



## Civil War 150 — Battle and Proclamation

- Profiles: Cast of Characters
- Activity: Compose Historical Questions: Meet a Cast of Characters
- Discussion Questions: Confederates Gain Confidence at Harpers Ferry
- Discussion Questions: When a Creek Turns Red
- New York Times Review Reprint: “Brady’s Photographs”
- Discussion Questions: Reading the Emancipation Proclamation
- Map: Legality of Slavery
- Answers: Reading the Emancipation Proclamation
- Answers: Confederates Gain Confidence at Harpers Ferry
- Answers: When a Creek Turns Red



## An Integrated Curriculum For The Washington Post Newspaper In Education Program

*Cast of characters*

BY MICHAEL E. RUANE

**George W. Smalley**

The New York Tribune reporter wrote a sweeping first-person account of the Battle of Antietam that historians consider the Civil War's greatest single piece of journalism. Smalley, a former lawyer with poor eyesight, headed a team of four Tribune reporters covering the battle. As the fighting ended, he hurried by horse and train to New York, writing his story by oil lamp. When he arrived at 5 a.m. on Sept. 19, 1862, the presses were waiting, and the Tribune had his account on the street two days after the battle.

**Dr. Jonathan Letterman**

The medical director of the Union's Army of the Potomac became one of the fathers of modern battlefield medicine in 1862, bringing order to the bloody chaos of the combat zone. After the Battle of Antietam, he helped organize the removal of thousands of wounded soldiers. He also helped establish and staff nearby military hospitals, including two 1,000-bed tent camps. It was "a great deal of labor," he wrote later. "But it was done, and done promptly and well."

**Alexander Gardner**

The pioneering photographer, while in the employ of fellow photo trail blazer Mathew B. Brady, reached Antietam shortly after the fighting and took history's first pictures of dead Americans on the battlefield. His photographs mesmerized the public when they were exhibited in Brady's gallery in New York. "There is a terrible fascination . . . that draws one near these pictures," the New York Times wrote at the time, and one is "chained by the strange spell that dwells in dead men's eyes."

**Gen. Philip Kearny**

A dashing, one-armed Union officer, he was a member of a wealthy New York family. Although Kearny inherited a fortune after the death of his grandfather, he was bent on a military career and joined the Army. He lost his left arm during the Mexican-American War. A superb division commander, he was killed at the Battle of Chantilly, Sept. 1, 1862. In an earlier battle, he is said to have encouraged his troops by shouting, "Don't worry, men, they'll all be firing at me!"

## An Integrated Curriculum For The Washington Post Newspaper In Education Program

*Cast of characters*

BY MICHAEL E. RUANE

**Mary Ann  
"Mother"  
Bickerdyke**

The widowed "botanic physician" went to the war early and served Union soldiers for the duration — as a nurse, nutritionist, organizer and enemy of red tape. Dedicated to the welfare of the common Billy Yank, she became chief of nursing under Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, was present for 19 battles and got as close to the fighting as she could. Once asked by what authority she acted, she replied, "the authority of Lord God Almighty."

**William B.  
Mumford**

A citizen of New Orleans, he was hanged June 7, 1862, on the orders of federal Gen. Benjamin F. Butler for tearing down a U.S. flag that had been raised as the city was being occupied by federal forces. Outraged, Confederate President Jefferson Davis decreed that Butler, "an outlaw and common enemy of mankind," be hanged if he was ever captured. He never was, and later, as a powerful congressman, Butler helped author civil rights and anti-Ku Klux Klan legislation.

**Henry David  
Thoreau**

The antislavery transcendentalist and author of "Walden" died of tuberculosis on May 6, 1862, in Concord, Mass., his words eclipsed by the tumult of the war. Sickened by slavery, he had written in 1854, "I dwelt before . . . in the illusion that my life passed somewhere only *between* heaven and hell, but now I cannot persuade myself that I do not dwell *wholly within* hell. . . . It is not an era of repose. We have used up all our inherited freedom. If we would save our lives, we must fight for them."

**Ambrose E.  
Burnside**

The bewhiskered Union general replaced his old friend, Gen. George B. McClellan, when the latter was fired as commander of the Army of the Potomac after the Battle of Antietam. Burnside, for whom a bridge on the battlefield is named, had twice before refused command, saying that he did not feel up to the job. This time he reluctantly accepted. Three months later he directed the army in its disastrous defeat at Fredericksburg, and was himself replaced.

[ruanem@washpost.com](mailto:ruanem@washpost.com)

## COMPOSE HISTORICAL QUESTIONS

# Meet a Cast of Characters

Many questions surround the Civil War and the social, political and economic conditions leading to it. What insights do people who lived in this time period provide today's students? Who faced the challenges? Who solved the problems? Finding the answers to these considerations can provide fascinating and demanding research.

**Write a question about an aspect of the Civil War or the period leading up to it.**

**Now that you have composed a question, begin your research. Select one of the individuals listed below. Read more about this individual. Online resources are provided to help you begin the search.**

Mary Ann "Mother" Bickerdyke

<http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/entry.php?rec=32>

Ambrose E. Burnside

<http://www.civilwar.org/education/history/biographies/ambrose-burnside.html>

Alexander Gardner

<http://www.civilwar.org/education/history/biographies/alexander-gardner.html>

<http://www.nps.gov/anti/photosmultimedia/gardnerphotos.htm>

Gen. Philip Kearny

<http://www.arlingtoncemetery.net/kearny.htm>

Dr. Jonathan Letterman

<http://www.civilwar.org/education/history/biographies/jonathan-letterman.html>

William B. Mumford

<http://onslowcountyconfederates.wordpress.com/tag/william-b-mumford/>

George W. Smalley

<http://www.historynet.com/george-smalley-reporting-from-battle-of-antietam.htm>

Henry David Thoreau

<http://transcendentalism.tamu.edu/authors/thoreau/>

**Answer the question you composed about this time period. Include aspects of the individual's life to illustrate the response to the question.**

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

# Confederates Gain Confidence at Harpers Ferry

Read “Confederate victory at Harpers Ferry set the stage for Antietam” by Washington Post reporter Joel Achenbach. Answer the following questions.

1. Locate Harpers Ferry on a map. What geographic features influenced settlement there (and its name)?
2. Why would Harpers Ferry be a strategic place to position a Union garrison?  
FYI: A garrison is a military post where troops live and work.
3. A graduate of West Point, General Robert E. Lee was a keen strategist. What was his plan for Harpers Ferry?
4. How long did the fight for Harpers Ferry last?
5. Why was the garrison so easily taken?
6. Why is the Union commander, Gen. Dixon Miles, not captured?
7. When Gen. Lee received word that the Union commanders had not been vacated the garrison at Harpers Ferry to counter his troops northern movement, he was prepared to end his Maryland campaign. What does this indicate about Lee's leadership?
8. Messengers arrived at Lee's headquarters in Sharpsburg. What good news was brought?
9. In what important manner did this message from Jackson influence Lee's decision?
10. Achenbach uses various sources for his informative article. How do these add credibility and accuracy?
11. What questions do you have about the encounter and its aftermath at Harpers Ferry?

# When a Creek Turns Red

Read “Antietam’s bloody, defining day” to learn about a September day when Union and Confederate forces faced each other in a quiet farm setting. Before the day would end, the creek ran red with the blood of the dead and wounded.

1. Post reporter Michael E. Ruane begins his article with a description. What is the primary image? How does it serve to move the reader between present and past?
2. How many generals and soldiers were killed on September 17, 1862?
3. Put the one-day battle at Antietam Creek into perspective. How does it compare with other military engagements of U.S. forces?
4. What is “friendly fire”?
5. Discuss the expectations of Lee toward Maryland and the Marylanders’ response to the Confederate troops.
6. Places on the battlefield take on special significance. Tell about actions and associations at each of the following locations:
  - Bloody Lane
  - Burnside bridge
  - The cornfield
  - Dunker church
  - Sunken Road
  - Hagerstown Turnpike fence
7. Alexander Gardner was one of many photographers Mathew Brady hired to record the war. Gardner gained the honorary rank of Captain on the staff of General McClellan. This placed him at the battle of Antietam — and the first of Brady’s group to photograph the dead on the field. Study Gardner’s photograph that accompanies the article. Comment on the story it tells.
8. Antietam is “considered by many historians to be a tactical draw but a vital strategic victory for the North,” writes Post reporter Michael Ruane. Take a stand on the impact of Antietam. Include two quotations from the article to support your point of view.
9. How do readers know that Michael Ruane did considerable research before writing this article? In what way(s) does the variety of sources add to the credibility and accuracy of the writer?
10. Select one of the quotations or scenes related in Ruane’s article. Why do you find this incident or statement to be particularly interesting, moving or insightful?



An Integrated Curriculum For The Washington Post Newspaper In Education Program

# Brady's Photographs: Pictures of the Dead at Antietam

The living that throng Broadway care little perhaps for the Dead at Antietam, but we fancy they would jostle less carelessly down the great thoroughfare, saunter less at their ease, were a few dripping bodies, fresh from the field laid along the pavement. As it is, the dead of the battlefield come up to us very rarely, even in dreams. We see the list in the morning paper at breakfast, but dismiss its recollection with the coffee. There is a confused mass of names, but they are all strangers; we forget the horrible significance that dwells amid the jumble of type ... It is a thunderbolt that will crash into some brain — a dull, dead, remorseless weight that will fall upon some heart, straining it to the breaking. There is nothing very terrible to us, however, in the list, though our sensations might be

different if the newspaper carrier left the names on the battlefield and the bodies at our door instead.

We recognize the battle-field as a reality, but it stands as a remote one. It is like a funeral next door. The crape on the bell-pull tells there is death in the house, and in the close carriage that rolls away with muffled wheels you know there rides a woman to whom the world is very dark now. But you only see the mourners in the last of the long line of carriages — they ride very jollily and at their ease, smoking cigars in a furtive and discursive manner, perhaps, and, were it not for the black gloves they wear, which the deceased was wise and liberal enough to furnish, it might be a wedding for all the world would know. It attracts your attention, but does not enlist your sympathy. But

it is very different when the hearse stops at your own door, and the corpse is carried out over your own threshold — you know whether it is a wedding or a funeral then, without looking at the color of gloves worn. Those who lose friends in battle know what battle-fields are, and our Marylanders, with their door-yards strewn with the dead and dying, and their houses turned into hospitals for the wounded, know what battle-fields are.

Mr. BRADY has done something to bring home to us the terrible reality and earnestness of war. If he has not brought bodies and laid them in our dooryards and along the streets, he has done something very like it. At the door of his gallery hangs a little placard, "The Dead of Antietam." Crowds of people are constantly going up the stairs; follow them, and you find them bending over photographic views of that fearful battle-field, taken immediately after the action. Of all objects of horror one would think the battle-field should stand preeminent, that it should bear away the palm of repulsiveness. But, on the contrary, there is a terrible fascination about it that draws one near these pictures, and makes him loth to leave them. You will see hushed, reverend groups standing around these weird copies of carnage, bending down to look in the pale faces of the dead, chained by the strange spell that dwells in dead men's eyes. It seems somewhat singular that the same sun that looked down on the faces of the slain, blistering them, blotting out from the bodies all semblance to humanity, and hastening corruption, should have thus caught their features upon canvas, and given them perpetuity for ever. But so it is. ...



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS PRINTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS DIVISION

Alexander Gardner photograph of Confederate dead by a fence on the Hagerstown road, Antietam

— A Review of a Photography Exhibit  
*The New York Times*, October 20, 1862

# Reading the Emancipation Proclamation



President Lincoln read his “preliminary proclamation” to his Cabinet in July 1862. Under advice, he withheld it from the public until a Union military victory. After the bloody battle at Antietam, the preliminary proclamation of emancipation was signed and sent for publication. Then on January 1, 1863, the Emancipation Proclamation went into effect.

The five pages of the Emancipation Proclamation have been in the holdings of the National Archives since 1936. Before that, the significant document was in the keeping of the Department of State. Carefully read a transcript of the Emancipation Proclamation of January 1, 1863, found on the National Archives Web site [[http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured\\_documents/emancipation\\_proclamation/](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured_documents/emancipation_proclamation/)].

1. What is a proclamation?
2. What was the purpose of the Emancipation Proclamation?
3. The Emancipation Proclamation has limitations. Name two.
4. What was its effect on the war?
5. Locate on a map the “States and parts of States wherein the people thereof respectively, are this day in rebellion against the United States.” Why do you think Lincoln named these states in the proclamation?
6. Within the document, Lincoln addressed freed slaves. What does he recommend?
7. What gives Lincoln authority to make such a proclamation?

**BONUS.** Read for more answers.

What impact did the Emancipation Proclamation have on citizens and the military in the South?



An Integrated Curriculum For The Washington Post Newspaper In Education Program

## READ THE MAP

## States Reflect Emancipation Proclamation Provision



## Emancipation Proclamation effective

January 1, 1863

Slavery becomes illegal officially throughout most of the South. Border states, Tennessee and parts of Virginia and Louisiana that are under Union control are exempted. It remains unclear whether the Federal armed forces will ever be able to conquer the rebellion and enforce the new law.

An Integrated Curriculum For The Washington Post Newspaper In Education Program

**ANSWERS.** *Reading the Emancipation Proclamation*

1. A proclamation is a formal public announcement.
2. Answers will vary. Should include:
  - The slaves in the rebellious states were declared free.
  - The Executive branch, including the military and naval authorities will recognize and maintain the freedom of these former slaves.
3. Limitations included in the Emancipation Proclamation include:
  - Emancipation only applies to the designated states and parts of states in rebellion.
  - The designated rebellious areas are valid for 100 days.
  - Slavery could continue in the loyal states.
  - If the Union lost, manumission would no longer be valid.
4. Black men were accepted into the Union Army and Navy.
5. As the war's victories and defeats might change the political situation, he made very clear those states which had seceded and areas that were in rebellion at the time emancipation was effective. Manumission applied only in these areas and the District of Columbia.
6. Lincoln recommends that those who have been enslaved should abstain from all violence, unless necessary for self-defense, and should work for reasonable wages.
7. Lincoln is president and must preserve the Union. He is also commander-in-chief. Lincoln's believes emancipation of slaves in the rebellious areas is
  - an act of justice,
  - warranted by the Constitution,
  - a military necessity.

**Bonus:** Answers will vary. They will include: Hesitation or restraint on foreign countries to support the Confederacy, Southerners' anger increased treatment against runaway slaves who were captured, and fewer prisoner exchanges and resulting dismal conditions in POW camps. More plantations and farms fell into disrepair because of runaway slaves.

**ANSWERS.** *Confederates Gain Confidence at Harpers Ferry*

1. The confluence of two rivers (Potomac and Shenandoah), a natural gap in the Blue Ridge Mountains and the meeting of three states (Maryland, West Virginia and Virginia).
2. Harpers Ferry was a gate to the Shenandoah Valley where grains and foods were grown. It is close enough to D.C. to protect the capital of the Union. It was at the upper end of a water route to D.C.
3. Lee planned to cross the Potomac River, taking his forces north. He needed to hold the garrison at Harpers Ferry so Union troops would not cut off his southern route and supplies and attack from the rear.
4. According to sources, it took Stonewall Jackson's forces an hour to take the garrison and capture forces.
5. Answers will vary. Some key points: Stonewall Jackson moved his forces into place quickly. They set up artillery bombardment in seven locations; he surrounded the Union garrison. The garrison lacked long-range artillery ammunition.
6. The Union commander was mortally wounded by "one of the final shells" fired as surrender was confirmed. He is one of the 44 killed in battle.
7. Answers will vary. Lee was an intelligent strategist who was not locked into troop movements. He was willing to change plans in order to maintain troops, keep from loss and reorganize.
8. Stonewall Jackson's troops had taken the garrison at Harpers Ferry with 12,737 Union troops captures.
9. Lee would not retreat to Virginia. The Confederate Army would "make our stand on these hills."
10. Achenbach's sources include eyewitness testimony from Union (losing side) officers and a respected Civil War history book.
11. Questions will vary. Discuss with students where they might find the answers to these questions.

An Integrated Curriculum For The Washington Post Newspaper In Education Program

**ANSWERS.** *When a Creek Turns Red*

1. The cultivated but rocky cornfield as it is today and was on September 17, 1862, where so many died.
2. Three Confederate and three Union generals died. Almost 4,000 men were killed, and 17,000 wounded. Many died of their injuries on the following days.
3. Michael Ruane provides several different ways of demonstrating that “the more than 23,000 killed, wounded and missing on both sides ‘were the highest casualties of any one-day battle in our entire nation’s history.’” This includes Antietam having three times the casualties of D-Day landings in 1944.
4. “Friendly fire” is gunfire on one’s own side or artillery fire of one’s allies. This may cause accidental death or injury.
5. Lee thought the slave state of Maryland would be supportive of his troops. Marylanders thought his troops were a rag-a-muffin group. Although holders of slaves, they were loyal to the Union.
6. Oliver Wendell Holmes described the battlefield: “like a table of some hideous orgy left uncleared, and one turned away disgusted from its broken fragments.” Some of the descriptions and actions will include:
  - Bloody Lane: “a ghastly flooring of the dead”
  - Burnside bridge: “a carnival of death and suffering”
  - The cornfield: “stalks were cut so close to the ground,” “bullets began to clip through the corn,” “regiments chased the rebels into the fields”
  - Dunker church: at the pacifist church soldiers lay dead and dying
  - Sunken Road: lined with bodies; became known as Bloody Lane; Dead Confederates lay so thick there, wrote one Federal soldier, that as far down the road as he could see, a man could have walked upon them without once touching ground.
  - Hagerstown Turnpike fence: “surpassed all in manifest evidence of slaughter” and Gardner “took grisly pictures of a line of dead Louisiana soldiers ... strewn along the turnpike fence”
7. Answers will vary.
8. Answers will vary. Be sure that students support their points of view with two quotations from the article.
9. Ruane includes paraphrases and quotations from interview of scholars and historians, from eyewitness accounts and those who viewed the battlefield after the war, including Oliver Wendell Holmes. His depth and scope of research indicates an attempt to use sources from both sides of the conflict.