

THE
CIVIL WAR
 A FILM BY KEN BURNS

ACTIVITY #1

The Union's Grand Strategy

Overview

This activity works well as an introduction to learning about the Civil War. It sets the stage for student understanding of why the war was fought, the objectives and strategies of both sides, and the sectional differences that augmented the debate over the direction of the country. Students will view three video clips from *The Civil War* and analyze a map of the Union's "Grand Strategy" to defeat the Confederacy. Student questions provided here can be used for general class discussion or individual assessment. Answers to the questions are included.

Resources

- Grand Strategy Map (p. 3)
- **Video Clips**
 - [A House Divided](#) (Episode 1, Chapter 5)
 - [Secessionitis](#) (Episode 1, Chapter 7)
 - [A Thousand Mile Front](#) (Episode 1, Chapter 12)

Lesson Standards

McREL

U.S. History

- **Standard 13:** Understands the causes of the Civil War
 - Level II (Grades 5-6)
 - Knows the locations of the southern and northern states and their economic resources (e.g., the industries and small family farms of the industrial North, the agricultural economy and slavery of the South).
 - Level III (Grade 7-8)
 - Understands issues other than slavery that led to the Civil War (e.g., the appeal of the northern "free labor" ideology in preventing the further extension of slavery in the new territories; cultural differences, conflicting economic issues, opposing constitutional perspectives).
- **Standard 14:** Understands the course and character of the Civil War and its effects on the American people

- Level II (Grades 5-6)
 - Understands the technological, social, and strategic aspects of the Civil War (e.g., the impact of innovations in military technology; turning points of the war; leaders of the Confederacy and Union; conditions, characteristics, and armies of the Confederacy and Union; major areas of Civil War combat).
- Level IV (Grade 9-12)
 - Understands military events that influenced the outcome of the Civil War (e.g., the "hammering campaigns" of Generals Grant and Sherman, the wartime leadership of Jefferson Davis and Abraham Lincoln).

Geography

- **Standard 17:** Understands how geography is used to interpret the past
 - Level II (Grades 5-6)
 - Knows the geographic factors that have influenced people and events in the past (e.g., the effects of the site of a Civil War battle on the course of the conflict).

Common Core

Key Ideas and Details

- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2**
 - Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

Craft and Structure

- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.4**
Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.

This activity was written by Michael Hutchison and Greg Timmons.

About the Authors

Michael Hutchison is the social studies department chair at Lincoln High School. Vincennes, Indiana. He has more than 35 years of classroom teaching experience, and has written lessons for several Ken Burns films, including *The Civil War*, *Empire of the Air*, *Horatio's Drive*, *Unforgivable Blackness*, *The War*, *Baseball*, *The Tenth Inning*, *Prohibition*, *The Dust Bowl*, and *The Roosevelts: An Intimate History*. He is past president of the Indiana Computer Educators. In 2014, he was named winner of the Caleb Mills Indiana History Teacher of the Year Award by the Indiana Historical Society. Michael Hutchison is the social studies department chair at Lincoln High School. Vincennes,

Greg Timmons has been a social studies teacher for over 30 years. He has written lessons for several PBS productions including *The NewsHour*, *FRONTLINE*, and various Ken Burns's productions including *The War*, *The National Parks: America's Best Idea*, *Baseball*, *Prohibition* and *The Dust Bowl*. He resides in Montana and Washington state.



Union's Grand Strategy

As envisioned by General George McClellan, the Union grand strategy for defeating the rebellious states called for three simultaneous overland assaults combined with a blockade of southern ports and naval thrusts up and down the Mississippi.

Union Statistics

2.9 million men served
 1.5 million enlisted - 3 years duration
 630,000 casualties
 360,000 killed in action or died of disease

Confederate Statistics

1.2 million men served
 800,000 enlisted - 3 years duration
 340,000 casualties
 250,000 killed in action or died of disease