



Early Years of the War

Objectives

1. Explain how new weapons made fighting the war more dangerous.
2. Describe the course of the war in the East in 1862.
3. Describe the early days of the war in the West and at sea.

Main Idea

The use of new weapons forced commanders to rethink their tactics.

Prepare to Read

Reading Skill

Distinguish Events in Sequence

As you read this section, it is important to keep events in sequence. Ask yourself: Which event happened first? Next? Last? You might number events to help you organize their sequence. This will help you to understand the unfolding drama of the Civil War.

Vocabulary Builder

High-Use Words

superior, p. 519

reinforce, p. 519

Key Terms and People

ironclad, p. 518

George McClellan, p. 519

casualty, p. 520

Ulysses S. Grant, p. 520

Background Knowledge The Union's crushing defeat at Bull Run made northerners realize that a long and difficult struggle lay ahead. In this section, you will learn how the bloody early years of war caused many to worry that the North might not win.

New Technology in the War

New weapons made the Civil War more deadly than any previous war. Traditionally, generals had relied on an all-out charge of troops to overwhelm the enemy. But new rifles and cannons were far more accurate and had a greater range than the old muskets and artillery. They could also be loaded much faster. As a result, the attacking army could be bombarded long before it arrived at the defenders' position.

Unfortunately, Civil War generals were slow to recognize the problem and change tactics. Thousands of soldiers on both sides were slaughtered by following orders to cross open fields against these deadly new weapons.

Both sides also made use of **ironclads**. These were war ships covered with protective iron plates. Cannon fire bounced harmlessly off this armor. The most famous naval battle of the war occurred when two ironclads, the Union's *Monitor* and the Confederacy's *Merrimack*, fought to a draw in March 1862. The use of ironclads marked the end of thousands of years of wooden warships. The Confederates used ironclads against the Union's naval blockade. Ironclad Union gunboats played an important role in the North's efforts to gain control of the Mississippi River.

Checkpoint What new technologies were used in the Civil War?

The War in the East

After the Union's defeat at Bull Run, Lincoln removed McDowell and put General **George McClellan** in command. The general was a good organizer, but he was very cautious. For seven months, he trained his army but did not attack. "If General McClellan does not want to use the army," a frustrated Lincoln complained, "I would like to borrow it for a time."

In March 1862, McClellan was finally ready. He moved some 100,000 soldiers by boat along Chesapeake Bay to a peninsula south-east of Richmond. As McClellan advanced toward the Confederate capital, he discovered that his force was far **superior** to the 15,000 enemy soldiers blocking the way. However, McClellan still did not have as many soldiers as he wanted because Lincoln had ordered 37,000 soldiers to stay behind to guard Washington, D.C. The general stopped his advance and asked for more troops.

McClellan waited nearly a month before moving again. This delay gave the Confederates time to **reinforce** their small army of defenders. On May 31, 1862, the Confederates stopped McClellan's advance near Richmond. In late June, McClellan had to retreat.

With Richmond no longer threatened, Lee decided to invade the North. He hoped that a victory on Union soil would help win support for the South in Europe and turn northern public opinion against the war. In early September, he slipped his army into western Maryland.

Now McClellan had a stroke of luck. A Union officer found a paper showing Lee's battle plan. McClellan thus learned that the Confederate army had divided into two parts.

Main Idea

Each side suffered setbacks in the East in 1862.

Vocabulary Builder

superior (sah PIR ee ahr) *adj.* of greater importance or value; above average

Vocabulary Builder

reinforce (ree ihn FORS) *v.* to make stronger; to make more effective

Discovery SCHOOL

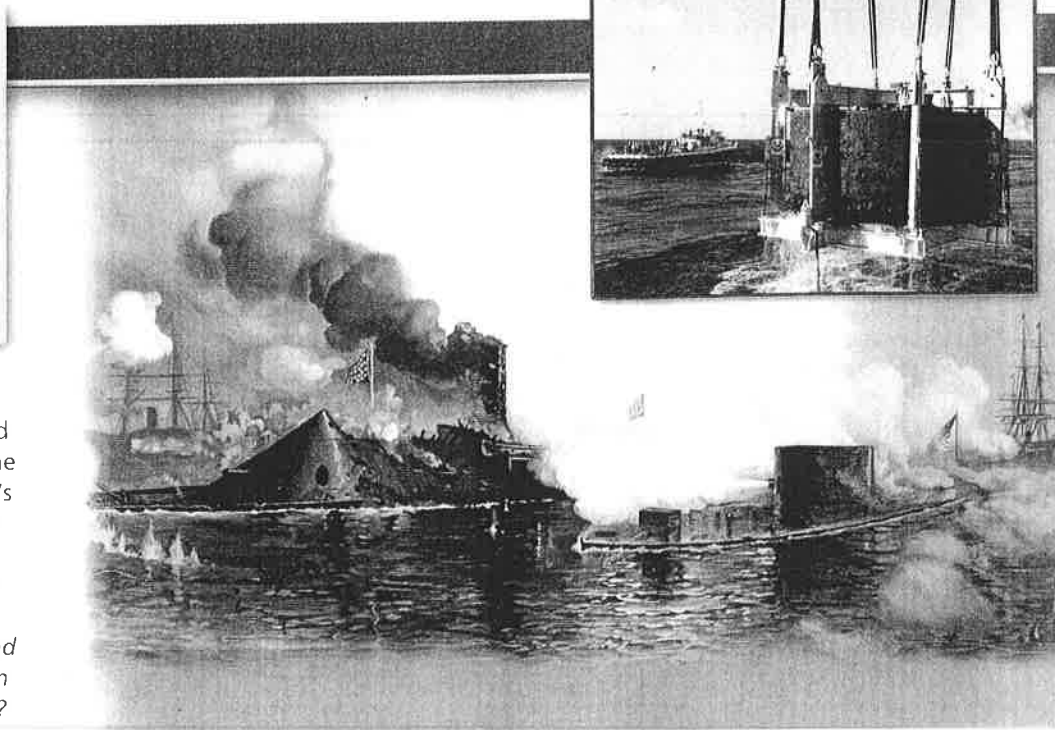
Explore More Video

To learn more about this historic battle, view the video.

Battle of Two Ironclads

The Civil War introduced ironclad warships. Here, an artist shows the battle between the Confederacy's *Merrimack* (left) and the Union's *Monitor* (right) off Hampton Roads, Virginia, in 1862. **Critical Thinking: Draw Conclusions**

How would you expect an ironclad ship to fare in a battle against an older warship that lacked armor? Explain.



Inset shows the recovery of the *Monitor's* turret, or gun chamber, in 2002.

Early Days of the War

MAP MASTER

Skills Activity

KEY

- ← Union troops
- ← Confederate troops
- ★ Union victory
- ★ Confederate victory



In 1862, Union troops tried but failed to capture Richmond, the capital of the Confederacy. To the west, meanwhile, the Union's land and naval forces won some significant victories.

- (a) **Read a Map** Which battles were Union victories? Which were Confederate victories?
- (b) **Interpret a Map** Describe Grant's route to Shiloh. What city on the Mississippi River did Grant attack after the Battle of Shiloh?

MapMaster Online

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McClellan's troops attacked the larger part of Lee's army at Antietam Creek, near Sharpsburg, Maryland, on September 17, 1862. This was the bloodiest day of the Civil War. The Union army attacked again and again. It suffered about 12,000 casualties—the military term for persons killed, wounded, or missing in action. Lee lost nearly 14,000 men—almost one third of his army. He was forced to pull his battered army back into Virginia. To Lincoln's dismay, McClellan did not press his advantage by pursuing Lee.

Neither side won a clear victory at the Battle of Antietam. But because Lee had ordered a retreat, the North claimed victory.

Checkpoint How did McClellan's caution hurt the Union?

Main Idea

In the West, Union forces seized control of most of the Mississippi River in 1862.

The War in the West

As McClellan moved cautiously, Union armies in the West went on the attack. General **Ulysses S. Grant** led the most successful of these armies. McClellan and Grant were very different. McClellan wore carefully fitted uniforms. Grant, once a poor store clerk, wore rumpled clothes. McClellan was cautious. Grant took chances.

Union forces made major advances in western land and naval battles in 1862, seizing control of most of the Mississippi River. In February 1862, Grant moved his army south from Kentucky. First, he captured Fort Henry on the Tennessee River. Then, he captured Fort Donelson on the Cumberland River.

Two water routes into the western Confederacy were now wide open. Grant's army continued south along the Tennessee River toward Corinth, Mississippi, an important railroad center.

Before Grant could advance on Corinth, Confederate General Albert Sidney Johnston attacked. On April 6, 1862, he surprised Grant's troops at the Battle of Shiloh. (For more on this battle, see the Geography and History feature in this chapter.)

The Battle of Shiloh was costly yet important for both sides. The South suffered nearly 11,000 casualties and the North more than 13,000. However, the Union forced the Confederate army to withdraw from the railroad center. Union forces also gained control of western Tennessee and part of the Mississippi River.

Two weeks after the Battle of Shiloh, a Union fleet commanded by David Farragut entered the Mississippi River from the Gulf of Mexico. On April 26, Farragut captured New Orleans, Louisiana. By summer, nearly the entire river was in Union hands.

 **Checkpoint** What was the result of the Battle of Shiloh?

Looking Back and Ahead Northern and southern generals both tried to carry the war into enemy territory. At first, neither side gained a decisive advantage. In the next section, you will read how the Emancipation Proclamation changed the nature of the war.

Section 2

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Comprehension and Critical Thinking

- (a) Describe** Explain what life was like for a Civil War soldier.

(b) Evaluate Information How did harsh conditions and new technology result in a high number of casualties?
- (a) Summarize** Why was General McClellan considered to be an ineffective leader?

(b) Organize Information Make a chart that shows the place, casualties, leaders, outcome, and importance of the battles at Shiloh and Antietam Creek.

Reading Skill

- Distinguish Events in Sequence** During the Battle of Shiloh, which came first: Grant captured Fort Henry, Johnston attacked, Grant won a stunning victory? Identify the signal clues that you used.

Vocabulary Builder

- Read each sentence. If the sentence is true, write YES. If the sentence is not true, write NO and explain why.
- Both the Union and the Confederacy suffered many casualties.
 - Ironclads were of little importance in the war at sea.

Writing

- Use library or Internet resources to find more information about one of the topics covered in this section. Suggestions for topics include the ironclad warships, the Battle of Shiloh, or the Battle of Antietam. Then, write a short introduction to a research paper that would present information about the topic.