

History
UNFOLDING

GETTYSBURG

AN HISTORIC TURNING POINT



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MindSparks
CHALLENGING STUDENTS TO THINK HISTORICALLY

Contents

Introduction	2
Lesson 1	The Road to Gettysburg.....	4
Lesson 2	Lee's Desperate Gamble	8
Lesson 3	The Final Horror	12
Lesson 4	Gettysburg: A Turning Point.....	16
Appendix	Image Close-ups	21

Gettysburg: An Historic Turning Point

Introduction

Gettysburg and the Civil War

In one sense, this booklet is about a turning point within a larger turning point. That larger event, the Civil War itself, transformed the nation. For four years, it divided states, communities, even families. It dominated every aspect of life. And its impact was felt for decades. In fact, we still live in its aftermath.

Within that great conflict, several key moments could be considered key “turning points,” at least in terms of the war itself—the Battle of Antietam, the announcement of the Emancipation Proclamation, the fall of Atlanta, etc. Yet in comparison to these events, the Battle of Gettysburg still stands out. It was the most daring attempt the South would make to force the Union to compromise and accept Southern independence. It followed the great Confederate victory at Chancellorsville. With frustration in the North building, President Lincoln could not be sure people there were fully committed to his goals of preserving of the Union and ending slavery. A decisive victory on Northern soil might have generated panic within the Union and convinced Great Britain to side with the Confederacy. History could well have taken a different turn had events gone Lee’s way as his men approached Gettysburg on the morning of July 1, 1863.

It is difficult to tell the story of this enormous battle clearly with just twelve illustrations. But the twelve we have chosen highlight, in chronological order, most of the key moments before, during, and after the battle. The illustrations are presented in four lessons. Each lesson uses three of the illustrations to explore one broad topic in the overall story. Briefly, the four lessons are as follows:

The Road to Gettysburg

The illustration in this lesson set the Battle of Gettysburg in context and call attention to the overall strategy behind Lee’s decision to invade the North.

Lee’s Desperate Gamble

The first day of battle left the two sides facing each other across two ridges south of the town. Lee hoped to attack both Union flanks, to the south and north, thereby squeezing its line together and forcing a surrender. It might well have worked. But for a variety of reasons, it failed.

The Final Horror

On the final day, Lee ordered one last attack, this one directly into the center of the Union line. The result was “Pickett’s Charge,” one of the most desperate, deadly, and heroic moments of the war. The Union line again held. The Battle of Gettysburg was over.

Gettysburg: A Turning Point

Lee’s successful retreat to Virginia allowed his army to fight again. But his chance for a decisive breakthrough had passed. The illustrations here focus on the outcome of the battle and the impact of Lincoln’s famous Address commemorating it.

Using Photos, Cartoons, and Other Visuals to Teach History

Many textbooks are full of colorful visuals. However, all too often these visuals function primarily as window dressing. They make the text more entertaining, or at least more palatable. Only occasionally do the visuals in textbooks do more than offer simple pictorial reinforcement of ideas already presented in the text. In many cases, they pander to the visual orientation of the young while doing little to help young people master the challenges of the visual media that dominate their lives.

By way of contrast, our approach to using visual materials emphasizes their unique strengths as historical documents. The lessons in this booklet focus students on the visual symbols and metaphors in editorial cartoons, the dramatic qualities of certain photographs, the potential of many images to make abstract ideas more specific and concrete, the implicit biases and stereotypes in certain images, their emotional power, and their ability to invoke the spirit of a time and place. In the process, we make every effort to strengthen students' visual literacy skills in general, as well as their ability to think critically and engage in spirited but disciplined discussions.

How to Use This Booklet

The booklet is divided into four lessons, with three illustrations per lesson. Each lesson consists of the following:

A BACKGROUND INFORMATION SHEET This page provides brief summaries explaining the three illustrations on which the lesson is based and their relevance to the lesson's objectives.

DIGITAL IMAGES The booklet's PDF allows you to project the images for use in your class discussions.

DISCUSSION-ACTIVITY SHEETS

Each sheet displays one illustration. It includes a sequence of questions to help you plan an all-class discussion while using the projected images. The questions take students step by step through an analysis of the illustration. If you wish, you may reproduce these pages and hand them out. In addition to the discussion questions on the illustration itself, one or two follow-up activities are suggested. Some of these can be made into individual assignments. Others will work best as small-group or all-class activities.

*Gettysburg: An Historic Turning Point***OBJECTIVES**

1. Students will better understand the South's overall objectives in planning to invade and fight in the North in 1863.
2. Students will understand how Lee planned to fight and win the Battle of Gettysburg.

The Road to Gettysburg

“Brave Men, Living and Dead”

Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION**Illustration 1**

The Battle of Gettysburg began on July 1, 1863. By then, the Civil War was already two years old. Southern soldiers had often out-fought the North. Yet the South's Confederacy was at a big disadvantage from the start. It had fewer people than the North. And it was much poorer. It is true that Confederate troops were brave and determined. But they were also ill-fed and ill-clothed. In this illustration, some of them have removed their shoes and pants to ford a stream. Shoes especially were closely guarded. At times, some soldiers had to go without them. Scenes such as this must have been common in June of 1863 as the South's Army of Northern Virginia headed north toward Pennsylvania.

Illustration 2

As he led his army North, Confederate General Robert E. Lee had several goals. His army was short of supplies. He hoped to resupply and live off the rich, fertile Pennsylvania farmland for a time. He also hoped to lure the Union's Army of the Potomac into a decisive battle. A big victory in the North might convince Great Britain to aid the Confederates. And it might further divide Northern public opinion. For by then, many Northerners longed for a quick settlement of the war. This Northern editorial cartoon shows that people in that region were not all united behind President Abraham Lincoln. The cartoon mocks Lincoln, picturing him as telling jokes while the Union's brave soldiers were fighting and dying.

Illustration 3

By late June, Lee's forces were north and northwest of Gettysburg. Lee is on the left here. When he learned that the Army of the Potomac was after him, he turned back southward toward Gettysburg. Meanwhile, Union forces, under General George G. Meade, on the right, were moving north toward the town. The map shows key points on the Gettysburg battlefield. Fighting started northwest of the town on July 1. Union troops were soon forced back through the town, up Culp's Hill, and down along Cemetery Ridge. The next day, General Lee decided to attack the Union from the north and from across the Emmitsburg Road. He spread his troops down along Seminary Ridge west of that road. On July 2 and 3, the battles in the Peach Orchard, the Devil's Den, Culp's Hill and elsewhere, would be among the bloodiest of the entire Civil War.

Lesson 1 – The Road to Gettysburg

Illustration 1



From Robert U. Johnson and Clarence C. Buel, eds, *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, Vol. 3. (Century Company, New York, 1884)

Discussing the Illustration

1. This scene shows Confederate soldiers on a journey north in the summer of 1863. Why were the soldiers of the South called “Confederates?”
2. As you can see, the Confederates are taking off their shoes as they prepare to cross a stream. Why do you suppose they were so worried about keeping their shoes in good condition?
3. Several different armies made up the forces of both the North and the South during the Civil War. The soldiers you see here on their way north in June of 1863 were part of the South’s most important army. Can you name that army? And can you name the general in charge of it?
4. By late June, the Army of Northern Virginia was on its way from Virginia to Maryland and across that state’s border into Pennsylvania. In other words, it was making its way into Northern territory. From what you know about the Civil War, why do you think Lee decided to take his troops north in June of 1863?

Follow-up Activities

1. In the spring of 1863, General Robert E. Lee, with key help from “Stonewall” Jackson, achieved a major military success against the North at the battle of Chancellorsville. Read more about this battle. Now, prepare a report to President Abraham Lincoln on it. Describe the South’s success at Chancellorsville, and explain why it might lead General Lee to think he could succeed at whatever he had planned as he headed north into Maryland and Pennsylvania.
2. Pretend you are a Confederate soldier in the above drawing. You recently fought at Chancellorsville. Now you’re headed North, though you’re not sure where or why. Read more about Chancellorsville. Now, write a long letter home, perhaps to your parents, perhaps to your wife or a sister or brother. In the letter, explain your thoughts and hopes for the near future. Also, talk about ordinary events, such as eating, sleeping, passing the time, talking with your fellow soldiers, etc.

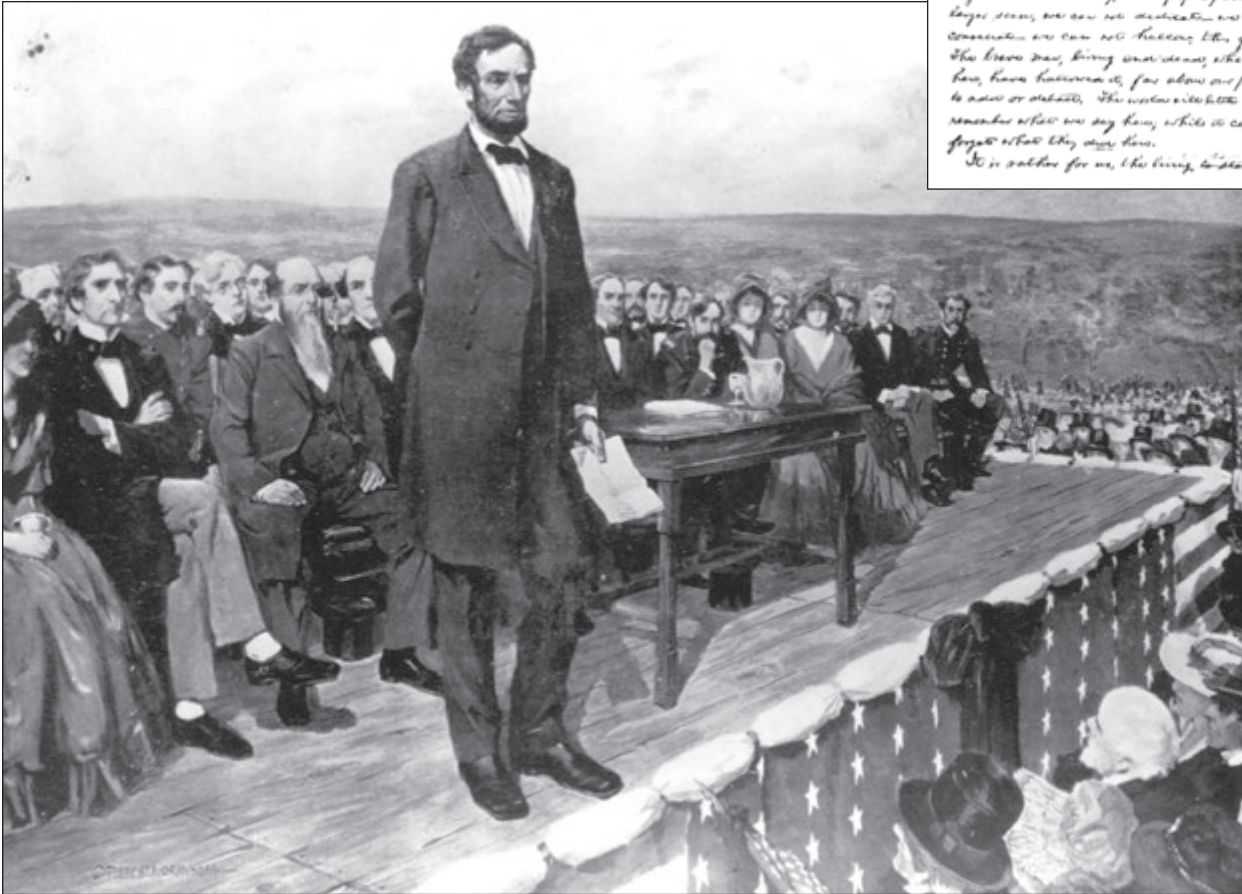
Gettysburg: A Turning Point Illustration 3

Executive Mansion,

July 4.

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth, upon 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 it, as a final resting place for those who here have given the noblest lives. This we do, in a great city. But, in a larger sense, we can dedicate our lives, our souls, our bodies, our brains, our strength, our honor, our sacredness, our destinies, our selves to the service of this nation. It is rather for us, the living, to dedicate



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