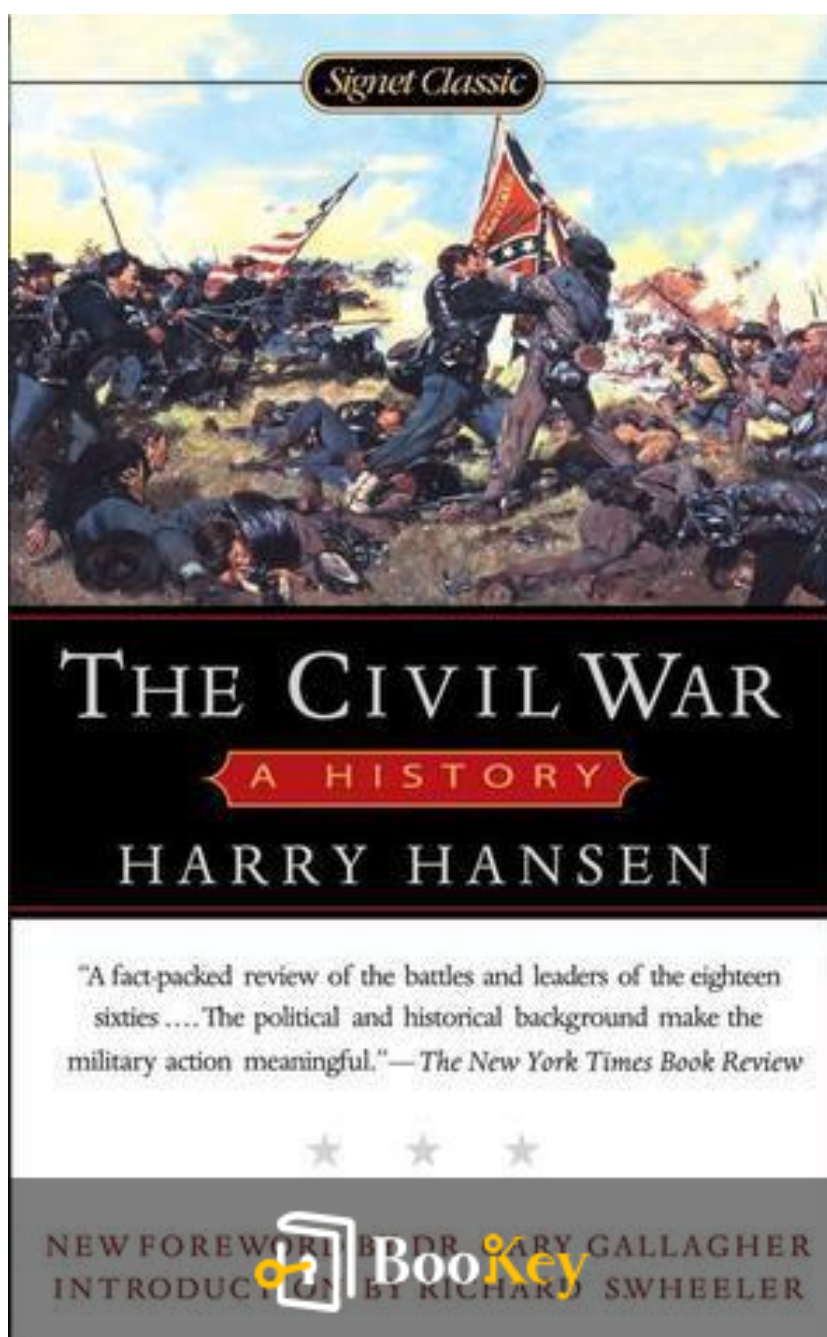


The Civil War By Geoffrey C. Ward PDF (Limited Copy)

Geoffrey C. Ward



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The Civil War By Geoffrey C. Ward Summary

Voices from the Battlefield: A Nation Transformed by Conflict

Written by New York Central Park Page Turners Books Club

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About the book

In "The Civil War," Geoffrey C. Ward offers a comprehensive examination of a defining moment in American history that forever altered the nation's trajectory. The narrative is rich with vivid imagery and powerful storytelling, bringing to life a diverse array of voices. These include influential leaders like Abraham Lincoln, who navigated the complexities of a divided nation, and Frederick Douglass, an escaped slave turned activist, who championed the cause of emancipation. The book also brings to the forefront the experiences of ordinary individuals such as Southern women, soldiers, and civilians from both the Union and Confederacy, illustrating the war's profound impact on all facets of society.

The text explores the origins of the conflict, tracing deep-seated tensions around issues such as slavery and states' rights. It delves into the tumultuous political atmosphere, marked by differing philosophies on governance and human rights, which ultimately culminated in war. A significant theme is the evolution of emancipation, highlighting how perceptions and policies shifted over time, leading to the eventual liberation of millions of enslaved people.

In addition to Ward's compelling narrative, the book is further enriched by essays from leading historians who provide context and analysis, situating the Civil War within broader historical frameworks. As the chapters unfold, they confront both the heart-wrenching tragedies and the remarkable

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triumphs that characterized this era, ultimately portraying the Civil War as a critical junction in America's journey toward realizing its foundational ideals of freedom and equality.

"The Civil War" stands as a profound reflection on the struggles faced by the nation and the transformative ideals that emerged from them, serving as a testament to the enduring legacy of this crucial period in American history.

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About the author

Geoffrey C. Ward is a celebrated author and screenwriter, recognized for his significant contributions to American historical documentaries. His journey began after graduating from Oberlin College in 1962, when he took on the role of an editor at American Heritage magazine. This foundation laid the groundwork for his future collaborations with filmmaker Ken Burns, with whom he co-wrote the renowned miniseries **The Civil War**, a landmark exploration of America's tumultuous history that garnered widespread acclaim.

Following **The Civil War**, Ward continued to work closely with Burns on several prominent projects, including **Jazz** and **Baseball**. This partnership not only showcased American culture and history but also earned them five Emmy Awards, cementing their status as influential figures in documentary filmmaking. Their most recent collaboration, **The War**, aired on PBS in September 2007, offering viewers an in-depth look at the American experience during World War II.

Ward's expertise in historical storytelling further flourished through his work on **The West**, co-written with historian Dayton Duncan, allowing him to explore the rich narratives surrounding the American frontier. Through these various projects, Ward has honed his ability to weave complex historical narratives into compelling visual stories, making history accessible and

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Summary Content List

Chapter 1: The Crossroads of Our Being

Chapter 2: 1861 A House Divided

Chapter 3: W H Y T H E W A R C A M E B Y D O N E. F E H R E N B A C H E R

Chapter 4: 1862 Forever Free

Chapter 5: W H O F R E E D T H E S L A V E S ? B Y B A R B A R A J. F I E L D S

Chapter 6: 1863 The Universe of Battle

Chapter 7: M E N A T W A R : A N I N T E R V I E W W I T H S H E L B Y F O O T E

Chapter 8: 1864 Most Hallowed Ground 239

Chapter 9: W A R A N D P O L I T I C S B Y J A M E S M. M C P H E R S O N

Chapter 10: 1865 The Better Angels of Our Nature 291

Chapter 11: W H A T T H E W A R M A D E U S B Y C. V A N N W
O O D W A R D

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Chapter 1 Summary: The Crossroads of Our Being

INTRODUCTION

The Crossroads of Our Being

The American Civil War began on April 12, 1861, when General P.G.T. Beauregard commanded Confederate troops to fire upon Fort Sumter, signaling the onset of a conflict that would forever change the nation. Initially marked by limited violence, the war escalated into unprecedented bloodshed, shaping the trajectory of American history.

The Magnitude of the Civil War

The Civil War redefined America's social and political landscape, prompting poet Walt Whitman to warn that the full extent of its brutality might never be encapsulated in historical accounts. In the years following the conflict, an astonishing fifty thousand volumes emerged, reflecting an enduring quest to comprehend its intricate layers.

The Endless Questions

This monumental conflict invites a multitude of unanswered queries: What

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motivated Americans to wage war against fellow countrymen? What did it signify to participate in such a struggle? Furthermore, how did the war facilitate the emancipation of four million enslaved individuals? The myriad interpretations and myths surrounding these questions complicate the war's legacy as a cornerstone of American history.

The War's Enduring Legacy

The reverberations of the Civil War continue to shape American culture, influencing national identity and collective memory. Historians assert that a deep understanding of the Civil War is crucial for grasping the essence of the American character, as it represents a pivotal turning point that unlocked new possibilities for the nation.

The Making of This Book

Developed alongside a ten-hour documentary series produced from 1985 to 1990, this book aims to provide a comprehensive narrative of the Civil War through the diverse voices of individuals who lived through it. Personal accounts illuminate the war's profound impact on both individuals and the broader society.

The Scale of the Conflict

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The Civil War's reach extended to nearly every corner of America, with major battles occurring nationwide. Over three million Americans enlisted, resulting in more than 600,000 deaths. Homes turned into makeshift headquarters, and the conflict pervaded daily life, underscoring its intimate and invasive nature.

Complicated Realities

The Civil War is referred to by various names—such as the War Between the States and the Second American Revolution—highlighting its multifaceted character. It culminated in the abolition of slavery and significant political transformation, embodying both horror and heroism in the United States' historical narrative.

Human Cost and Ironies

Amidst the grand narrative, real individuals suffered immense hardships. Personal stories speak to the emotional toll of families divided by ideology. Ironically, figures like Robert E. Lee became iconic despite having previously declined leadership roles offered by the Union.

Civil War Reflections

Renowned author Robert Penn Warren noted that civil wars evoke profound

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emotional complexities, manifesting both individual and national strife. The Civil War arose from a conflict over the concepts of Union and States' Rights, fundamentally redefining freedom in America, as eloquently expressed by President Abraham Lincoln at Gettysburg.

Conclusion

Between 1861 and 1865, Americans endured catastrophic violence that irrevocably transformed the nation, fostering a newfound comprehension of freedom and unity. The legacy of the Civil War continues to resonate, prompting ongoing reflection on the conflicts that shape the American landscape.

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Chapter 2 Summary: 1861 A House Divided

Chapter Two: A House Divided

The Meteor of Change: John Brown's Influence

The chapter opens with a pivotal moment in American history: the murder of Elijah P. Lovejoy, an abolitionist editor, by an anti-slavery mob in Alton, Illinois, on November 7, 1837. Lovejoy's defiance in protecting his newspaper ignited outrage across the Northern states and deeply inspired John Brown, an ardent abolitionist who became committed to the cause of ending slavery. This dedication culminated in his ill-fated raid on Harpers Ferry on October 16, 1859, where he aimed to provoke a slave uprising. Brown's martyr-like determination for abolition resonated with many and intensified the growing sectional tensions in the nation over the issue of slavery.

The Growing Divide: Slavery and Economic Disparities

In the years leading up to the Civil War, the United States was rapidly evolving, with the Northern states embracing industrial growth while the Southern economy remained reliant on agriculture, particularly cotton production, which had surged due to the invention of the cotton gin. As

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slavery became entrenched in the Southern economic system, the North's demographic and industrial expansion increasingly shifted the political balance of power. By 1860, a growing disparity existed, with the North's population and economic clout outweighing that of the South.

Compromises and Conflict

Attempts to quell the rising sectional tensions through political compromises—including the Missouri Compromise of 1820 and the Compromise of 1850—failed to resolve the underlying conflict over slavery. Instead, these efforts often deepened the divide. Prominent abolitionists like David Walker and William Lloyd Garrison rallied for immediate emancipation through pamphlets and public speeches, which provoked the ire of Southern supporters of slavery and further entrenched the positions of both sides.

Political Upheaval: The Rise of the Republican Party

The formation of the Republican Party in the 1850s represented a significant turning point in American politics, emerging as a force against the expansion of slavery. This shift brought new leaders to prominence, most notably Abraham Lincoln. The election of Lincoln in 1860, perceived as a threat by the Southern states, ignited fierce outrage and ultimately prompted South Carolina to be the first state to secede from the Union, triggering a wave of

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secessions across the South.

Secession and the Formation of the Confederacy

In the months following Lincoln's election, seven Southern states declared their secession, uniting to form the Confederate States of America, with Jefferson Davis as their President. Despite the formation of the Confederacy, the Northern states remained resolute in their commitment to preserving the Union, setting a clear path toward civil war.

The Fateful Spark: Fort Sumter

The situation reached a boiling point on April 12, 1861, when Confederate forces bombarded Fort Sumter, marking the official start of the Civil War. In response, Lincoln called for troops to quell the insurrection, further inflaming Southern sentiments and resulting in additional states seceding from the Union.

Expectations of a Quick War

Many on both sides expected a swift resolution to the conflict. This belief was illustrated during the First Battle of Bull Run, where crowds from Washington D.C. gathered to witness what they presumed would be an easy victory for Union forces. However, the Union's unexpected and humiliating

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defeat showcased the complexities and imminent challenges of the war ahead.

Conclusion: The Realization of War

By the close of 1861, the harsh realities of war became undeniable to Lincoln and leaders on both sides. The initial enthusiasm for the conflict was replaced by a sobering acknowledgment of its prolonged and bloody nature, signifying the beginning of a long and arduous struggle that would reshape the nation. This chapter conveys the deepening divide within the country as it transitioned toward a full-blown civil war, setting the stage for the events to unfold in the years to come.

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Chapter 3 Summary: WHY THE WAR CAME BY DON E. F EHRENBACHER

Summary of Chapter 3: Why the War Came

Introduction to Secession

In the weeks leading up to Abraham Lincoln's inauguration on March 4, 1861, the nation faced a growing divide. Jefferson Davis was inaugurated as the President of the newly formed Confederate States of America, a response to Lincoln's election viewed by many Southern leaders as an assault on their way of life, particularly the institution of slavery.

Causes of Secession

While the immediate impetus for secession was slavery, the Southern states also had economic grievances, feeling increasingly reliant on the Northeast. Southern leaders rallied around the idea that Lincoln's presidency would usher in violence and the degradation of their societal structure, reinforcing their justification for disunion through a heightened focus on the preservation of slavery.

Perception of the Republican Party

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To many in the South, the Republican Party represented a radical threat to the established social order. Fears of potential abolitionist policies, including the repeal of fugitive slave laws, created a sense of impending disruption and insecurity among Southern slaveholders. However, the Republican platform, though anti-slavery expansion, did not match the exaggerated fears held by Southern states.

Historical Context of Slavery in the Republic

By the mid-19th century, slavery, which had once played a peripheral role in American politics, became a dominant issue due to the booming cotton economy. This prosperity was met with increasing defensiveness from the South, viewing Northern abolitionists as direct enemies, thereby intensifying regional tensions.

Shift in Political Landscape

The volatile debate over slavery, particularly regarding its expansion into western territories, led to national unrest and violence, especially exemplified by conflicts in Kansas. As reliance on legislative compromise waned, the idea of secession began to gain traction among Southern leaders, demonstrating a shift in political strategy.

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Emergence of the Republican Party

The rise of the Republican Party was spurred by the anti-Nebraska movement and dissatisfaction with traditional political factions. While anti-slavery sentiment was a cornerstone of its identity, the Southern perspective on the party was shaped more by fear than an accurate understanding of its policies.

Southern Reaction to Lincoln's Election

Lincoln's election was perceived by many in the South as a stark reversal from the previously favorable pro-slavery federal government. Fears of an impending abolitionist regime convinced Southern leaders that secession was the only viable option, though opinions differed within the South regarding the urgency of this action.

The Call for Secession

Initiated by South Carolina, the call for secession rapidly gained momentum, leading to the establishment of a Confederate government and the launching of hostilities, such as the attack on Fort Sumter. However, resistance to secession was notable in some upper Southern states, indicating a complex regional landscape that did not uniformly support disunion.

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Conclusion

A confluence of fear, anger, and a strong desire for self-preservation propelled the lower South to rapidly secede following Lincoln's election. This pivotal chapter not only illuminated slavery's central role in driving the movement toward disunion but also set the stage for the impending Civil War, highlighting the profound sectional divides within the nation.

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Chapter 4: 1862 Forever Free

Chapter Four: 1862 - Forever Free

Champagne and Oysters

In early 1862, President Abraham Lincoln was grappling with significant military challenges, particularly the inefficacy of General George McClellan, whose reluctance to engage aggressively with the Confederate forces frustrated both Lincoln and the public. Despite escalating demands for McClellan's dismissal, Lincoln opted to retain him but replaced Secretary of War Simon Cameron with Edwin Stanton, aiming for a more vigorous military strategy. On January 27, Lincoln issued General War Order Number One, orchestrating a unified military advance set for February 22. Unfortunately, early Union operations revealed a lack of decisive action.

McClellan's Peninsular Campaign

March heralded the start of McClellan's Peninsular Campaign, which aimed to take Richmond by navigating the York-James Peninsula, thus avoiding direct conflict. However, logistical blunders, including errors in equipment

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measurements, marred the venture, causing widespread dissatisfaction and casting doubts on McClellan's leadership. Although McClellan's army eventually moved towards Richmond, the Lincoln administration's frustrations continued to mount.

Unconditional Surrender

During this period, the Western front saw Union General Ulysses S. Grant achieving a series of impressive victories, notably the captures of Fort Henry and Fort Donelson. His relentless approach earned him the moniker "Unconditional Surrender Grant," marking a pivotal turn in the war's momentum and improving the Union's strategic outlook.

Ironclads

Technological advancements in naval warfare underscored this era, epitomized by the historic battle between the ironclads Merrimack and Monitor, which ultimately rendered wooden ships obsolete. The Monitor's emergence shifted naval superiority to the Union, signaling a transformative moment for maritime combat.

The Peninsula Campaign Observations

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Throughout the Peninsula Campaign, Union forces wrestled with logistical challenges and strategic hesitations. Confederate General John Bankhead Magruder effectively employed deception to overstate his force's size, thwarting McClellan's advance at Yorktown. Despite Lincoln's urgent pleas for decisiveness, McClellan remained cautious.

Shiloh

The Battle of Shiloh in April emerged as a defining moment, highlighting the war's harrowing brutality. Grant's troops faced an unexpected and ferocious Confederate assault but capitalized on reinforcements to secure victory. Despite the triumph, rising casualty counts sparked scrutiny over Grant's leadership.

New Orleans and Supply Chain Control

Following Shiloh, Union forces achieved further success by capturing New Orleans, effectively crippling a crucial Confederate supply route. Under Admiral David Farragut's leadership, naval forces gained control of vital southern ports, although Vicksburg remained an essential Confederate

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stronghold.

Economic Adjustments and Draft Laws

To sustain their war efforts, both the Union and the Confederacy implemented significant economic measures. The South faced rising discontent over conscription laws, challenging the loyalty of soldiers who felt burdened by the draft, particularly among poorer demographics.

Stonewall Jackson's Valley Campaign

Meanwhile, Confederate General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson demonstrated remarkable military acumen during his campaigns in the Shenandoah Valley, successfully thwarting Union advances and diverting attention from McClellan's operations, illustrating the effectiveness of surprise tactics in warfare.

The Seven Days Battles

The culmination of the Peninsular Campaign led to the Seven Days Battles, where McClellan's forces clashed with General Robert E. Lee's more

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aggressive tactics. McClellan's inability to leverage his numerical advantage resulted in a retreat from the outskirts of Richmond, solidifying Lee's reputation as a commanding strategist.

Second Bull Run

After a series of Confederate victories, including the Second Battle of Bull Run, Lincoln reinstated McClellan, reflecting the shifting dynamics and deepening crises within Union leadership. Lee's continued advances posed further challenges to Union strategy.

Sharpsburg and the Emancipation Proclamation

The devastating confrontation at Sharpsburg (Antietam) marked a critical turning point, being the bloodiest single day in American history. This somber occasion prompted Lincoln to issue the Emancipation Proclamation, aligning the Union's military objectives with the moral imperative of abolishing slavery, thus transforming the war's context.

The Northern Light: Dispatching Responsibility

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As the year progressed, the command transitioned to General Ambrose Burnside, whose ill-fated attack at Fredericksburg underscored ongoing leadership struggles within the Union. The failure of this operation intensified public discontent and further complicated the North's military endeavors.

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Chapter 5 Summary: WHO FREED THE SLAVES ?

BY BARBARA J. FIELDS

Summary of Chapter 5: Who Freed the Slaves?

Lincoln's Stance on Emancipation

In August 1862, President Abraham Lincoln was clear about his priorities—preserving the Union was paramount, and if it meant keeping slavery intact, he would do so. This pragmatic approach reflected the sentiments of many white citizens in the loyal states, who were more invested in the debate over Union versus secession than in the rights of Black individuals. Public opinion largely prioritized the interests of white Americans, revealing the complex interplay of race and allegiance during the Civil War.

Shifts in Public Morality

As the war progressed, societal attitudes began to evolve, granting newfound respectability to abolitionists and to Black citizens advocating for the end of slavery. Enslaved individuals themselves recognized their right to liberty and began to assert their demands for freedom. This growing consciousness was acknowledged by Lincoln when he issued the Emancipation

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Proclamation on January 1, 1863, marking a pivotal turning point in the conflict.

The Inevitability of Change

From the war's inception, astute observers understood that the conflict posed a fundamental threat to the institution of slavery. The secession of Southern states was not just a political maneuver but the spark that would eventually lead to slavery's end. Both the Unionists and Confederates initially underestimated the war's transformative implications for slavery.

The Role of Slaves in Emancipation

As hostilities continued, enslaved people became active agents in their pursuit of freedom, often seeking refuge with Union forces. They were acutely aware of the stakes and took significant risks to secure their liberty, often long before the Emancipation Proclamation was enacted. Their involvement in the war effort revealed their humanity, gradually changing military and political perspectives on the necessity of emancipation.

Government Response to Slavery

Lincoln's initial hesitance regarding emancipation led military leaders to take the initiative. Notable figures like Generals John C. Fremont and David

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Hunter issued proclamations against slavery, while Congress passed measures aimed at dismantling the slave system. These actions demonstrated a growing recognition of the need to address the issue of slavery as part of the war effort.

The Struggle for Freedom

Despite legislative advancements, the path to true freedom was fraught with challenges. Enslaved individuals were required to fight for their emancipation, often risking their lives and well-being. Many gained their freedom through service in the military, while others bravely confronted oppressive systems, demonstrating remarkable resilience amidst adversity.

Conclusion: Merging Agendas

In conclusion, the personal struggles of enslaved individuals forced the government to reconcile its dual objectives of preserving the Union and enacting emancipation. The momentum for freedom, driven by the agency of the enslaved, became increasingly unavoidable. Ultimately, it became clear that true national unity could not be achieved without the abolishment of slavery. This chapter highlights that the quest for freedom transcended mere politics; it represented a fundamental human demand that irrevocably altered the course of the nation.

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Chapter 6 Summary: 1863 The Universe of Battle

Chapter 6: The Universe of Battle

The Fire in the Rear

On New Year's Day 1863, the Army of the Potomac found itself in dire straits at Falmouth, Virginia. The soldiers grappled with severe hardships, including delayed pay and scarce food supplies, despite full warehouses nearby. Filthy living conditions contributed to outbreaks of disease, resulting in more deaths from illness than from combat. Among the afflicted were soldiers suffering from scurvy and dysentery. Morale plummeted, leading to increased desertion rates. General Ambrose Burnside's attempt to initiate an offensive known as the "Mud March" was hampered by relentless winter weather, forcing a retreat.

Political Challenges

In Washington, political tensions escalated as military setbacks breathed life into the Northern Democrats' peace movement. Critics of President Lincoln began to call for an armistice, fueled by fears of conscription and rising anti-war sentiments, especially in the Midwest. Lincoln's decision to suspend habeas corpus further inflamed discontent, leading to notable arrests, including that of Congressman Clement Vallandigham, who openly opposed the war and advocated for peace.

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Struggles in the Confederacy

Meanwhile, the Confederacy was not without its own troubles. The Confederate Congress faced significant political discord, and dissatisfaction grew against President Jefferson Davis due to his conflicts with military commanders. In addition, the issues surrounding military conscription sowed discontent among both soldiers and civilians, complicating the Confederacy's war effort.

Union Strategy and Leadership Changes

Amidst these challenges, Lincoln replaced Burnside with General Joseph Hooker, who was tasked with rejuvenating the Army of the Potomac for a new offensive. Hooker, brimming with confidence and keen on defeating General Robert E. Lee's forces, soon found his resolve tested in the dense Virginia Wilderness during the Battle of Chancellorsville. Despite having superior numbers, Hooker faced a tactical disadvantage as Lee's commanding strategies turned the tide, inflicting heavy casualties on the Union troops.

The Loss of Stonewall Jackson

The Battle of Chancellorsville culminated in tragedy for Lee's Confederacy when famed General Stonewall Jackson was wounded by friendly fire, leading to his eventual death. Jackson's loss was a profound blow to Lee, marking a critical moment of grief and misfortune for the Confederate army.

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Despite the high toll of the battle for both sides, Lee's tactical genius was reaffirmed, further solidifying his reputation.

Vicksburg and the Union Strategy

Recognizing the strategic significance of Vicksburg, Lincoln assigned Ulysses S. Grant the task of capturing the city. Grant's series of strategic maneuvers ultimately led to a prolonged and grueling siege lasting weeks. The fall of Vicksburg on July 4, 1863, marked a pivotal Union victory that effectively split the Confederacy in two.

Gettysburg: The Turning Point

The Battle of Gettysburg commenced on July 1, 1863, sparked by a fight over critical supplies, specifically shoes. This three-day clash escalated into one of the war's most brutal encounters, with initial Confederate successes ultimately faltering during Pickett's Charge on July 3, resulting in severe losses for Lee's army and marking a significant shift in the war's momentum.

Political and Social Upheaval in the North

The fallout from Gettysburg triggered violent riots in Northern cities, underscoring rising tensions, particularly among immigrant populations. These uprisings highlighted the North's growing unease with conscription policies and racial issues, creating additional complexities for the Lincoln administration.

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Black Soldiers in the Union Army

In response to the war's demands, the recruitment of black soldiers gained traction, with thousands enlisting in the Union Army. Despite facing discrimination and inequality, their involvement not only bolstered troop numbers but also began to change military strategies, impacting perceptions of military service.

Chattanooga and Grant's Rise

After the triumph at Vicksburg, Grant directed successful campaigns in Chattanooga, navigating logistics and resource challenges to secure decisive victories against Confederate forces and solidifying his status as a key military leader.

Conclusion

By autumn 1863, the landscape of the Civil War was rapidly shifting due to significant battles and victories. However, both the Union and Confederacy continued to wrestle with profound internal and external challenges, as the implications of warfare transcended the battlefield, influencing social, political, and military dynamics in both regions.

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Chapter 7 Summary: M E N A T W A R : A N I N T E R V I E W W I T H S H E L B Y F O O T E

Summary of Chapter 7: Men at War - An Interview with Shelby Foote

In this insightful interview, renowned historian Shelby Foote shares his reflections on the American Civil War, a pivotal event that shaped the nation's identity and character. Born in 1916 in Mississippi and a veteran of World War II, Foote devoted two decades to his monumental work, "The Civil War," a three-volume narrative that delves deeply into the complexities of this conflict.

Foote emphasizes the significance of the Civil War as a defining moment in American history. He highlights the profound sense of defeat experienced by Southerners, contrasting it with the North's sense of invincibility. This war was ignited by the failures of political compromise, particularly as many Southerners felt threatened by the election of Abraham Lincoln and his potential stance on abolitionism. Foote asserts that the war ultimately resolved the debates over secession, reinforcing the continuity of the Union.

Before the war, life was simpler, with most people living close to home and engaged in familiar routines. Soldiers enlisted with a sense of adventure, unaware of the brutal reality they would face. The war's warfare methods

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were drastically outdated compared to the advanced weaponry of the time, resulting in staggering casualty rates.

The medical practices of the Civil War era were primitive, lacking effective anesthetics and an understanding of germs. This led to numerous infections and amputations, which compounded the suffering of the wounded. Despite these adversities, the conflict also spurred significant technological innovations in military tactics, such as field fortifications and improvised weaponry, showcasing human ingenuity under dire circumstances.

Foote paints a vivid picture of the life of enlisted men, who faced harsh conditions and physical demands. Despite the frequent boredom and hardships, they exhibited remarkable bravery, propelled by a sense of unit pride and camaraderie. Notably, the election process for officers in the Confederate army was surprisingly democratic, reflecting a unique form of governance.

Throughout the discussion, Foote examines major battles such as Shiloh, Antietam, Fredericksburg, and Gettysburg, illustrating the courage displayed on both sides. He acknowledges the distinct qualities and strategies of key figures, including Ulysses S. Grant, Robert E. Lee, William Tecumseh Sherman, and "Stonewall" Jackson, each of whom left an indelible mark on the outcome of the war.

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In contemplating the war's consequences, Foote suggests that while the North emerged victorious, both sides suffered immense losses—human and societal. He draws connections between the war's aftermath and the evolution of American identity, noting the transformation from a collection of loosely affiliated states into a cohesive nation.

Ultimately, Shelby Foote presents the Civil War as a crucible that forged national unity and solidified the United States as a singular entity. The sacrifices made during this tumultuous period have become ingrained in the American psyche, shaping both the legacy of the war and the continuing evolution of the country's identity.

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Chapter 8: 1864 Most Hallowed Ground 239

CHAPTER EIGHT: 1864 - Most Hallowed Ground

The year 1864 marked a pivotal moment in the American Civil War, culminating in significant leadership changes and military strategies that would shape the conflict's outcome.

Grant's Arrival in Washington

On March 8, 1864, Ulysses S. Grant arrived in Washington, D.C., with his son, stepping into the role of the Union's commanding general. His ascension to this prestigious position was a remarkable turn for someone who had risen from humble beginnings and faced many personal and professional challenges. Grant's reputation as a military leader soared following key victories at Fort Donelson and Vicksburg. His arrival at the Willard Hotel created a buzz among Washington's elite, celebrated by none other than President Abraham Lincoln during a White House reception — an event that illustrated Grant's rising prominence in contrast to Lincoln's own stature.

Grant's Early Life and Career

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Born into a financially struggling family, Grant's early life was marked by hardship and challenges, including a difficult relationship with alcohol. Although his time at West Point produced average academic results, his determination led him to serve in the Mexican-American War, where he first showcased his military capabilities. However, it was the outbreak of the Civil War that reignited Grant's ambition and provided him a platform to climb the military ranks through his bold tactics and relentless pursuit of victory.

Confrontation with Lee

Grant's focus was clear: he aimed to decisively engage the troops of Confederate General Robert E. Lee in order to seize control of Richmond, the Confederate capital. Lee, a commanding figure in his own right with a storied military lineage, sought to weaken Union morale by delivering crushing blows through costly battles, forcing the Union into a defensive posture.

The Unfolding of the Wilderness Campaign

The Wilderness Campaign became emblematic of the war's brutal nature, characterized by chaotic fighting through dense terrain. Units often lost direction amid the chaos, and they faced staggering casualties. Despite the heavy toll, Grant remained unwavering in his commitment to a strategy of

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constant engagement, refusing to retreat even as both sides suffered enormities. His decision to maintain pressure on Lee led to the grueling siege at Petersburg, prolonging the conflict and accumulating further losses.

The Crater and Shift in Strategy

The campaign took a dire turn during the ill-fated Union assault at Petersburg known as the Battle of the Crater. This disastrous event underscored the blunders and miscalculations prevalent in military strategy, leading to intensified scrutiny of Grant's approach. As the siege dragged on, frustrations grew within Union ranks, compelling leaders to reassess their tactics.

Sherman's March to the Sea

Meanwhile, across Georgia, General William Tecumseh Sherman orchestrated a daring campaign aimed at breaking the South's will to continue the fight. His March to the Sea, which included the infamous burning of Atlanta, was designed to disrupt Confederate resources and erode civilian morale. Sherman's total war approach sought to ensure that the impact of the war reached beyond the battlefield, directly affecting the Southern populace.

Elections and Transformation

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As November approached, Lincoln's administration faced skepticism amidst military challenges. However, victories in Atlanta and the Shenandoah Valley bolstered public support, paving the way for a more favorable outlook in the upcoming elections. The election became a battleground of ideologies,

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Chapter 9 Summary: WAR AND POLITICS BY JAMES M. MCPHERSON

War and Politics

Introduction to the Intersection of War and Politics

In 1864, the United States was embroiled in a brutal Civil War, a conflict that interwoven the realms of military engagement and politics. This chapter delves into how the ongoing war shaped the presidential election of that year, illustrating the critical interaction between warfare and electoral dynamics.

Historical Context of Elections During War

Throughout American history, presidential elections often occur amid wartime challenges, notably during the War of 1812 and World War II. Typically, incumbents leverage their war policies to gain public support. However, the 1864 election stood out as a decisive juncture for the continuation of the Civil War, with the outcome potentially altering the course of the conflict.

Union Optimism and Confederate Defiance

As 1864 began, the North, buoyed by recent military victories, was filled with optimism. Key figures like President Abraham Lincoln and General

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Ulysses S. Grant were devising strategies for significant offensives against the Confederate states. In contrast, the Confederacy grappled with internal strife, economic difficulty, and food shortages, all of which set a dramatic electoral backdrop.

Military Strategies and Elections

The Union's military strategy focused on coordinated offensives to secure victory, while Confederate leaders hoped to prolong the war, banking on a change in U.S. leadership that could lead to negotiations favorable to them. Their strategy revolved around staving off Union advances long enough to impact electoral sentiment in the North.

Confederate Efforts to Influence Northern Sentiments

Confederate leaders actively sought to sway Northern opinion. They employed sabotage and initiatives aimed at amplifying anti-war sentiment among the Northern Democrats. Notably, they pursued clandestine negotiations to frame Lincoln's peace overtures as uncompromising, attempting to undermine his support.

Shifting Northern Sentiment

By the late summer of 1864, the mood in the North darkened as heavy casualties and military stagnation took a toll on public morale. Lincoln felt the weight of this discontent and encountered growing demands to reconsider his approach to war, particularly regarding emancipation. Yet, he



steadfastly adhered to his principles, refusing to waver in his commitment to the Union cause.

Democratic Convention and McClellan's Nomination

The Democratic Party's convention adopted a peace platform, leading to the nomination of George B. McClellan, formerly a Union general who was viewed as a War Democrat. However, the Democratic messaging lacked clarity, creating confusion around their position on war and peace.

Turning Point of the Election

A crucial shift occurred with military victories, particularly General William Tecumseh Sherman's capture of Atlanta shortly before the election. This victory revitalized Northern support for Lincoln, enhancing the Republican Party's prospects as public sentiment rallied behind the ongoing war effort.

The Soldier Vote

The soldiers' votes played a vital role in the election, starkly contrasting with civilian attitudes. Their firsthand experiences fueled a desire for a definitive victory and reinforced their robust support for Lincoln, emphasizing the soldiers' understanding of the war's significance.

Conclusion: Lincoln's Reelection and Its Implications

Lincoln's resounding victory in the 1864 election served as a clear endorsement of his leadership and commitment to the war. This outcome

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underscored the North's resolve to persist in the fight for an unconditional victory. The election results not only reflected public sentiment but also highlighted the intricate link between military successes and political strategies during this tumultuous period.

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Chapter 10 Summary: 1865 The Better Angels of Our Nature 291

Chapter Summary: The Better Angels of Our Nature

The Winter of 1864-1865

The winter of 1864-1865 proved to be one of the harshest periods for Confederate soldiers, battling not only their opponents but also unbearable cold and hardship. As the Union General William Tecumseh Sherman advanced through the Carolinas, his campaign was marked by a promise of devastation; his troops demonstrated remarkable resolve as they navigated muddy, makeshift roads in pursuit of their goal.

Key Events and Legislative Changes

Amidst the turmoil, a historic legislative change took place on January 31, 1865, when Congress passed the Thirteenth Amendment, officially abolishing slavery. Simultaneously, the Confederate forces faced mounting difficulties. Desertions became rampant, morale dwindled, and the plight of refugees and civilians highlighted the desperation permeating the South.

Fall of Columbia

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Sherman's campaign solidified with the capture of Columbia, South Carolina, indicative of the increasing pressure on Confederate territory. The city's destruction served as a stark reminder of the war's impact on Southern society and highlighted the growing despair among its citizens.

Lincoln's Second Inauguration

As the nation grappled with these challenges, President Abraham Lincoln's second inaugural address struck a tone of reconciliation and healing. While there were moments of celebration, the weight of the war's toll left Lincoln feeling profoundly burdened, echoing his sense of being the "tireddest man on earth."

The March to Appomattox

As Union forces closed in, General Robert E. Lee's army found itself in a precarious position. Diminishing resources and personnel translated into escalating difficulties in mounting a defense. The final days of fighting were marked by desperate measures by Confederate troops but ultimately culminated in catastrophic losses.

Surrender at Appomattox

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The chapter reached a pivotal moment with Lee's surrender to Grant at Appomattox Court House. This surrender elicited deep emotions of grief and reflection across the nation. In a spirit of reconciliation, Grant offered lenient terms to Lee, attempting to mend the rift between North and South and heralding a new era.

Lincoln's Assassination

Just as the nation began to contemplate its future, tragedy struck again on April 14, 1865, when Lincoln was assassinated by Confederate sympathizer John Wilkes Booth. His shocking death ignited a wave of mourning and reflection, prompting the country to reconsider Lincoln's profound legacy in the context of his leadership during the Civil War.

Aftermath and Final Days of Conflict

Following Lincoln's assassination, the remnants of Confederate resistance persisted, with the capture of Confederate President Jefferson Davis and sporadic conflicts marking the tail end of the war. The nation began to grasp the immense scars left in the wake of this conflict and emerged into a time of introspection regarding its path forward.

Final Reflections

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This chapter encapsulates the harrowing conclusion of the Civil War, underscoring its societal impacts and the fragile journey toward reconciliation. The juxtaposition of joy from victory and grief from loss illustrates the complexities of finding peace in the aftermath of deep-seated conflict, ultimately defining a transformative moment in American history.

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Chapter 11 Summary: W H A T T H E W A R M A D E U S B Y C . V A N N W O O D W A R D

Summary of Chapter 11: What the War Made Us

Introduction to the Aftermath of the Civil War

The aftermath of the Civil War left survivors grappling with traumatic memories of its violence and chaos. Esteemed voices, including Nathaniel Hawthorne and President Abraham Lincoln, voiced their doubts about humanity's ability to comprehend or control the war's purpose. This upheaval forced a profound reevaluation of what it meant to be American.

Casualties and Divisions

The Civil War resulted in staggering casualties, surpassing the combined death toll of all other American conflicts. The uniquely brutal nature of this war stemmed from its intranational character, with families and communities divided along North-South lines. Each side held starkly different views on issues of freedom, enslavement, and loyalty, leading to a complex conflict that shattered unity.

Moral and Legal Absolutism

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At the heart of the Civil War lay two competing forms of absolutism—moralists in the North championed the higher law doctrine of abolitionism, while Southerners defended legal rights concerning slavery. Both sides were fiercely committed to their ideologies, resulting in a struggle marked by deep conviction and desperation.

Postwar Transformation and Disillusionment

With the war's end came a significant shift in ideologies, as many rejected absolutist views in favor of more moderate positions. While there were advances, such as constitutional amendments aimed at securing rights for freedmen, the reality was often one of unmet promises. The postwar period became characterized by compromises that predominantly favored white interests at the expense of black citizens.

Economic Shifts and Gilded Age Politics

The war catalyzed monumental changes in America's economy, propelling industry and prompting rapid urbanization. However, the subsequent Gilded Age was rife with corruption, leading to the exploitation of freedmen and Native Americans alike. Opportunities that emerged from the conflict were frequently undermined by opportunistic politicians and business tycoons, highlighting the darker side of progress.

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Legacy of the Civil War

The Civil War's legacy extended well beyond immediate political changes; it fundamentally reshaped American society and identity. The collective trauma experienced during the war fostered rich narratives that defined cultural memory, elevating this tumultuous period to a place of national significance akin to legendary conflicts throughout history.

Enduring Impact and National Memory

The Civil War remains a pivotal event in U.S. history, prompting profound emotional and moral reflections within the American psyche. Its legacy is rooted in a narrative that combines elements of pride and shame, contributing to a complex mythos that stands as a defining moment in the American experience.

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