsylvania. McClellan, whose command had been reduced after the peninsula campaign, was given command again under public pressure. He took his reorganized army out to meet Lee.

Lee divided his army to capture Harper’s Ferry and press an attack to the north. McClellan learned of the plans when a lost copy of Lee’s orders accidentally got into Union hands, but McClellan did not move fast enough to trap Lee with his army spread out. The two sides met near Antietam Creek on September 17th. It was the single bloodiest day of the long, bloody war. In one day, there were over 20,000 casualties between the two armies. Militarily, the battle was a draw. Lee’s lines held but he retreated the next day. History records a Union victory because they took the field.

Emancipation Proclamation. Lincoln’s goal had always been to restore the Union, but he began to see that the North needed a more specific, moral war aim—the end of slavery. He was reluctant to act because he did not want to drive the Northern border states into the arms of the Confederacy, but he had decided by the summer of 1862 to make the move. However, he wanted to wait until after a Union victory to make the announcement. Antietam gave him that chance.

On September 22nd, Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation. It declared that all of the slaves in any state still in rebellion on January 1, 1863 would be forever free. It did not affect the slaves in the Northern border states and did not free any slaves until the South was effectively under Northern control. However, the document meant the end of slavery in the U.S. The North now had a moral cause. Britain, which had waged a world-wide campaign against slavery, would not aid the Confederacy to protect it.

Fredericksburg. McClellan was so slow following Lee that Lincoln lost all patience and finally removed him from command in November. He was replaced by Ambrose E. Burnside. The general was a handsome man with thick side whiskers that were thereafter called “side burns” in his honor. He immediately began an offensive, but he would prove as foolhardy as McClellan was hesitant.

Burnside decided to move his army to the east around Lee’s right flank and march from there to Richmond. Burnside successfully moved the army and prepared to cross the Rappahannock River opposite the city of Fredericksburg. However, he insisted on waiting for pontoon bridges to cross. They took more than a week to arrive. By that time, Lee’s scouts had warned him of the Union’s location and he had set up strong defenses on the high ground near the city.

Faced with a strongly entrenched Confederate army, Burnside should have withdrawn to fight somewhere else. Instead, he attacked on December 13th. Wave after wave of Union soldiers were sent up the hill towards the Confederate guns. By the day’s end, Union casualties were 13,000. General Lee said after that carnage, “It is well war is so terrible, or we should grow too fond of it.”

Burnside’s failures prompted Lincoln to again change generals. This time he choose General Joseph Hooker. Hooker had a reputation as a fighter, and he began to rebuild the army during the winter months in preparation for another summer of fighting. By that point, the war was more than a year and a half old. The Union had captured the upper and lower reaches of the Mississippi, but they had been completely unable to use their superior numbers and supplies to penetrate the eastern Confederate defenses. Richmond was still 120 miles away.



Name the person, event, battle, or item.

- 2.19 _____ freed all slaves in any state still in rebellion on January 1, 1863
- 2.20 _____ McClellan faced Johnston in the Peninsular Campaign
- 2.21 _____ Union ironclad that fought the *Merrimac* to a draw
- 2.22 _____ Lee fought using information from Stuart’s ride around the Union army
- 2.23 _____ Lee advanced into Maryland and was almost trapped when his plans were discovered
- 2.24 _____ Lee trapped Pope before McClellan could come to his aid
- 2.25 _____ the best general in the Civil War
- 2.26 _____ it gave the war its single bloodiest day
- 2.27 _____ Burnside attacked entrenched Confederate positions on the Rappahannock River
- 2.28 _____ general who circled behind Pope and drew him away from Richmond
- 2.29 _____ gave the North a moral cause and kept Britain from supporting the Confederacy
- 2.30 _____ Confederate vessel that almost broke the blockade on Chesapeake Bay
- 2.31 _____ cotton from the South would be taken here by blockade runners
- 2.32 _____ Lee became the Confederate commander after Johnston was injured in this battle
- 2.33 _____ Lee forced McClellan back to the James River and effectively ended the Peninsular Campaign
- 2.34 _____ this battle gave Lincoln the “victory” he needed to release the Emancipation Proclamation
- 2.35 _____ Burnside waited too long for pontoon boats
- 2.36 _____ removed from Union command for not pursuing Lee