



7

### Mess Tins

A soldier carried his own eating implements with him. Most had only a cup, knife, fork, spoon, and metal plate. This more-elaborate mess kit was privately purchased.

### Hard Tack

8

Although not very tasty, this chewy bread lasted a long time without spoiling and was easy to carry.



**1. Summarize** What do the objects and illustrations tell you about the life of the ordinary soldier during the Civil War?

**2. Connecting to Today** Find a monument, museum display, statue, or name of street or highway that is related to the Civil War in your community or some other place and report the following to your class: (a) a description of the site; (b) when it was created; (c) why you think so many communities have a Civil War memorial.

# American ARTIFACTS



FROM EXHIBITIONS AND COLLECTIONS  
AT THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION'S  
NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN HISTORY

## LIFE AT WAR

When Union and Confederate soldiers set off to war in 1861, both sides expected it to last only a short time. They soon realized that the struggle would not be settled quickly, and that they would have to adapt to long years of war.

As in most wars, much of what the soldiers did was boring or uncomfortable—training for battle, securing food, idling with their fellow soldiers, and marching. Soldiers far preferred these daily activities, however, to the deadly horrors they faced from battle and disease.

Scarcity of clothing was also a problem, especially for the Confederates because of the Union blockade. It was common to see Confederate soldiers barefoot or wearing the blue uniforms taken from Union soldiers killed in battle. See **1**.

Technological advances changed the way the war was fought. While both sides relied on older weapons such as knives, bayonets, and muskets at the start of the war, rifles became more common as the war progressed. The greater range and accuracy of rifles enabled defenders to cut down attacking troops with terrible efficiency. See **2**, **3** and **4**.

Medical care on the battlefield was crude. Surgeons routinely cut off injured arms and legs of wounded soldiers. Without medicines to fight infection, minor wounds often became infected. Diseases like pneumonia and malaria killed more men than guns or cannons. See **5** and **6**.

The armies survived mainly on hard tack, a kind of biscuit that, with bacon and coffee, was the main part of the soldiers' diet. See **7** and **8**.

By the war's end, more than 600,000 people had died—the greatest number of Americans ever to die in a war. Four of every ten men who went off to the Civil War were killed or wounded.



**December 13,  
1862**  
*Battle of  
Fredericksburg*

**May 1-4,  
1863**  
*Battle of  
Chancellorsville*

**July 1-3  
1863**  
*Battle of Gettysburg*

**July 4,  
1863**  
*Vicksburg surrenders*

**November 19,  
1863**  
*Lincoln presents  
Gettysburg Address*

**1863**

**1864**

## 3 The Tide of War Turns

### SECTION PREVIEW

#### Objectives

- 1 Analyze the importance of the Lee's victories at Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville.
- 2 Explain how the Battles of Gettysburg and Vicksburg turned the war in the North's favor.
- 3 Describe the importance of 1863 and the message of the Gettysburg Address.
- 4 **Key Terms** Define: Battle of Fredericksburg; Battle of Chancellorsville; Battle of Gettysburg; Pickett's Charge; siege; Gettysburg Address.

#### Main Idea

Despite southern victories at Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville, the tide of war turned in the summer of 1863, when the North won important battles at Gettysburg and Vicksburg.

#### Reading Strategy

**Reinforcing Key Ideas** Write the headings *Gettysburg* and *Vicksburg* on a sheet of paper and take notes about each battle as you read. When finished reading the section, write briefly about why each battle was important in turning the tide of the war.

**T**he Emancipation Proclamation may have renewed enthusiasm for the war among some Northerners, but it had little effect on the battlefield. When General George McClellan delayed in following up on his victory over Robert E. Lee at the Battle of Antietam, Lincoln again removed the general from command.

### Victories for Lee

In November 1862 the President named General Ambrose Burnside to replace McClellan. Sadly for Lincoln, Burnside was better known for his thick whiskers, the origin of the term "sideburns," than for his skills as a military strategist. He soon proved that his poor reputation was justified.

**The Battle of Fredericksburg** Knowing that McClellan had been fired for being too cautious, Burnside quickly advanced into Virginia. His plan was simple—to march his army of some 122,000 men straight toward

Richmond. In response, Lee massed his army of nearly 79,000 at Fredericksburg, Virginia, on the south bank of the Rappahannock River. Lee spread his troops along a ridge called Marye's Heights, behind and overlooking the town.

Incredibly, instead of crossing the river out of range of the Confederate artillery, Burnside decided to cross directly in front of Lee's forces. "The enemy will be more surprised [by this move]," he explained. Lee was surprised only by the poor strategy of Burnside's plan.

Union troops poured across the river on specially constructed bridges and occupied the town. Lee let them cross. He knew that his artillery had the area well covered. Lee believed that if Burnside's army attacked, the Confederate forces could easily deal it a crushing defeat.

On December 13, 1862 the **Battle of Fredericksburg** began. Throughout the day Burnside ordered charge after charge into the Confederate gunfire. Some Union army units lost more than half their men. When the



fighting ceased at nightfall, the Union had suffered nearly 13,000 casualties. Confederate losses were just over 5,000. A demoralized Burnside soon asked to be relieved of his command.

**The Battle of Chancellorsville** After accepting Burnside's resignation, a worried Lincoln turned to yet another general, Joseph "Fighting Joe" Hooker. The general's plan was to move the Union army around Fredericksburg and attack the Confederates' strong defenses from behind. "May God have mercy on General Lee, for I will have none," Fighting Joe promised.

In late April 1863, Hooker put his plan into action. Leaving about a third of his 115,000-man army outside Fredericksburg, he marched the rest of his troops several miles upriver and slipped across the Rappahannock. Lee soon became aware of Hooker's actions. Confederate cavalry commanded by General J.E.B. "Jeb" Stuart discovered Hooker's force camped about ten miles west of Fredericksburg, near a road crossing called Chancellorsville.

Dividing his forces, Lee sent more than 40,000 Confederate soldiers westward to meet Hooker. About 10,000 troops remained in Fredericksburg. Lee ordered them to build many fires at night, so the enemy across the river would not realize most of the army was gone.

The **Battle of Chancellorsville** began on May 1, 1863. When the Union troops started their march toward Fredericksburg, they suddenly saw Lee's army in front of them. After a brief clash, Fighting Joe ordered them to pull back into the thick woods and build defenses.

The next day, when the Confederates did not attack, Hooker assumed they were in retreat. Instead, Lee had daringly divided his forces a second time. He sent General Stonewall Jackson and 26,000 men on a 12-mile march around the Union army for a late-afternoon attack on its right side. The movement of Jackson's troops was concealed by heavy woods that covered the area.

Again, Hooker was taken by surprise. The only warning was a wave of rabbits and deer that poured into the Union camp moments ahead of the Confederate charge. If darkness had not halted his attack, Jackson would have crushed the Union army.

That night, Jackson and some other officers left the Confederate camp to scout the Union positions for a renewed attack. As they returned, in the darkness some Confederate



*The Last Meeting of Lee and Jackson depicts the two great generals before Lee sends Jackson and his troops to outflank Union forces at Chancellorsville.*  
**Geography**  
*How did the terrain aid the Confederate plan?*

soldiers mistook them for enemies and opened fire. Three bullets hit Jackson, one shattering his left arm so badly that it had to be amputated.

On May 3, with Stuart now leading Jackson's command, the Confederate army completed its victory. On May 5, Hooker's badly beaten troops withdrew back across the river. Chancellorsville was Lee's most brilliant victory, but it was also his most costly one. On May 10, Jackson died of complications from his wounds. Stonewall Jackson was probably Lee's most brilliant general. His popularity with the troops was exceeded only by Lee's. His death deprived Lee of a man he called his "strong right arm."

### **Main Idea CONNECTIONS**

*Why was the death of Stonewall Jackson at the Battle of Chancellorsville a major blow to the Confederate army?*

## **The Battle of Gettysburg**

The crushing defeats at Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville were the low point of the war for the Union. The mood in Washington was dark. Rumors swept the capital that Lincoln would resign as President. Some northern leaders began to talk seriously of making peace with the South. "If there is a worse place than Hell," Lincoln said, "I am in it."

In June 1863 Lee marched his forces northward. The Union blockade and the South's lack of resources were beginning to weaken his army. With all the fighting in Virginia, supplies there had become scarce. Lee hoped to find some in Pennsylvania. More importantly, he





## Battle of Gettysburg, July 1–3, 1863

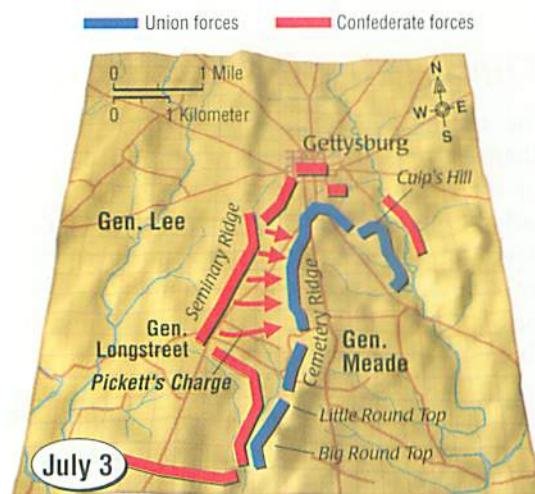
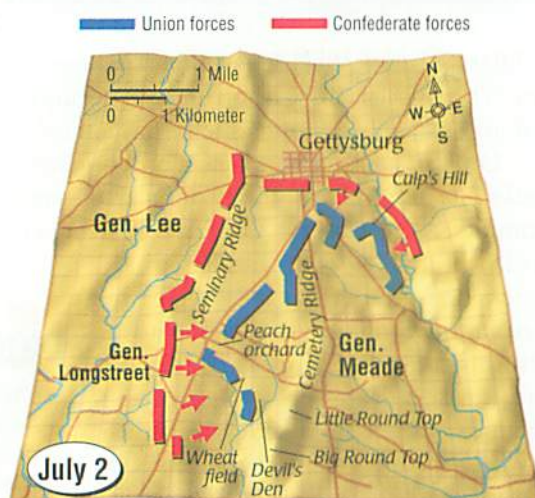
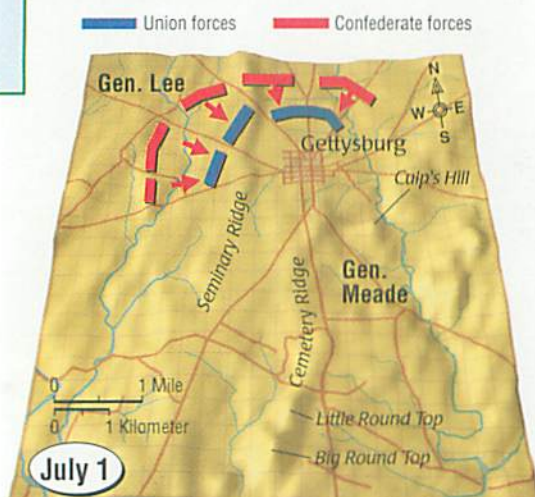


The Battle of Gettysburg was fought over three days. Notice the changes in troop positions over the course of the battle.

### Human-

### Environment

**Interaction** How did each side attempt to use the terrain to gain an advantage?



hoped that a major Confederate victory on northern soil would finally push the Union into giving up the war.

As Lincoln prepared to replace Hooker, the Union army moved north, too, staying between the Confederates and Washington. On July 1, some Confederate troops entered the town of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Many of them were barefoot, and a supply of shoes was rumored to be stored in the town. There the Confederates encountered a unit of Union cavalry and a fight developed. From this skirmish grew the greatest battle ever fought in North America, the three-day **Battle of Gettysburg**.

**July 1, 1863** Hearing the gunfire coming from Gettysburg, units of both armies rushed to the scene. At first, the Confederates outnumbered the Union forces. Fighting through the day, they pushed the Northerners back onto some hills south of town. Meanwhile, troops on both sides continued to gather. Among the Union soldiers to arrive that night was General George Meade, the new head of the Union army. He had been in command for less than a week.

As units arrived, both armies took up positions on a series of hills. Each army's lines stretched from the outskirts of town, in a southerly direction, for about four miles. The center of the Union line was a long hill called Cemetery Ridge. Another series of hills, called Seminary Ridge, was the center of the Confederate position. Between these ridges was a large field several hundred yards wide.

That evening, Lee discussed his battle plan with General James Longstreet, his second-in-command since Jackson's death. Having won the day's fighting, and fresh from his victory at Chancellorsville, Lee's confidence in his troops was high. He proposed to continue the battle the next day. Longstreet advised against attacking such a strong Union position, but Lee had made up his mind. "The enemy is there," said Lee, pointing to Cemetery Ridge, "and I am going to attack him there." He ordered Longstreet to lead an attack on the southern end of the Union line the next morning.

**July 2, 1863** Although a graduate of West Point, Longstreet preferred more peaceful endeavors. An accountant, he wanted to be in charge of the Confederate army's payroll. Lee made him a field commander instead. "Longstreet is a very good fighter when he . . . gets everything ready," Lee said of him, "but he is so slow."



On this second day of the battle, Longstreet was not ready to attack until about 4:00 P.M. His delays gave Meade the chance to bring up reinforcements. The battle raged into the early evening. Heavy fighting took place in a peach orchard, a wheat field, and a mass of boulders known locally as the Devil's Den.

At one point, some Alabama soldiers noticed that one of the hills in the Union position, called Little Round Top, was almost undefended. They rushed to capture the hill. From it, Confederate artillery could have bombarded the Union lines.

However, Union commanders also had noticed Little Round Top's weakness. About 350 Maine soldiers under Colonel Joshua Chamberlain, a college professor before the war, were ordered to defend the position. They arrived on the hill just before the Alabamans' assault and then held off repeated attacks until they ran out of ammunition. Unwilling to give up, Chamberlain ordered a bayonet charge. The surprised Confederates retreated back down the hill. The Maine soldiers' heroic act likely saved the Union army from defeat. At the end of the day, the Union lines remained intact.

**July 3, 1863** The third day of battle began with a brief Confederate attack on the north end of the Union line. Then the battlefield fell quiet. Finally, in the early afternoon, about 150 Confederate cannons began the heaviest artillery barrage of the war. Some Union generals thought the firing might be to protect a Confederate retreat. However, they were wrong. Lee had decided to risk everything on an infantry charge against the center of the Union position. As he had two days before, Longstreet opposed such a direct attack. Again Lee overruled him.

After a two-hour artillery duel, the Union guns stopped returning fire. Thinking that the Confederate artillery had destroyed the enemy's guns, Longstreet reluctantly ordered the direct attack. Actually, the Union artillery commander had ceased fire only to save ammunition. Now, however, northern soldiers on Cemetery Ridge saw nearly 15,000 Confederates, formed in a line a mile long and three rows deep, coming toward them.

Although this event is known in history as **Pickett's Charge**, General George Pickett was only one of three southern commanders on the field that day. Each led an infantry division of about 5,000 men. As the Confederates marched across about a mile of open ground between the two ridges, the Union artillery resumed firing. Hundreds of canister shells rained down on the soldiers, tearing huge gaps in their ranks. When they closed to within about 200 yards of the Union lines, northern soldiers poured rifle fire into those who remained standing.

Only a few hundred Confederates reached the Union lines—at a bend in a stone wall that became known as the Angle. A survivor described the fighting there:

**AMERICAN VOICES**

“Men fire into each other's faces, not five feet apart. There are bayonet-thrusts, sabre-strokes, pistol-shots; . . . men going down on their hands and knees, spinning round like tops, throwing out their arms, falling; legless, armless, headless. There are ghastly heaps of dead men.”

—Soldier at Gettysburg

In about 30 minutes it was over. Scarcely half the Confederate force returned to Seminary Ridge. Lee ordered Pickett to reform his division



Confederate troops in George Pickett's charge at Gettysburg temporarily broke the Union line in the action shown here, at a bend in a stone wall called the Angle. **Science and Technology** How was Pickett's Charge an example of old and new war tactics? How did this combination of warfare result in Confederate defeat?





In order for Grant to capture Vicksburg, navy gunboats under Commander David Porter had to sail past the city at night under heavy fire. "It was as if hell itself were loose," said one observer. The gunboats survived their mad dash past Vicksburg and linked up with Grant's forces south of the city.

**Geography** Why was it important for the Union to capture Vicksburg?

in case Meade counterattacked. "General Lee, I have no division," Pickett replied.

Pickett's Charge ended the bloodiest battle of the Civil War. Losses on both sides were staggering. The Union army of about 85,000 suffered over 23,000 casualties. Of some 75,000 Southerners, about 28,000 were casualties. For the second time, Lee had lost more than a third of his army. The next day, July 4, the Confederates began their retreat back to Virginia.

## Vicksburg

While armies clashed in the East, a Union army in the West struggled to capture the city of Vicksburg, Mississippi. Only this stronghold and a fortress at Port Hudson, Louisiana, prevented the Union from having complete control of the Mississippi River.

Vicksburg seemed safe from attack. It sat on a bluff, high above a sharp bend in the river. From this bluff, Confederate artillery could lob shells at any Union ships that approached the city. In addition, much of Vicksburg was surrounded by swamps. The only approach to the city over dry land was from the east and Confederate forces held that territory.

**Grant Attacks** The Union general who faced these challenges was Ulysses S. Grant. Between December 1862 and April 1863 he made several attempts to either capture or bypass the city.

First, he sent General William Tecumseh Sherman and several thousand troops in an unsuccessful attack on Vicksburg from the north. Next he had his army dig a canal across the bend in the river, so Union boats could bypass the city's guns. However, the canal turned out to be too shallow. Then he tried to attack from the north by sending gunboats down another river. This too failed.

An attempt to approach the city through a swampy backwater called Steele's Bayou nearly ended in disaster. The Confederates cut down trees to slow the boats and fired on them from shore. Finally, Sherman's troops had to come and rescue the fleet.

By mid-April 1863, the ground had dried out enough for Grant to try a daring plan. He marched his army down the Louisiana side of

the river and crossed into Mississippi south of Vicksburg. Then he moved east and attacked Jackson, the state capital. This drew out the Confederate forces from Vicksburg, commanded by General John Pemberton, to help defend the capital. Before they could arrive, Grant captured Jackson. Then he turned his troops west to fight Pemberton.

On May 16 the two armies clashed at Champion's Hill halfway between Jackson and Vicksburg. Although Grant won another victory, he could not trap Pemberton's army. The Confederates were able to retreat back to Vicksburg's fortifications. In late May, after two more unsuccessful attacks, Grant began a **siege**, a tactic in which an enemy is surrounded and starved in order to make it surrender.

**The Siege of Vicksburg** When Union cannons opened fire on Vicksburg from land and water, a bombardment began that would average 2,800 shells a day. For more than a month, citizens of Vicksburg endured a nearly constant pounding from some 300 guns. The constant schedule of shelling took over everyday life.

Residents dug caves in hillsides, some complete with furniture and attended by slaves. "It was living like plant roots," one cave dweller said. As the siege dragged on, residents and soldiers alike were reduced to eating horses, mules, and dogs. Rats appeared for sale in the city's butcher shops.



By late June, Confederate soldiers' daily rations were down to one biscuit and one piece of bacon per day. On July 4, some 30,000 Confederate troops marched out of Vicksburg and laid down their arms. Pemberton thought he could negotiate the best terms for the surrender on the day that celebrated the Union's independence.

## The Importance of 1863

For the North, 1863 had begun disastrously. However, the Fourth of July 1863 was the most joyous Independence Day since the first one 87 years earlier. Thousands of former slaves for the first time could truly celebrate American independence. The holiday marked the turning point of the Civil War.

In the West, Vicksburg was in Union hands. For a time, the people of that city had been sustained by the hope that President Jefferson Davis would send some of Lee's

troops to rescue them. But Lee had no reinforcements to spare. His weakened army had begun its retreat into Virginia, never again seriously to threaten Union soil.

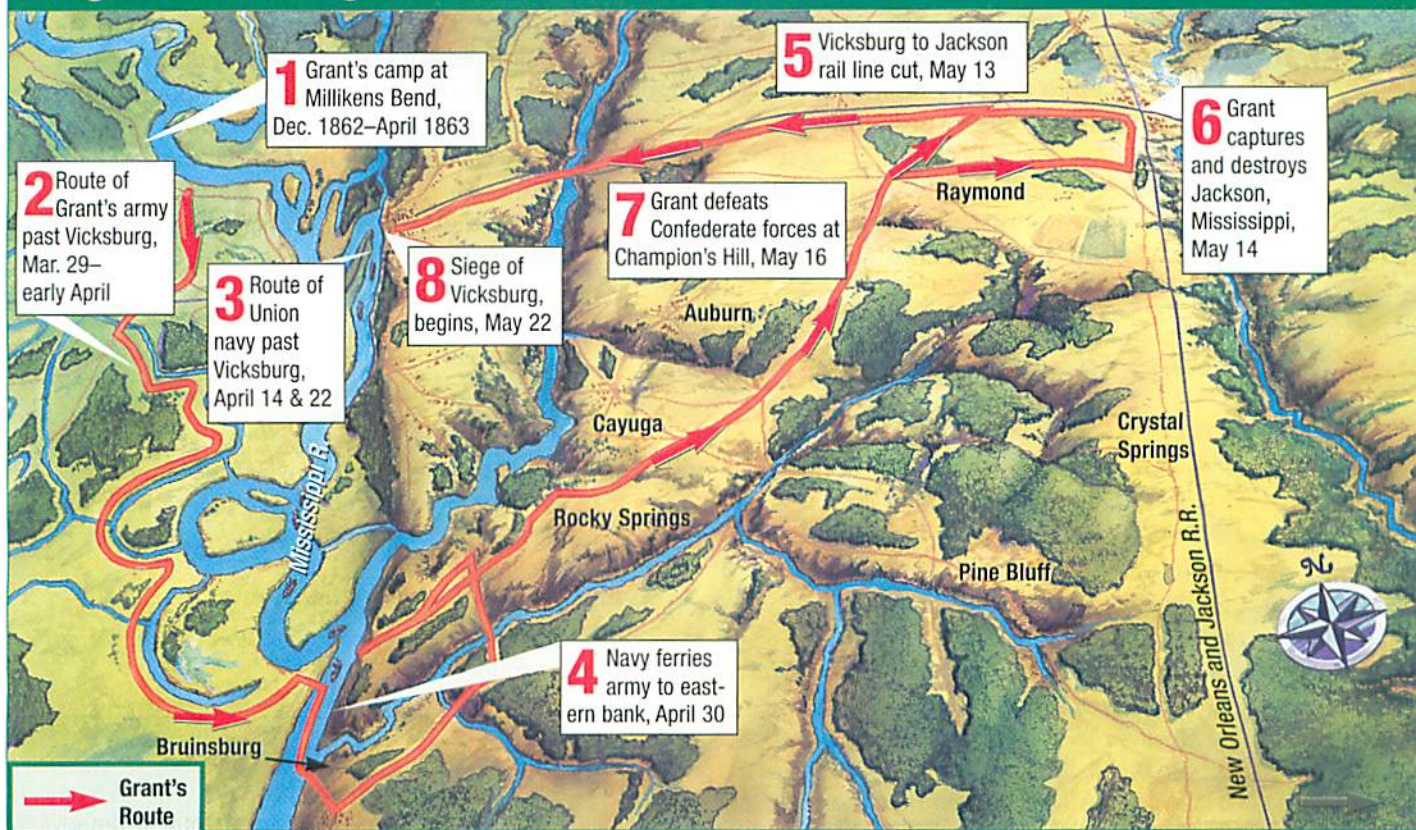
Four days later, Port Hudson surrendered to Union forces. The Mississippi River was in Union hands, cutting the Confederacy in two. "The Father of Waters again goes unvexed [undisturbed] to the sea," announced Lincoln in Washington, D.C.

In Richmond there began to be serious talk of making peace. Although the war would continue for nearly two years more, for the first time the end seemed in sight.

## The Gettysburg Address

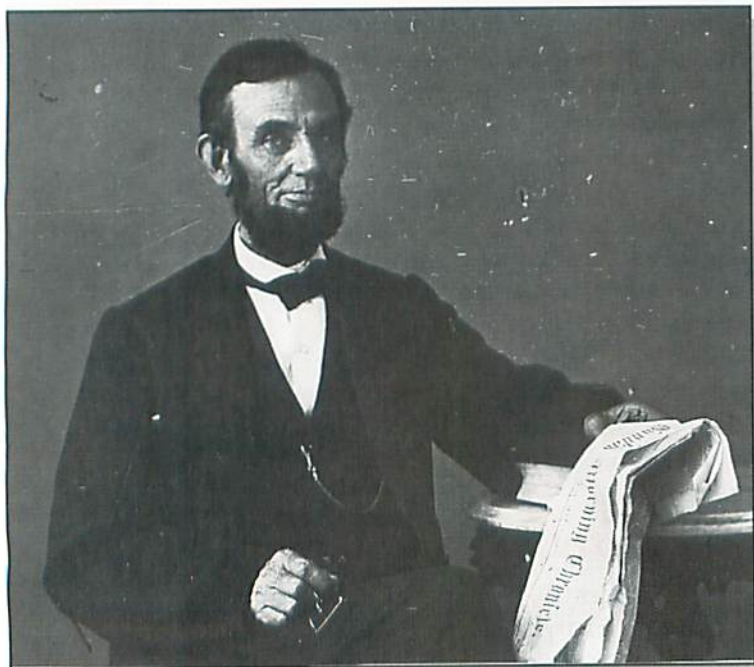
On November 19, 1863, some 15,000 people gathered at Gettysburg. The occasion was the dedication of a cemetery to honor the Union soldiers who had died there just four months before. The featured guest was Edward Everett

### Siege of Vicksburg



Lincoln called capturing Vicksburg "the key" to winning the war. Jefferson Davis considered the city to be "the nailhead that holds the South's two halves together." Grant spent eight months trying to capture it. **Movement** Trace Grant's route on the map and explain the strategy behind it.





"In times like the present," Lincoln said, "men should utter nothing for which they would not willingly be responsible through time. . . ." **Government** How do Lincoln's words at Gettysburg represent his goals in the Civil War?

of Massachusetts, the most famous public speaker of the times. President Lincoln was invited to deliver "a few appropriate remarks" to help fill out the program.

Everett delivered a grand crowd-pleasing speech that lasted two hours. Then it was the President's turn to speak. In his raspy, high-pitched voice, Lincoln delivered his remarks,

which became known as the **Gettysburg Address**. In a short, two-minute speech he eloquently explained the meaning of the Civil War. The speech began simply and ended with a statement that redefined the meaning of the United States:

#### KEY DOCUMENTS

"Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. . . .

[T]hat this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

—Lincoln's Gettysburg Address,  
November 19, 1863

Lincoln spoke with a wisdom ahead of his time. Most Americans in 1863 did not like his speech. They thought it was too short and simple. But in the years since then, people have come to appreciate that Lincoln's words marked a dramatic new definition of the United States. Freedom and equality no longer belonged to a few, as they had in 1776. They were the right of everyone. Democracy and the Union did not exist to serve the interests of only white men. They existed to preserve freedom for all. Lincoln's Gettysburg Address marked a great milestone in the expansion of liberty to all Americans.

## SECTION 3 REVIEW

### Comprehension

- 1. Key Terms** Define: (a) Battle of Fredericksburg; (b) Battle of Chancellorsville; (c) Battle of Gettysburg; (d) Pickett's Charge; (e) siege; (f) Gettysburg Address.
- 2. Summarizing the Main Idea** In what ways were the Battles of Gettysburg and the siege of Vicksburg turning points in the Civil War?
- 3. Organizing Information** Create a chart that details the major battles discussed in this section. In the first column, write the *names of the battles*. In the next column note the important *Confederate officers* for each battle. In the third column note the *Union officers*, and in the last column write if the battle is considered a *Confederate* or *Union* victory.

### Critical Thinking

- 4. Analyzing Time Lines** Review the time line at the start of the section. Write a sentence or phrase that connects each entry to the entry that follows it.
- 5. Identifying Central Issues** Explain how the Gettysburg Address redefined the concept of freedom for Americans.

### Writing Activity

- 6. Writing an Expository Essay** The events of 1863 are considered to be vital in determining the outcome of the Civil War. Write a one-page essay explaining why. Support your essay with specific examples.