# Choices Under Fire

How strategy, leadership, and resources shaped three Civil War battles

**SS24.US1.12a** "Compare the military strategy, leadership, and resources of the United States and the Confederate States of America, and evaluate how these factors shaped the outcomes of key battles."

NAME _____ DATE _____

## 1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

**YOUR JOB** Underline each commander's military choice, circle each advantage or shortage in resources, and number the outcomes of the three battles. Use your marks to compare why the battles ended as they did.

### Three Battles, Different Decisions

1. In September 1862, Confederate general Robert E. Lee crossed into Maryland, hoping to gather supplies and win support for the South. Union general George B. McClellan had more soldiers and found a copy of Lee's plans, yet he attacked in separate waves rather than using his full force at once. At Antietam, Confederate troops defended their positions through terrible losses. Lee then withdrew to Virginia. The battle did not destroy his army, but the Union stopped his invasion. That outcome gave President Lincoln the opening to announce the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, making the war against slavery a stated Union aim.

2. In July 1863, Lee again took the war north, hoping a victory in Pennsylvania would weaken Northern support for the conflict. At Gettysburg, Union general George G. Meade kept his army on strong high ground. Lee ordered attacks against that position, including Pickett's Charge on the third day. Union defenders, backed by artillery and a larger army, broke the assault. Lee withdrew to Virginia with heavy losses. Both sides suffered greatly, but the Confederacy had fewer people and fewer industrial resources to replace men and equipment. Meade's defensive choices and Lee's costly attacks helped make Gettysburg a major Union victory.

3. At the same time, Union general Ulysses S. Grant targeted Vicksburg, Mississippi, a Confederate stronghold on the Mississippi River. Union gunboats and a larger supply network helped Grant move troops along the river. He then marched inland, defeated Confederate forces in several battles, and surrounded Vicksburg. Confederate general John C. Pemberton could not break the siege or get enough food to his troops and civilians. He surrendered on July 4, 1863. Unlike Lee's attacks at Gettysburg, Grant's campaign isolated an enemy army before forcing its surrender. After another river fortress fell days later, Union control of the river split the Confederacy and disrupted east-west supply routes.

## 2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. At Antietam, how did McClellan's choices limit the advantage of his larger army, and what outcome did the Union still achieve?

2. At Gettysburg, how did Meade's and Lee's decisions interact with the Union's resources to shape the battle?

3. At Vicksburg, how did Grant use Union resources differently from Pemberton, and why did Pemberton surrender?

4. Compare the Union approaches at Gettysburg and Vicksburg. How did each approach help produce a different outcome?

## 3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 75 to 95 word advisory note to a Confederate commander before either Gettysburg or Vicksburg. Propose one different military choice, then explain how Union leadership, strategy, and resources could still limit its effect. Do not claim your change would guarantee victory.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 10 · SS24.US1.12a

## PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each commander's military choice, circle each advantage or shortage in resources, and number the outcomes of the three battles. Use your marks to compare why the battles ended as they did. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

## PART 2 · ANSWERS

| # | QUESTION | ANSWER |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | At Antietam, how did McClellan's choices limit the advantage of his larger army, and what outcome did the Union still achieve? | **McClellan attacked in separate waves instead of using his full force at once. The Union stopped Lee's invasion but did not destroy his army.** |
| 2 | At Gettysburg, how did Meade's and Lee's decisions interact with the Union's resources to shape the battle? | **Meade held strong high ground while Lee ordered attacks against it. Union artillery and a larger army helped repel the assaults, leaving Lee with heavy losses.** |
| 3 | At Vicksburg, how did Grant use Union resources differently from Pemberton, and why did Pemberton surrender? | **Grant used gunboats and a larger supply network to move troops, then surrounded Vicksburg. Pemberton could not break the siege or obtain enough food, so he surrendered.** |
| 4 | Compare the Union approaches at Gettysburg and Vicksburg. How did each approach help produce a different outcome? | **At Gettysburg, Meade defended strong ground and repelled Lee's attacks. At Vicksburg, Grant isolated Pemberton's army in a siege that ended in its surrender.** |

## PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

General Lee, do not order another direct assault on Meade's high ground at Gettysburg. Instead, withdraw and look for ground that makes the Union army move before you fight again. Meade's decision to defend strong ground, along with his larger army and artillery, makes a frontal attack especially costly. A withdrawal might save soldiers and equipment that the Confederacy cannot easily replace. Yet Meade could refuse to leave his position, and Union resources would still favor his army. This change might reduce losses without producing a Confederate victory.

Accept other plausible changes supported by passage details. The note should explain both the proposed choice and why Union leadership, strategy, or resources could limit its effect.