

The Civil War Begins

MAIN IDEA

The secession of Southern states caused the North and the South to take up arms.

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

The nation's identity was forged in part by the Civil War.

Terms & Names

- Fort Sumter
- Anaconda plan
- Bull Run
- Stonewall Jackson
- George McClellan
- Ulysses S. Grant
- Shiloh
- David G. Farragut
- Monitor
- Merrimack
- Robert E. Lee
- Antietam

One American's Story

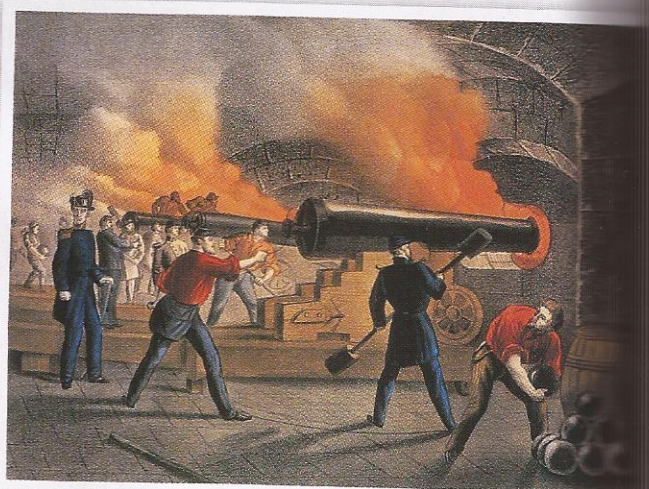
On April 18, 1861, the federal supply ship *Baltic* dropped anchor off the coast of New Jersey. Aboard was Major Robert Anderson, a 35-year army veteran on his way from Charleston, South Carolina, to New York City. That day, Anderson wrote out a report to the secretary of war, describing his most recent command.

A PERSONAL VOICE

ROBERT ANDERSON

“Having defended Fort Sumter for thirty-four hours, until the quarters were entirely burned, the main gates destroyed by fire, . . . the magazine surrounded by flames, . . . four barrels and three cartridges of powder only being available, and no provisions but pork remaining, I accepted terms of evacuation . . . and marched out of the fort . . . with colors flying and drums beating . . . and saluting my flag with fifty guns.”

—quoted in *Fifty Basic Civil War Documents*



▲ Major Anderson (far left) and Fort Sumter's Union troops

The flag that Major Anderson saluted was the Stars and Stripes. After it came down, the Confederates raised their own flag, the Stars and Bars. The confederate attack on Fort Sumter signaled the start of the Civil War.

Confederates Fire on Fort Sumter

The seven southernmost states that had already seceded formed the Confederate States of America on February 4, 1861. Confederate soldiers immediately began taking over federal installations in their states—courthouses, post offices, and especially forts. By the time of Abraham Lincoln's inauguration on March 4, only two Southern forts remained in Union hands. The more important was South Carolina's **Fort Sumter**, on an island in Charleston harbor.

The day after his inauguration, the new president received an urgent dispatch from the fort's commander, Major Anderson. The Confederacy was demanding that he surrender or face an attack, and his supplies of food and ammunition would last six weeks at the most.

LINCOLN'S DILEMMA The news presented Lincoln with a dilemma. If he ordered the navy to shoot its way into Charleston harbor and reinforce Fort Sumter, he would be responsible for starting hostilities, which might prompt the slave states still in the Union to secede. If he ordered the fort evacuated, he would be treating the Confederacy as a legitimate nation. Such an action would anger the Republican Party, weaken his administration, and endanger the Union.

FIRST SHOTS Lincoln executed a clever political maneuver. He would not abandon Fort Sumter, but neither would he reinforce it. He would merely send in "food for hungry men."

Now it was Jefferson Davis who faced a dilemma. If he did nothing, he would damage the image of the Confederacy as a sovereign, independent nation. On the other hand, if he ordered an attack on Fort Sumter, he would turn peaceful secession into war. Davis chose war. At 4:30 A.M. on April 12, Confederate batteries began thundering away. Charleston's citizens watched and cheered as though it were a fireworks display. The South Carolinians bombarded the fort with more than 4,000 rounds before Anderson surrendered. **A**

VIRGINIA SECEDES News of Fort Sumter's fall united the North. When Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers to serve for three months, the response was overwhelming. In Iowa, 20 times the state's quota rushed to enlist.

Lincoln's call for troops provoked a very different reaction in the states of the upper South. On April 17, Virginia, unwilling to fight against other Southern states, seceded—a terrible loss to the Union. Virginia was the most heavily populated state in the South and the most industrialized (with a crucial ironworks and navy yard). In May, Arkansas, Tennessee, and North Carolina followed Virginia, bringing the number of Confederate states to 11. However, the western counties of Virginia were antislavery, so they seceded from Virginia and were admitted into the Union as West Virginia in 1863. The four remaining slave states—Maryland, Delaware, Kentucky, and Missouri—remained in the Union, although many of the citizens in those states fought for the Confederacy.

MAIN IDEA

Analyzing Causes

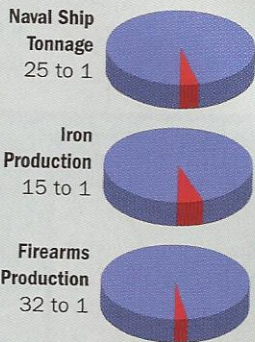
Why did Jefferson Davis choose to go to war?

Most Union troops saw the war as a struggle to preserve the Union.

Most Confederate soldiers fought to protect the South from Northern aggression.

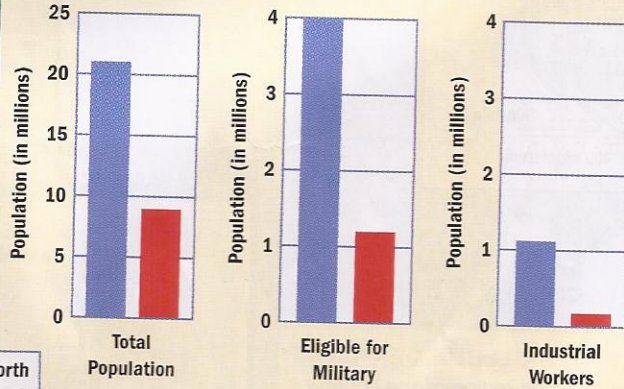
Northern and Southern Resources, 1861

Military Strength



Source: *Times Atlas of World History*, 1989

Population



Source: *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War* (1884-1888; reprinted ed., 1956)

SKILLBUILDER Interpreting Graphs

- Which side—North or South—had the advantage in terms of industrial production?
- What do the overall data suggest about the eventual outcome of the war?

Americans Expect a Short War

Northerners and Confederates alike expected a short, glorious war. Soldiers left for the front with bands playing and crowds cheering. Both sides felt that right was on their side.

UNION AND CONFEDERATE STRATEGIES In reality the two sides were unevenly matched. The Union enjoyed enormous advantages in resources over the South—more fighting power, more factories, greater food production, and a more extensive railroad system. In addition, Lincoln proved to be a decisive yet patient leader, skillful at balancing political factions.

The Confederacy likewise enjoyed some advantages, notably “King Cotton” (and the profits it earned on the world market), first-rate generals, a strong military tradition, and soldiers who were highly motivated because they were defending their homeland. However, the South had a tradition of local and limited government, and there was resistance to the centralization of government necessary to run a war. Several Southern governors were so obstinate in their assertion of states’ rights that they refused to cooperate with the Confederate government. **B**

The two sides pursued different military strategies. The Union, which had to conquer the South to win, devised a three-part plan: (1) the Union navy would blockade Southern ports, so they could neither export cotton nor import much-needed manufactured goods, (2) Union riverboats and armies would move down the Mississippi River and split the Confederacy in two, and (3) Union armies would capture the Confederate capital at Richmond, Virginia.

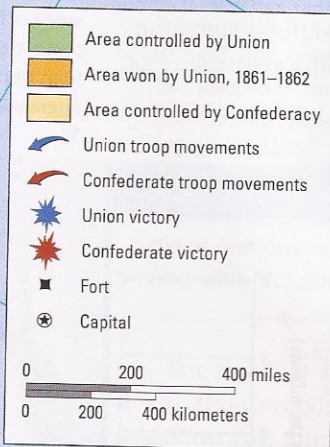
“The die was cast; war was declared . . . and we were all afraid it would be over and we [would] not be in the fight.”

SAM WATKINS,
CONFEDERATE SOLDIER

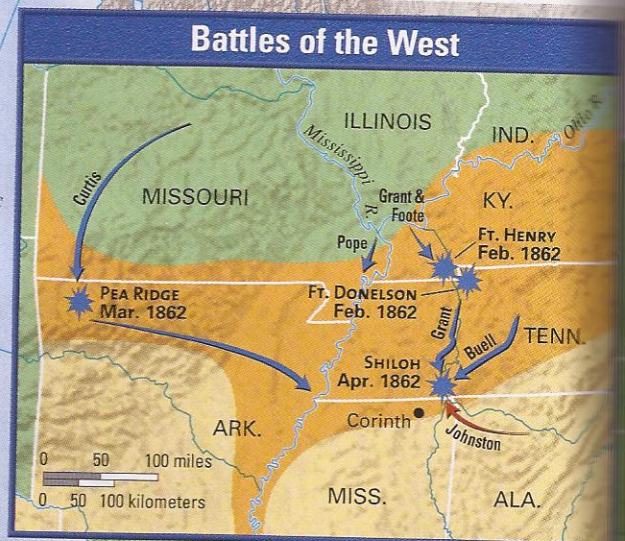
MAIN IDEA

Contrasting
B Contrast the strengths of the North and the South.

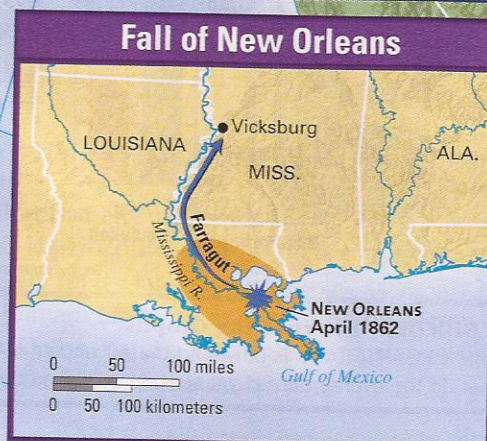
Civil War, 1861–1862



Battles of the West



Fall of New Orleans



GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER

- Region** In which region of the country did Northern forces have the most success?
- Place** In which states did Confederate troops attempt invasions of the North?

Northern newspapers dubbed the strategy the **Anaconda plan**, after a snake that suffocates its victims in its coils. Because the Confederacy's goal was its own survival as a nation, its strategy was mostly defensive. However, Southern leaders encouraged their generals to attack—and even to invade the North—if the opportunity arose.

BULL RUN The first major bloodshed occurred on July 21, about three months after Fort Sumter fell. An army of 30,000 inexperienced Union soldiers on its way toward the Confederate capital at Richmond, only 100 miles from Washington, D.C., came upon an equally inexperienced Confederate army encamped near the little creek of **Bull Run**, just 25 miles from the Union capital. Lincoln commanded General Irvin McDowell to attack, noting, "You are green, it is true, but they are green also."

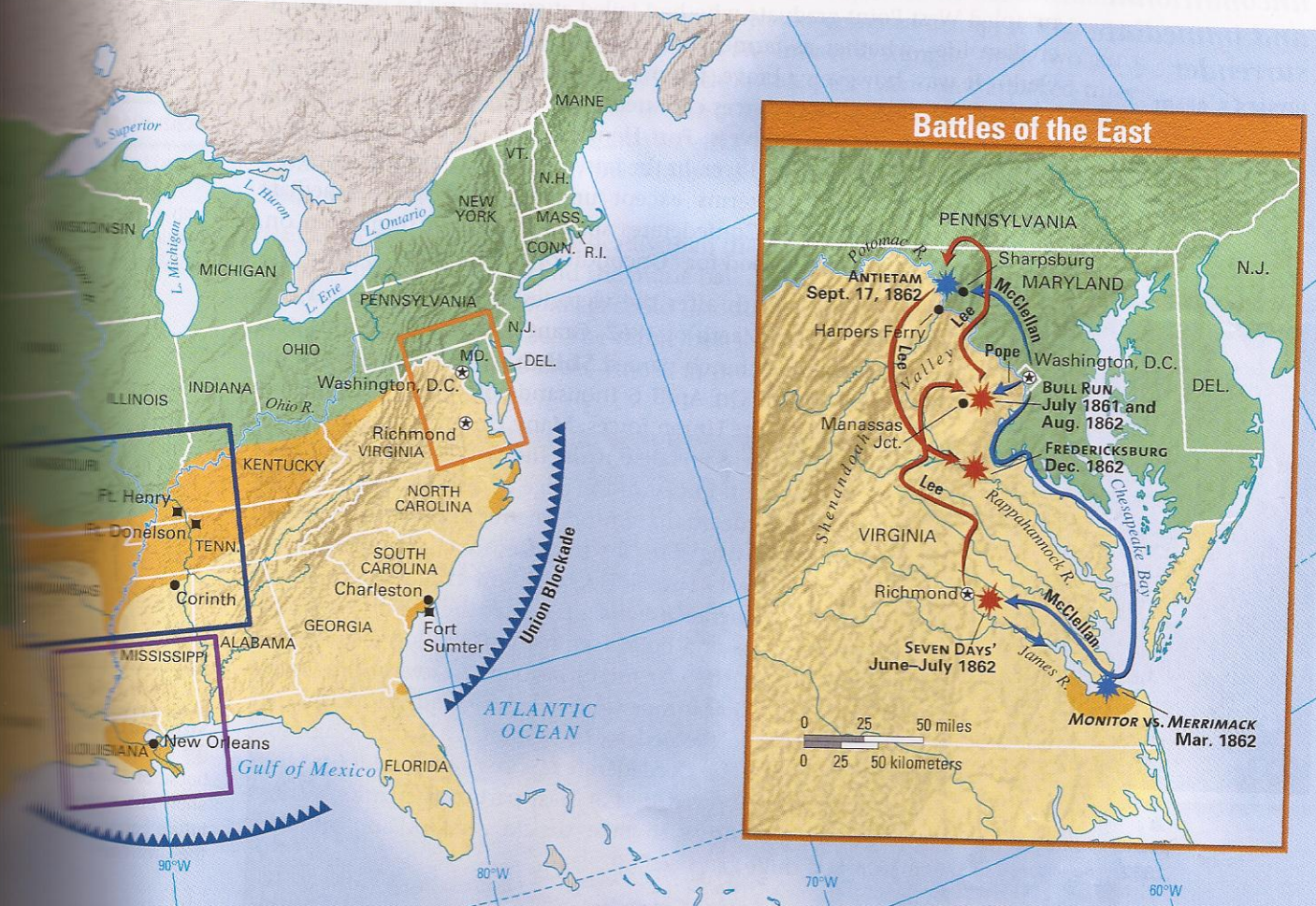
The battle was a seesaw affair. In the morning the Union army gained the upper hand, but the Confederates held firm, inspired by General Thomas J. Jackson. "There is Jackson standing like a stone wall!" another general shouted, originating the nickname **Stonewall Jackson**. In the afternoon Confederate reinforcements arrived and turned the tide of battle into the first victory for the South. The routed Union troops began a panicky retreat to the capital.

HISTORICAL SPOTLIGHT

PICNIC AT BULL RUN

Before the First Battle of Bull Run, the inexperienced soldiers weren't the only ones who expected the war to be a "picnic." In Washington, ladies and gentlemen put on their best clothes and mounted their carriages. Carrying baskets of food and iced champagne, they rode out to observe the first encounter of the war.

The battle did not turn out to be the entertainment viewers expected. When the Confederates forced the Union to retreat, the Northerners were blocked by the carriages of the panicking civilians. After that disaster, no one in the North predicted that the war would be over after just one skirmish.



A newspaper reporter described the chaos at the scene.

A PERSONAL VOICE

“I saw officers . . . —majors and colonels who had deserted their commands—pass me galloping as if for dear life. . . . For three miles, hosts of Federal troops . . . all mingled in one disorderly rout. Wounded men lying along the banks . . . appealed with raised hands to those who rode horses, begging to be lifted behind, but few regarded such petitions.”

—correspondent, *New York World*, July 21, 1861

Fortunately for the Union, the Confederates were too exhausted and disorganized to attack Washington. Still, Confederate morale soared. Bull Run “has secured our independence,” declared a Georgia secessionist, and many Southern soldiers, confident that the war was over, left the army and went home. **C**

MAIN IDEA

Analyzing Effects

C How did Southerners react to the outcome of Bull Run?

Union Armies in the West

Lincoln responded to the defeat at Bull Run by calling for the enlistment of 500,000 men to serve for three years instead of three months. Three days later, he called for an additional 500,000 men. He also appointed General **George McClellan** to lead this new Union army, encamped near Washington. While McClellan drilled his men—soon to be known as the Army of the Potomac—the Union forces in the West began the fight for control of the Mississippi.

“No terms except unconditional and immediate surrender . . .”

ULYSSES S. GRANT

FORTS HENRY AND DONELSON In February 1862 a Union army invaded western Tennessee. At its head was General **Ulysses S. Grant**, a rumped West Point graduate who had failed at everything he had tried in civilian life—whether as farmer, bill collector, real estate agent, or store clerk. He was, however, a brave, tough, and decisive military commander.

In just 11 days, Grant’s forces captured two Confederate forts that held strategic positions on important rivers, Fort Henry on the Tennessee River and Fort Donelson on the Cumberland River. In the latter victory, Grant informed the Southern commander that “no terms except unconditional and immediate surrender can be accepted.” The Confederates surrendered and, from then on, people said that Grant’s initials stood for “Unconditional Surrender” Grant.



▲ Grant, at Shiloh in 1862

SHILOH One month after the victories at Fort Henry and Fort Donelson, in late March of 1862, Grant gathered his troops near a small Tennessee church named **Shiloh**, which was close to the Mississippi border. On April 6 thousands of yelling Confederate soldiers surprised the Union forces. Many Union troops were shot while making coffee; some died while they were still lying in their blankets. With Union forces on the edge of disaster, Grant reorganized his troops, ordered up reinforcements, and counterattacked at dawn the following day. By midafternoon the Confederate forces were in retreat. The Battle of Shiloh taught both sides a strategic lesson. Generals now realized that they had to send out scouts, dig trenches, and build fortifications. Shiloh also demonstrated how bloody the war might become, as nearly one-fourth of the battle’s 100,000 troops were killed, wounded, or captured. Although the battle seemed to be a draw, it had a long-range impact on the war. The Confederate failure to hold on to its Ohio-Kentucky frontier showed that at least part of the Union’s three-way strategy, the drive to take the Mississippi and split the Confederacy, might succeed. **D**

MAIN IDEA

Summarizing

D What did the battle of Shiloh show about the future course of the Civil War?

FARRAGUT ON THE LOWER MISSISSIPPI As Grant pushed toward the Mississippi River, a Union fleet of about 40 ships approached the river's mouth in Louisiana. Its commander was sixty-year-old **David G. Farragut**; its assignment, to seize New Orleans, the Confederacy's largest city and busiest port.

On April 24, Farragut ran his fleet past two Confederate forts in spite of booming enemy guns and fire rafts heaped with burning pitch. Five days later, the U.S. flag flew over New Orleans. During the next two months, Farragut took control of Baton Rouge and Natchez. If the Union captured all the major cities along the lower Mississippi, then Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Tennessee would be cut off. Only Port Hudson, Louisiana, and Vicksburg, Mississippi, perched high on a bluff above the river, still stood in the way.

A Revolution in Warfare

Instrumental in the successes of Grant and Farragut in the West was a new type of war machine: the ironclad ship. This and other advances in technology changed military strategy and contributed to the war's high casualty rate.

IRONCLADS The ironclad ship could splinter wooden ships, withstand cannon fire, and resist burning. Grant used four ironclad ships when he captured Forts Henry and Donelson. On March 9, 1862, two ironclads, the North's **Monitor** and the South's **Merrimack** (renamed by the South as the **Virginia**) fought an historic Duel.

A Union steam frigate, the *Merrimack*, had sunk off the coast of Virginia in 1861. The Confederates recovered the ship, and Confederate secretary of the navy Stephen R. Mallory put engineers to work plating it with iron. When Union secretary of the navy Gideon Welles heard of this development, he was determined to respond in kind. Naval engineer John Ericsson designed a ship, the *Monitor*, that resembled a "gigantic cheese box" on an "immense shingle," with two guns mounted on a revolving turret. On March 8, 1862, the *Merrimack* attacked three wooden Union warships, sinking the first, burning the second, and driving the third aground. The *Monitor* arrived and, the following day, engaged the Confederate vessel. Although the battle was a draw, the era of wooden fighting ships was over. **E**

NEW WEAPONS Even more deadly than the development of ironclad ships was the invention of the rifle and the minié ball. Rifles were more accurate than old-fashioned muskets, and soldiers could load rifles more quickly and therefore fire more rounds during battle. The minié ball was a soft lead bullet that was more destructive than earlier bullets. Troops in the Civil War also used primitive hand grenades and land mines.

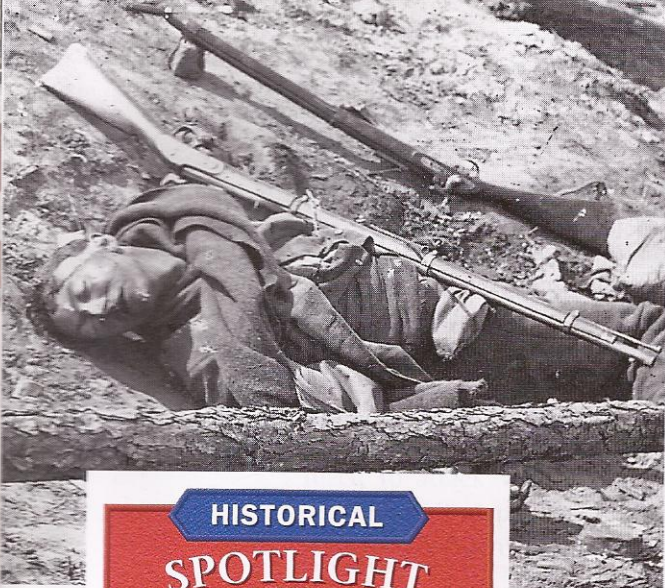
MAIN IDEA

Evaluating

E What advantages did ironclad ships have over wooden ships?



◀ An engagement between the *Monitor* and the *Merrimack*, March, 9, 1862, painted by J. G. Tanner



HISTORICAL SPOTLIGHT

BOYS IN WAR

Both the Union and Confederate armies had soldiers who were under 18 years of age. Union soldier Arthur MacArthur (father of World War II hero Douglas MacArthur) became a colonel when he was only 19.

Examination of some Confederate recruiting lists for 1861–1862 reveals that approximately 5 percent were 17 or younger—with some as young as 13. The percentage of boys in the Union army was lower, perhaps 1.5 percent. These figures, however, do not count the great number of boys who ran away to follow each army without officially enlisting. The young man pictured above was killed at Petersburg, Virginia, shortly before the end of the war.

The new technology gradually changed military strategy. Because the rifle and the minié could kill far more people than older weapons, soldiers fighting from inside trenches or behind barricades had a great advantage in mass infantry attacks. **F**

MAIN IDEA
Analyzing Effects
F How did technology affect military strategy during the Civil War?

The War for the Capitals

As the campaign in the west progressed and the Union navy tightened its blockade of Southern ports, the third part of the North's three-part strategy—the plan to capture the Confederate capital at Richmond—faltered. One of the problems was General McClellan.

Although he was an excellent administrator and popular with his troops, McClellan was extremely cautious. After five full months of training an army of 120,000 men, he insisted that he could not move against Richmond until he had 270,000 men. He complained that there were only two bridges across the Potomac, not enough for an orderly retreat should the Confederates repulse the Federals. Northern newspapers began to mock his daily bulletins of "All quiet on the Potomac," and even the patient Lincoln commented that he would like to "borrow McClellan's army if the general himself was not going to use it." **G**

MAIN IDEA
Contrasting
G Contrast Grant and McClellan as generals.

"ON TO RICHMOND" After dawdling all winter, McClellan finally got under way in the spring of 1862. He transported the Army of the Potomac slowly toward the Confederate capital. On the way he encountered a Confederate army commanded by General Joseph E. Johnston. After a series of battles, Johnston was wounded, and command of the army passed to **Robert E. Lee**.

Lee was very different from McClellan—modest rather than vain, and willing to go beyond military textbooks in his tactics. He had opposed secession. However, he declined

an offer to head the Union army and cast his lot with his beloved state of Virginia.

Determined to save Richmond, Lee moved against McClellan in a series of battles known collectively as the Seven Days' Battles, fought from June 25 to July 1, 1862. Although the Confederates had fewer soldiers and suffered higher casualties, Lee's determination and unorthodox tactics so unnerved McClellan that he backed away from Richmond and headed down the peninsula to the sea.

ANTIETAM Now Lee moved against the enemy's capital. On August 29 and 30, his troops won a resounding victory at the Second Battle of Bull Run. A few days later, they crossed the Potomac into the Union state of Maryland. A resident of one Potomac River town described the starving Confederate troops.

A PERSONAL VOICE MARY BEDINGER MITCHELL

"All day they crowded to the doors of our houses, with always the same drawing complaint: 'I've been a-marchin' and a-fightin' for six weeks stiddy, and I ain't had n-a-r-thin' to eat 'cept green apples an' green cawn, an' I wish you'd please to gimme a bite to eat.' . . . That they could march or fight at all seemed incredible."

—quoted in *Battle Cry of Freedom*

At this point McClellan had a tremendous stroke of luck. A Union corporal, exploring a meadow where the Confederates had camped, found a copy of Lee's army orders wrapped around a bunch of cigars! The plan revealed that Lee's and Stonewall Jackson's armies were separated for the moment.

For once McClellan acted aggressively and ordered his men forward after Lee. The two armies fought on September 17 beside a sluggish creek called the **Antietam** (ăn-tē'təm). The clash proved to be the bloodiest single-day battle in American history. Casualties totaled more than 26,000, as many as in the War of 1812 and the war with Mexico combined. Instead of pursuing the battered Confederate army and possibly ending the Civil War, however, McClellan, cautious as always, did nothing. Though the battle itself was a standoff, the South, which had lost a quarter of its men, retreated the next day across the Potomac into Virginia.

On November 7, 1862, Lincoln fired McClellan. This solved one problem by getting rid of the general whom Lincoln characterized as having "the slows." However, the president would soon face a diplomatic conflict with Britain and increased pressure from abolitionists.



▲ Lincoln and McClellan confer at Antietam in 1862.

SECTION 1

ASSESSMENT

1. TERMS & NAMES For each term or name, write a sentence explaining its significance.

- Fort Sumter
- Anaconda plan
- Bull Run
- Stonewall Jackson
- George McClellan
- Ulysses S. Grant
- Shiloh
- David G. Farragut
- Monitor
- Merrimack
- Robert E. Lee
- Antietam

MAIN IDEA

2. TAKING NOTES

For each month listed below, create a newspaper headline summarizing a key Civil War battle that occurred. Write your headlines in a chart like the one shown.

1861	
Month	Headline
• April	
• July	
1862	
Month	Headline
• February	
• April	
• September	

CRITICAL THINKING

3. HYPOTHESIZING

What if Virginia had not seceded from the Union in 1861? Speculate on how this might have affected the course of the war. Support your answer with examples. **Think About:**

- Virginia's influence on other Southern states
- Virginia's location and its human and material resources
- how the North's military strategy might have been different

4. DRAWING CONCLUSIONS

What do you think were General McClellan's major tactical errors? Support your response with details from the text.

5. EVALUATING DECISIONS

Do you think Lincoln's decision to fire McClellan was a good one? Why or why not?