

THE BATTLE OF ANTIETAM: SEPTEMBER 17, 1862

Introduction

Ask students to list as many names of people that they know (friends, family, teachers, neighbors, coaches and team members, working people they know from stores, and the community) for a maximum of five minutes.

When the time is up, ask students to count the number of names on their lists. Add up the numbers to produce a total for the entire class; post the lists around the class.

Ask students to compare this total with the 3,600 known battle deaths on a single day, September 17, 1862, during the Battle of Antietam. Formulate as a class questions about how this horrific loss of life could have happened and why.

Vocabulary

abolitionist	divisions
army	emancipation
artillery	flank
batteries	infantry
brigades	pompous
casualty	proclamation
cavalry	regiments
commands	rifled
companies	subordinates
corps	tactical

Mark It on the Map

Have students locate the following: Maryland (Frederick, Hagerstown, Sharpsburg, Antietam, South Mountain); Washington, D.C.; West Virginia (Harper's Ferry); Virginia; Potomac River. Ask students to study the map and ask how a clear Confederate victory at Antietam might have changed the outcome of the Civil War.

Questions for Discussion

- What events led to the Battle of Antietam on September 17, 1862?
- How did the accidental discovery of Lee's Special Order No. 191 change the way George McClellan reacted to Lee's invasion of Maryland?
- How did his participation in the Battle of Antietam change Barton Mitchell's life?
- How did Bloody Lane earn its name? What happened at the Cornfield, Dunker's Church, the West Woods, and Burnside Bridge?
- What was the impact of George Smalley's report from Antietam? How did Alexander Gardner and James Gibson's photographs change the way people reacted to war?
- What problems did Clara Barton and army doctors face when treating huge numbers of wounded soldiers during and after the Battle of Antietam?
- What made Union cannon more accurate than Confederate cannon? How did Confederate artillery affect the outcome of the battle?
- What were the casualties for the Battle of Antietam? Was either army fit to fight after their losses on September 17, 1862?
- Why were Union commanders and President Lincoln dissatisfied with McClellan during and after the Battle of Antietam?
- Some historians say that the Battle of Antietam was the turning point of the Civil War. Why was the battle so important?
- Why did Abraham Lincoln decide to issue the Emancipation Proclamation following the Battle of Antietam? What did the Emancipation Proclamation actually do and why was it so important to African Americans?
- How have citizens in the past honored those who participated and died during the Battle of Antietam? How are today's citizens continuing to honor the sacrifice of those who fought and died in the Civil War?

Think About It

- During the Civil War improved military technology, such as rifled cannon, created more and worse casualties. Medical knowledge, supplies, and organization of field hospitals lagged far behind. Did the gap between the technology to kill and the technology to save lives contribute to the terrible casualties of the Battle of Antietam?
- Lincoln struggled for almost three years as commander-in-chief to find a good commander for the Union army, while the Confederate army had a number of gifted top generals—including Robert E. Lee—providing expert command and leadership from the very beginning of the war. What characteristics make for a good general?

Writing Workout

Students may complete one or more of the following activities:

- Compare Alexander Gardner's photograph of the Confederate dead with the engraving made from the photograph for *Harper's Weekly*. Explain which image has more impact for you and why.
- Select one of the photographs taken at Antietam and write an interior monologue, or stream-of-consciousness paragraph, about what might have been going through Alexander Gardner's mind as he took the photograph.
- Pick one of the following people and write a diary entry describing his or her experiences during the Battle of Antietam: George McClellan, Robert E. Lee, Clara Barton, Alexander Gardner, Johnny Cook, George Smalley.
- Assume the role of the editor of either a Southern or Northern newspaper. Lay out a front page reporting the Battle of Antietam, including headline, map, graphic, and the lead story.

Get Into Art

Students may complete one or more of the following activities:

- Have students select and design a school mascot if there is not one, or redesign the existing school mascot.
- Create a three-dimensional map of the Battle of Antietam.
- Create an organizational chart illustrating the information contained in "What Does It Take to Make an Army?" on page 33.

Play the Part

Abraham Lincoln and George B. McClellan disagreed about whether the Union army should pursue Lee following the Battle of Antietam. Let two students play the parts of Lincoln and McClellan, presenting their respective arguments to the class. Have the remainder of the students write which argument they found most persuasive and why.

Time Line

Create a log book or time line to organize the events of the Battle of Antietam, including the hour at which the incident occurred, the individual or group involved, and the location of the incident.

Virtual History

Students may complete one or more of the following activities:

- Create a computer slide-show presentation about individuals who participated in the Battle of Antietam.
- Visit the National Park Service Web site for the Antietam Battlefield and then design a Web page featuring one activity for children visiting the park (www.nps.gov/anti/home.html).
- Create on a word processor a brochure about points of interest for Civil War enthusiasts visiting western Maryland.

Just for Fun

➤ Make the pinhole camera on pages 24–25, take a series of pictures, and select the best one—writing a caption for it and mounting it for display.

➤ Although the deadline for the “After the Battle” contest has passed, use the guidelines on page 38 for your own class or grade level contest. Desktop publish the winning letters or journal entries and make copies available in each class and the media center.

Follow These Footsteps

Clara Barton

Mathew Brady

Ambrose E. Burnside

Ulysses S. Grant

Ambrose Powell Hill

Joseph Hooker

Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson

Robert E. Lee

Abraham Lincoln

James Longstreet

George B. McClellan

James Ewell Brown “Jeb” Stuart