

## AP United States History

### Unit 5: The Nation Divided and Reunited

#### Topic- The Civil War- Part 2 of 2

## The Civil War- Phase Two: A War for a New Birth of Freedom

1. Explain how Lincoln's leadership during the Civil War impacted American ideals over the course of the war.

a. Lincoln and most Union supporters began the Civil War to preserve the Union, but Lincoln's decision to issue the Emancipation Proclamation reframed the purpose of the war and helped prevent the Confederacy from gaining full diplomatic support from European powers. Many African Americans fled southern plantations and enlisted in the Union Army, helping to undermine the Confederacy.

b. Lincoln sought to reunify the country and used speeches such as the Gettysburg Address to portray the struggle against slavery as the fulfillment of America's founding democratic ideals.

### The Gettysburg Address

*Four score 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.*

*Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.*

*But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate -- we can not consecrate -- we can not hallow -- this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us -- that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion -- that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain -- that 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.*

*Abraham Lincoln  
November 19, 1863*

It should be ironic to us today to consider that the Gettysburg Address was given to dedicate a national cemetery to honor the fallen Union soldiers who had died in the Battle of Gettysburg, one of the major turning points in the war and on that day, Lincoln himself, was actually not the featured speaker. He was supposed to just deliver a few brief remarks, in fact, his invitation was merely a formality. More or less, Lincoln on that day, was an afterthought. But, in less than two minutes, he perfectly summarized the meaning of the great conflict that had divided the nation and inspired the modern United States that would arise from the ashes of the war to begin the process of becoming what its founding fathers had promised.

## **A War for a New Birth of Freedom**

The second phase of the Civil War would be characterized by the following: key Union victories which turned the tide of the war in 1863, the presence of African-American troops who would fight bravely for the balance of the conflict, the development of the first total war in the history of modern warfare, and the leadership of Abraham Lincoln. During the summer of 1863, the Union would defeat the largest and most powerful Confederate army in the field at the Battle of Gettysburg. The very next day, Grant and his Union army in the West would capture the important Confederate stronghold of Vicksburg, and with it, the Union took control of the Mississippi River—splitting the Confederacy in two. After the Emancipation Proclamation was issued, hundreds of thousands of former slaves left their southern plantations and most critically, more than 200,000 of them would join and serve bravely in the Union armies. But, the pivotal moment when the war began to come to a conclusion began in 1864, with the re-election of Abraham Lincoln to the presidency and with it, the introduction of total war by the Union armies that would be led by both Ulysses S. Grant and William T. Sherman.

As 1863 dawned, the major Confederate army in the East, led by Robert E. Lee had defeated one Union commander of its major army in the field in the East after another. However, the Confederacy embarked on a major gamble as it invaded the North for a second and final time—mostly to relieve the pressure that was being placed on the Confederate stronghold of Vicksburg, Mississippi, by Ulysses S. Grant and his Union army in the West. In the greatest military engagement ever fought on American soil, the Union in the East defeated the major Confederate army in the field at the Battle of Gettysburg from July 1-3, 1863. On July 4, 1863, as the major Confederate army in the East was retreating back into Virginia, Grant's forces finally overwhelmed the defenders of Vicksburg and captured the city. After the Battle for Chattanooga in the fall of 1863, the Union was poised under William T. Sherman to invade the Confederate heartland (Georgia and the Carolinas), while Grant moved into the East to take control of the Union army that would set out to capture the Confederate capital of Richmond, Virginia, and to destroy the largest Confederate army in the field.

While issuing the Emancipation Proclamation helped to allay an interest that a major European power might have in assisting the Confederate war effort, throughout 1863 and into 1864, it would have another profound impact on the conflict. After it was issued, African-American slaves began to desert their plantations as Union armies made their way deeper into the South. This development was important because it took away a chief component of the southern labor force and it turned more than 200,000 former African-American slaves into brave Union troops who now fought for their freedom and for that of their families. African-American troops would fight bravely in engagements throughout the South. Their bravery would have another crucial result—it would lead to the creation of a series of Constitutional amendments in the years following the war which would abolish slavery (the 13th amendment, 1865), define them as citizens of the United States for the very time (the 14th amendment, 1868), and grant African-American freedmen, the right to vote for the first time, too (the 15th amendment, 1870). But, while African-American troops would become a key ingredient in the Union war effort, it was the development of total war and the re-election of Lincoln in 1864 which would eventually bring the conflict to a conclusion.

In 1864, the American Civil War would enter its final full year. By the early summer of 1864, Grant and Sherman had assumed the command of the two major Union armies in the field. For the very first time, cities, towns, and important geographical locations were not the primary objectives for the Union armies in the field. Instead, their primary objectives were twofold: to subdue the two major Confederate armies that remained in the field and to destroy the capacity of the South to continue to wage the war. Throughout the summer of 1864, the Union armies led by Grant and Sherman—despite staggering casualties—continued to press the major Confederate armies in the field, as Grant's Union army would begin the process of capturing the Confederate capital of Richmond by laying siege to (surrounding) the important railway center of Petersburg, Virginia, and Sherman's Union army captured the important railway hub and center of trade, Atlanta, Georgia. These victories enabled Lincoln to be re-elected to the presidency in the fall of 1864. It also unleashed a torrent of destruction. As Union

armies moved throughout the South, these forces destroyed farms, livestock, homes, railways, businesses, roads, bridges, and factories. This process of total war, made war on civilians and brought an end to the ability of the South to continue to wage the war. It would also influence the conduct of the future World Wars I and II which were fought in the early and mid-twentieth century.

But, in the end, it was the leadership of Lincoln that would influence both the course and conduct of the conflict and also, bring it to a conclusion. It was not easy. Just days after the major Union victory at Gettysburg, riots over the drafting of young men into the war rocked New York City in the summer of 1863. Mainly started by Irish-Catholic immigrants who were angered and fearful of the fact that the African-Americans slaves in the South, if freed, might compete with them for jobs, this series of riots were so violent that troops were required to put them down. Lincoln had to contend with a nominal Democratic Party which wanted the war to come to an end and the nation to return to the status quo before 1861. He had to deal with horrific losses on the battlefield throughout the summer of 1864. He even had to deal with the tragic death of one of his own children. Plus, he had to win re-election during the midst of the Civil War. Through it all, it was the vision and determination of Lincoln, the soldiers who served in the Union armies and the people of the North who threw their unyielding support behind the war in its final months in early 1865, which would bring it to a conclusion. Upon assuming the presidency for the final time, Lincoln, in his second inaugural address once again, spoke directly to the South, blaming them for the war and its impending destruction.

*“On the occasion corresponding to this four years ago all thoughts were anxiously directed to an impending civil war. All dreaded it ~ all sought to avert it. While the inaugural address was being delivered from this place devoted altogether to saving the Union without war, insurgent agents were in the city seeking to destroy it without war ~ seeking to dissolve the Union and divide effects by negotiation. Both parties deprecated war but one of them would make war rather than let the nation survive, and the other would accept war rather than let it perish. And the war came.”*

But, Lincoln, in his final major speech, did something else, too. He inspired the nation to bring the war to a conclusion with a complete victory for the Union and gave every American a glimmer of hope for a lasting peace with a unified nation by saying–

*“With malice toward none with charity for all with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right let us strive on to finish the work we are in to bind up the nation’s wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan ~ to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.”*

On April 13, 1865, the Civil War came to an end as Ulysses S. Grant accepted the surrender of the major Confederate force still left on the field of battle. But, the very next evening, on April 14, 1865, Lincoln himself was assassinated, becoming one of the final casualties of the Civil War. The death of Lincoln, left the nation to move forward toward reconciliation and peace, but without perhaps its greatest political leader to oversee the crucial process of reconstruction.