**The Battle of Antietam**

The Battle of Antietam (September 17, 1862) was the bloodiest one day battle of the Civil War, claiming over 23,000 American lives. After a string of Confederate victories, General Robert E. Lee wanted to bring the war to the North. Lee also hoped to bring Maryland (a slave state) into the CSA and for British and French recognition with a major victory on northern soil. However, this victory did not happen. While the North and South fought to what can be considered a “draw” with no clear winner, Lee chose to withdraw from Maryland and return to Virginia. Abraham Lincoln saw this as the victory he needed to release the Emancipation Proclamation, thus keeping the British and French, who had abolished slavery, out of the war.

One of the possible reasons for the Union victory at Antietam was “Special Order: Number 191,”a CSA dispatch that contained strategic plans concerning the movements of Lee’s army. According to legend, three Union soldiers discovered a copy of this order in an envelope containing three cigars. The soldiers read the orders and sent them to their commanders where they finally reached Major General George McClellan. Discovering this order allowed the U.S. Army to find Lee in Maryland.

**The Emancipation Proclamation**

After the Battle of Antietam, Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on September 22, 1862. Though often understood as the document that “freed the slaves,” the Proclamation actually said that all slaves in the rebellious states would be freed on January 1, 1863. At that point, all slaves in states that fought with the Union were not freed. Hypothetically, according to this document, if the South had surrendered before January 1, they would have been allowed to keep their slaves. However, Lincoln knew the CSA would not give up, and this document would end slavery once the war was over. It would also be the moral issue that kept other European powers out of the conflict.

**The Battle of Gettysburg**

The battle that many historians believe was the true “turning point” of the Civil War was the Battle of Gettysburg. The battle was fought near the town of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania from July 1-3, 1863. Over 50,000 soldiers were killed on that day. Similarly to the Battle of Antietam, the South had won a series of victories and Lee wanted to again bring the war to the North. This time Lee hoped that a victorious campaign in the North would cause the North to give up and realize that they could not keep the South in the Union. During the battle, Lee’s outnumbered army failed to gain the high ground and the advantage. After three days of heavy losses, the Southern army retreated back to Virginia. Due to the loss of a large portion of Lee’s men, the South never invaded the North again. Combined with U.S. victories in the Western theater that were occurring at the same time, the South was demoralized. After this battle, the North began to put constant pressure on the South and was eventually able to invade and capture the rebellious states.

After the battle, President Lincoln gave one of his most famous speeches: **The Gettysburg Address**. This short, 10 sentence speech offered a rationale for the war and a purpose for why so many men fought and died. This speech is considered one of the most important speeches in American history.

**The Battle of Chickamauga**

For the first three years of the Civil War, Georgia was virtually left untouched. There were a few skirmishes, though the Battle of Fort Pulaski in 1862 led to the North’s control of the Georgia coast and expansion of the Union Blockade of Southern ports. However, the major impact of war arrived on Georgia’s doorstep in 1863, during the Battle of Chickamauga. The town of Chickamauga is located in Walker County just 10 miles south of the Tennessee/Georgia line. The battle lasted three days from September 18-20 and was the second bloodiest battle of the Civil War with over 34,000 casualties.In many historical accounts of the battle it is often said that the name “Chickamauga” is a Cherokee word meaning “river of death.” **The battle was the largest ever fought in the state of Georgia.**

The Generals that led this battle were William S. Rosecrans of the U.S. and Braxton Bragg of the South. This battle was part of a larger Northern objective to capture the city of Chattanooga, itself an important rail center, and **to use its capture as a stepping stone to capture a more important rail road hub: Atlanta.**

While Rosecrans captured Chattanooga earlier that September, he wanted to circle around Bragg’s army and cut the Southern supply lines in Western Tennessee and Northwest Georgia. However, the CSA discovered Rosecrans army in the area and attacked. This battle is significant for two reasons. First it was **the largest Union defeat in the Western theater of the Civil War**. Second, due to the South’s victory, General Bragg focused on recapturing Chattanooga. The **attack on Chattanooga was a southern defeat that brought General Ulysses S. Grant more attention** and led to his promotion to the Commanding General of the U.S. Army. Once Chattanooga was defended and securely in Union hands, it was **used as a launching point for Sherman’s Atlanta Campaign**.

* GA was NOT really hurt in the war until the Battle of Chickamauga
* Battle lasted for 3 days-September 18-20, 1862 and was the 2nd bloodiest battle of the whole war. (over 34,000 causalities)
* LARGEST BATTLE EVER FOUGHT IN THE STATE OF GA
* North General Rosecrans vs. South General Braxton Bragg
* North wanted to capture Chattanooga to capture the railroads and eventually capture ATLANTA
* Chickamauga was the largest NORTHERN DEFEAT (SOUTHERN WIN) in the western part of the fighting BUT…
* Bragg gets overconfident and tries to recapture Chattanooga and LOSES…General Ulysses S. Grant gets noticed and promoted (BAD for the SOUTH)
* The North uses Chattanooga to begin their march towards Atlanta

**The Union Blockade of Georgia’s Coast**

One of the United States’ most important strategies during the Civil War is often called the Union Blockade. Basically, the North’s objective was to use its superior navy to prevent the South from shipping its cotton to England and France in return for weapons and other supplies. The mastermind behind this strategy was **General Winfield Scott and was often called the “Anaconda Plan”** due to its intention of “squeezing” the South to death. Despite the initial criticism, this strategy proved to be a **major factor in the US victory**.

At first, the Union blockade was not successful and almost 9 out of 10 “blockade runners,” private citizens who took the risk of evading the Union blockade for the chance at huge profits, were able to make it to Europe and back. However, things changed dramatically in Georgia when the North destroyed the brick Fort Pulaski with rifled cannon. Once this fort was obliterated the North was able to effectively “bottle up” the important port of Savannah. Though Georgians continued to attempt to sneak past the Union blockade, and build several gun boats, including three “ironclads,” Georgia was unable to deal with the power of the Union navy.

* Blockade: North trying to stop the South from sending cotton/other goods to trade with Europe to get supplies-BLOCK the South from getting its supplies “Squeezing” the South to death
* At first-Blockade was NOT successful…people made tons of money beating the ships and going to Europe anyway
* Turning point for the Blockades-when the North destroys Fort Pulaski in Savannah = WHEN THE NORTH CAPTURES THE PORT OF SAVANNAH BLOCKADE WINS! (\*\*Major defeat for the South\*\*)
* The South still tries to beat the North with gunboats/big ironclad ships but were unsuccessful

**William T. Sherman = “He Who Must Not Be Named”**

To many Georgians, General William T. Sherman’s actions during the Civil War makes him the most hated figure in the state’s history. However, as time has gone by, many historians are re-examining Sherman’s military campaigns and are developing varying viewpoints about the purposes and rationales behind his treatment of the South. No matter if Sherman was a truly a tyrant who reveled in his “mistreatment” of Georgia, or simply a military commander doing his job to swiftly end the war, Sherman’s military campaigns through Georgia left an enormous impact on the history of the state.

**Sherman’s Atlanta Campaign**

Though often called “Sherman’s March through Georgia” or simply “Sherman’s March,” Sherman actually led two separate military campaigns in the state. The first was called the Atlanta Campaign. Beginning in the spring of 1864, Sherman set out to capture Atlanta. **Due to Atlanta’s role as the major** **railroad hub of the South, along with its industrial capabilities**, the capture of the city would bring a mortal blow to the Confederacy. The campaign took almost 4 ½ months and several major engagements took place between the two armies including the Battles of Dalton, Resaca, and Kennesaw Mountain.

The southern army was led by General Joseph Johnston who believed that with his army being out numbered almost two to one, he should use defensive tactics to slow down Sherman’s campaign. He primarily hoped to have his army dig in to defensive positions and lure Sherman into costly head on attacks. However, with the exception of the Battle of Kennesaw Mountain, where the North lost over 2000 men, **Sherman chose to simply go around (“out-flank”) the CSA’s positions and continue to move toward Atlanta forcing the CSA to withdraw from their defensive strongholds.**

As Sherman pushed his army closer and closer to the city, Confederate President, Jefferson Davis, removed Johnston from command and replaced him with **John B. Hood, a general that would attack Sherman’s larger army head-on to protect the city**. Though Hood did as ordered, his attacks were unsuccessful and did not deter Sherman and his movements toward the city. It should be pointed out that there was **not one major battle to take Atlanta but rather several small battles** that eventually allowed Sherman the opportunity to move close enough to the city to bombard it with cannon fire. These battles include the Battle of Peachtree Creek (July 20, 1864), the Battle of Atlanta (July 22, 1864), and The Battle of Ezra Church (July 24, 1864).

**On September 2, 1864, General Hood was forced to withdraw from Atlanta leaving the city open for Union occupation.** Sherman held the city for more than two months planning for what was to be called The March to the Sea. On Nov 15, 1864, Sherman’s army left Atlanta. Whether or not he was solely to blame for the fire that spread through the city as he was withdrawing, or if some of the fires were started by Confederate soldiers or civilians, is a topic that has been debated from almost as soon as it happened. Regardless, as Sherman started his new campaign, the city of Atlanta was left smoldering and in ruins. The capture of Atlanta in September of 1864 was critical not only due to Atlanta’s industrial role for the South, but also because it gave the war weary Union a victory to celebrate and the will power to continue fighting. **With Sherman’s victory, Lincoln was assured a triumph in the 1864 presidential election.**

**Sherman’s March to the Sea**

After leaving the city of Atlanta utterly destroyed, Sherman set his sights on the rest of Georgia. Hoping to end the war as quickly as possible, while punishing the South for starting the war, Sherman began his infamous March to the Sea. The march began on November 15, 1864, and ended on December 21, 1864, with Sherman’s capture of Savannah. Due to the losses the CSA sustained during the battles of the Atlanta campaign, and Hood’s attempt to lure Sherman out of Georgia by marching toward Tennessee, Union troops had an unobstructed path to the Atlantic Ocean.

During the march, Sherman’s army created a path of destruction that was 300 miles long and 60 miles wide. Though it is disputed about how Union soldiers were ordered to behave during the march, many lived off civilian food supplies and took anything of value. Sherman burned buildings and factories, and in some cases destroyed towns. There were only two battles during Sherman’s March to the Sea and the battle of Griswoldville was the most tragic. Sherman’s battle-hardened army was attacked by a force of Georgia militia made up of men too old and boys too young to fight in the regular army. In this battle over 650 of the Georgians were killed in comparison to 62 Union soldiers. In the end, Savannah, not wanting to receive the same bombardment that happened to Atlanta, surrendered to Sherman without a fight on December 22, 1864. Sherman wrote to Abraham Lincoln that Savannah was his Christmas present.

**Sherman and the Atlanta Campaign**

* Sherman = “He Who Must Not Be Named” in GA History-his military campaign had a HUGE impact on the war and the state
* Sherman wanted to capture Atlanta because it was the center for the railroads and it had factories-it would also hurt the South’s feelings big time
* Several major battles including the ones in Dalton, Resaca, and Kennesaw Mountain
* Southern General Johnston tries to play defense but Sherman just went around him
* Johnston gets fired and General Hood replaced him-he tried to attack Sherman head to head and lost many small battles before giving up the city of Atlanta to the Union
* Sherman and his men occupy Atlanta from September 2-November 15, 1864-Atlanta burns to the ground. No one knows who started the fire.

**Sherman’s March to the Sea**

* Created a path of destruction 300 miles long and 60 miles wide
* Sherman and the army burned buildings and factories, stole food and even destroyed entire towns.
* Battle of Griswoldville-Sherman’s army faces a group of old men and boys from GA-650 GA men killed, only 62 Union soldiers killed.
* Savannah surrenders to Sherman to avoid being burned to the ground like Atlanta
* Sherman presents Savannah to Lincoln as a Christmas present.

**Andersonville**

Andersonville Prison is the most notorious prisoner of war camp from the Civil War era. Located in Macon County, the prison’s official name was “Fort Sumter” but became known as Andersonville after a nearby railroad station. Built to hold only 10,000 Union prisoners of war in 1864, the camp’s population tripled to over 30,000 at the peak of its occupancy.

Once the prison began to reach its occupancy limits, the main water source, a small creek that followed through the camp, began to back up with human waste and other sewage. Once this occurred, disease started running rampant throughout the prison. In addition, due to the success of the Union blockade, the south was running low on food and other supplies for the prisoners. Finally, the Union prisoners themselves began to turn on each other and a group of soldiers known as “the raiders” terrorized the fellow prisoners by robbing and beating them. Six of these raiders were later hanged for their crimes. With these horrible conditions more men died (over 13,000) at Andersonville than any other Civil War prison. Due to the awful conditions, Captain Henry Wirz, the commander of the camp, was executed by the North for war crimes. He was the only CSA official to meet this fate.

While some support Wirz’s execution due to the harsh treatment of the Andersonville prisoners and the high death rate, others believed that Wirz did what he could to run the prison with the South’s lack of resources and the decision by his superiors to continue sending prisoners to the already overcrowded camp. The Wirz trial offers teachers a great opportunity to use discussion and debate in the classroom. For example, one strategy that could be used for discussing Wriz’s guilt or innocence is to use a “line of contention.”