

The Last Full Measure Study Guide

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Plot Summary

Shortly after his defeat at Gettysburg, General Robert E. Lee of the Confederate army oversees the retreat across the Potomac River. The next battle involves Hill trying to attach Chamberlain's position at Bristoe Station, which ends in defeat for Hill because he was unaware of the Federal's strength.

Lincoln assigns General Ulysses S. Grant the supreme leadership of the Federal army. Grant begins his campaign to penetrate the South and force Lee's surrender. This leads to a long fight in the Wilderness, which turns out a draw. Lee rushes to Spotsylvania to set up defenses, thinking that Grant's objective is to take Richmond. The ensuing battle shows that Grant does not want Richmond but Petersburg, a major supply line center for Lee's army. Lee comes to the realization that he is Grant's objective and that Grant intends to destroy the Confederate army.

Through employing the defensive tactic of trench warfare, Lee holds back the Federals. However, Grant has reinforcements and a solid supply line. He eventually takes Petersburg and pushes the Confederates westward, but not without taking serious losses. In one attack, Grant loses about forty percent of his men, a serious mistake. Meanwhile Sherman has completed his march to the sea and moves north to cut off Lee's southern route.

Lee scrambles to draw forces together to stop Sherman, realizing that cutting off the southern retreat route would nearly box in the Confederate army. Failing this, Lee looks westward for supplies and demands better support from Richmond. The first critical shipment to Lee's army turns out to be ammunition, not the needed food. Eventually food arrives, but it comes too late.

Grant and Sherman meet to plan the endgame of the Civil War. Federal forces push Lee's army toward Appomattox. Grant cuts off Lee's supply line from the east and west, the only routes left. With his troops starving and surrounded, Lee surrenders at Appomattox.

Grant accepts Lee's surrender and gives generous conditions. The soldiers keep their horses because they must return to their farms, and it is the planting season. They must give up their arms. Chamberlain oversees the Federals and Gordon oversees the Confederates when this is done. Chamberlain orders the Federals to salute the Confederates, and Gordon returns the salute.

John Wilkes Booth assassinates Lincoln after Lee's surrender. Lincoln had wanted the reunification of the nation to proceed smoothly and with as little resentment as possible. The assassination may have led to Reconstruction period brutality.

In the aftermath of the war, Grant writes his memoirs, and the two-volume set becomes a best-seller that is published to this day. Lee tries to write his memoirs, but he feels that

it can only do more damage to the South. Chamberlain attends the veteran reunions at Gettysburg until his death.

Introduction

Introduction Summary

The author gives background information about the novel, which is the third book in a Civil War trilogy as well as all the major characters. He also presents brief biographies for Robert Edward Lee, Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain and Ulysses Simpson Grant. The starting point of the novel is just ten days after the major defeat of Lee's army at Gettysburg on July 3, 1863. From 1861 to 1863, terribly bloody battles follow one another. At the opening point of the novel, July 13, 1863, the military careers of Lee, Chamberlain, and Grant had advanced to where these three men are the primary commanders in the story.

Introduction Analysis

The Introduction serves the purpose of orienting the reader to the historical background of the story. What had begun as an almost celebratory event, turns into a horribly bloody war that went on for year after year. The author promises that the story follows history faithfully but does incorporate storytelling techniques to bring the history to life in ways that textbooks usually do not. The use of foreshadowing gives a clear impression that the commanders are ready for their most significant action, which is ending the terrible conflict.



Part 1, Lee (July 13, 1863): Chapter 1

Part 1, Lee (July 13, 1863): Chapter 1 Summary

General Robert E. Lee, while astride his white horse Traveler and on a high bluff overlooking the Potomac River, observes his defeated army making its retreat from the Battle of Gettysburg. A hard rain falls. The river has swollen to near flood stage, and the current is too strong for crossing. Lee has his engineers construct a makeshift bridge. By August of 1863, Lee has successfully brought his army into Virginia south of the Rapidan River near the town of Orange.

Part 1, Lee (July 13, 1863): Chapter 1 Analysis

The opening scene in which General Lee watches his troops while seemingly trapped by a raging Potomac River sets the mood of despair and defeat. The occasional cannon and musket fire lends an air of desperation. Meade could attack at any moment, thus crushing any hope for the South. The dark mood, enhanced in the night, lightens up once the makeshift bridge is built and the army begins crossing over to safety.

Lee's anger over Longstreet's attempt to spread the blame for the defeat at Gettysburg points to Lee's character. He refuses to not accept responsibility. Additionally, Lee has a strong Christian belief in the will of God. He cannot understand why God willed this defeat, but he also accepts this outcome as divine judgment.

A general date is used to split the chapter into two major parts, the crossing of the Potomac and Lee's attempted resignation. This moves the story past the march back home to the more important and interesting attempted resignation. Although the technique skips many details of the march, they are not important for telling this story. Another kind of story for the same time period could benefit from some of the details, but not this one. The mood also changes from dark despair to a lighter, although still troubling, time and place. Complete failure has been avoided but victory also seems impossible.

The letter from Davis that turns down Lee's resignation is quoted in the text, but not in its entirety. Only those lines in which Davis expresses heartfelt confidence in Lee appear. In a history of the Civil War, the whole letter would probably be quoted for completeness, but in a historical novel, completeness is neither required nor desirable. The point is to breathe life into historical figures and to flesh them out with personalities, strengths, and weaknesses.

A dramatic touch closes the chapter when Lee's horse Traveler takes him back to his men without any prompting from Lee. Closing a chapter in this way leads the reader to the next chapter with curiosity about what happens next.



Part 1, Chamberlain (August-October 1863): Chapters 2-4

Part 1, Chamberlain (August-October 1863): Chapters 2-4 Summary

Colonel Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain returns on military leave to Brunswick, Maine by train. His wife Fannie meets him at the station. Chamberlain has a touch of malaria and nearly faints in Fannie's arms. A small crowd watches as Chamberlain and his wife ride away in a carriage toward their home. While resting in bed, Chamberlain remembers the heroic and dangerous bayonet charge that he had led on Little Round Top at the Battle of Gettysburg.

In Chapter 3, Chamberlain returns to the Federal army located in northern Virginia. Here he talks with General Griffin who informs Chamberlain that he has been assigned as commander of the Third Brigade.

Chapter 4 covers A.P. Hill's attack at Bristoe Station. Confederate troops come out of the woods and advance toward Chamberlain's position. Unknown to the attackers, the entire II Corps waits in ambush behind a railroad cut near the station. Federal musket volleys from Chamberlain's front position and from II Corps right flank position mow down the attackers.

Part 1, Chamberlain (August-October 1863): Chapters 2-4 Analysis

Three chapters follow Chamberlain from his visit home to his next battle. The chapters are short and could have been combined into one. However, the points made are unique enough to stand alone. Chamberlain used to be an academic before the war broke out. His nature is not oriented toward the military, unlike his father who served and thinks a career in academics is a waste of time. Meanwhile, Chamberlain's mother wants him to become a priest. Chapter 2 brings out the internal conflicts that this causes in Chamberlain. He had performed courageously on Little Round Top by leading his troops, who were out of ammunition, in a bayonet charge right into the heart of the enemy. This made his father proud of Chamberlain for the first time, which in turn must have removed a good deal of internal conflict for both father and son.

Chapter 3 reveals another conflict within Chamber, that of the academic serving in the military. He sees the terrible absurdity of drafted soldiers being executed after they had deserted and were caught. Yet he can understand why this has to be done, to discourage desertion and to encourage fighting when ordered to do so. Moreover, he is



uncomfortable while talking to General Griffin even though Griffin has good news for Chamberlain.

In Chapter 4, the theme of Chamberlain's discomfort with military duty carries through. The sight of a cannon muzzle spooks him and brings his thoughts to death on the field. Chamberlain wonders whether being blown to bits or dying slowly from fatal wounds is a better option. He has to force his thoughts away from this track because it serves no good purpose.

General Griffin later orders Chamberlain to prepare for A.P. Hill's attack. Chamberlain notices the deadly crossfire that the Confederate troops enter, their route taking them into a perfect trap. The quick victory is celebrated and now the North seems to have the upper hand. It will indeed be interpreted by contemporaries and future historians that the Civil War pivoted to the North's advantage at the Battle of Gettysburg. This short battle affirms the idea but Chamberlain and other Federal officers are not yet convinced. General Lee is still out there somewhere and the fighting is far from over.



Part 1, Lee (October-December 1863): Chapters 5-6

Part 1, Lee (October-December 1863): Chapters 5-6 Summary

Chapter 5 opens with General Lee surveying the field after Hill's failed attack. Hill looks on with him. They ride onto the field together, and Hill describes what went wrong. The reason for the attack was to catch the rear of the Federal troops by surprise but reconnaissance was not thorough enough to detect the true strength of the enemy. Hill attempts an apology that Lee neither accepts nor rejects. He simply tells Hill that the dead should be buried and nothing more said about the matter.

Lee goes to Richmond for Christmas in Chapter 6. He also has a meeting scheduled with President Davis. He thinks about the men still in the field for whom Christmas is just another day in the war. Lee cannot enjoy the company of his family as a result. His wife Mary wants Lee to tell Davis how bad off the army is and what it needs. Lee does not see how this could possibly help the dire situation.

Part 1, Lee (October-December 1863): Chapters 5-6 Analysis

Chapter 5 gives an explanation of what went wrong at Bristoe Station. Hill had been in too much of a hurry, and as a result, reconnaissance was not done thoroughly enough. The fifteen hundred Federal soldiers hidden in the railroad cut were missed. Hill feels terrible about this, but true to his character, Lee dismisses the apology by not acknowledging it. He thinks again that the defeat had to be God's will in a grand plan that lies beyond his understanding.

Flashbacks are used through the memories of Lee to explain earlier battles that led to this situation. General Longstreet has been criticized as losing the Battle of Gettysburg. General Bragg had pressed the Federal soldiers hard at Chickamauga, but he lacks leadership skills.

The flashbacks continue in Chapter 6. Lee again wonders why God had chosen to take Stonewall Jackson, shot by his own men during the Battle of Chancellorsville and soon after dying of pneumonia. Lee thinks about the time when Meade had pressed on his army at Mine Run. Back then Lee was criticized for the defensive maneuver of digging trenches and felling trees for cover, this not being the honorable way to fight war. This memory is highly ironic because now, when the South cannot waste resources, finding cover is very important. The flashback identifies one of the reasons why the South is



suffering. It had squandered its men to preserve the idea of honor during the first part of the war.

In the middle of the chapter, Lee is presented as a loving father and husband profoundly weary of the war. His wife Mary suffers from debilitating arthritis that has rendered one of her arms shriveled and useless. His son Custis works for the government and shares Lee's concerns about dishonesty hurting the cause. Closing this scene, Mary expresses bluntly what everyone wants to say but holds back, which is that there has been too much loss, too many widowed, and if this goes on, the war will be lost.

When Lee refuses to take command of the forces in the west, he predicts that the war will be won or lost in the east. President Davis reluctantly agrees and says that an equally good commander as Lee must be found for the western troops. This could be foreshadowing about events to come.

In the closing scene, Lee struggles with a tightness and pain in his chest. He has felt this before and could be the signs of a serious illness, perhaps a weak heart. The pain subsides, but he says cryptically "Yes...I know..." (pg. 69.) This leaves the questions of who he is talking to and what does he know. One interpretation is that he talks to God and knows that death is near. A more literal interpretation is that he is answering what his wife had just said to him a paragraph back. However this is taken, the effect is to end the chapter with open questions. This is another technique to encourage the reader to stay with the story.



Part 2, Grant (March 1864): Chapter 7

Part 2, Grant (March 1864): Chapter 7 Summary

General Ulysses S. Grant arrives in Washington to meet President Lincoln. Lincoln gives him a warm welcome and pulls him aside to meet Secretary of State Seward and Mrs. Lincoln. President Lincoln promotes Grant to Lieutenant General, meaning that he now commands the entire Federal army.

As the season changes to early spring, Grant sends orders to position his troops. General Sigel is to move into the Shenandoah Valley to divert part of Lee's army toward the west. General Meade is to approach Richmond from the north but not take the city and Confederate capital. General Butler is to approach Richmond from the south. Both movements are intended to draw Lee's army toward Richmond.

Part 2, Grant (March 1864): Chapter 7 Analysis

The figure of Grant that the story presents in Washington is that of a war-hardened soldier unconcerned with political advancement, appearances, or coverage in the newspapers. He is the symbol of the everyday man who works for a living. At this time in his life, his work centers on defeating the Confederates. He is not in the war for glory but to win.

Other commanders have the same attitude. General Meade is the symbol of these soldiers. He expresses himself bluntly to Grant, expecting the new general to be his replacement for not performing well enough at Gettysburg. When Grant assures Meade that the purpose is now to win the war, not promote self, Meade joins with Grant as brothers in arms. They will work together throughout the rest of the war toward the common goal of defeating Lee.

This dramatic point signifies the full turn that northern strategy has taken after Gettysburg. Before Gettysburg, the Federal soldiers lost more times than they won. The victory at Gettysburg showed the politicians in Washington, most significantly President Lincoln, that the Federal troops could win if effectively commanded. When Lincoln talks with Grant, the principle theme is that the war must be won or the idea of constitutional democracy will die. A bold stroke has just been made that will change history not only for the United States but for the world.

Chapter 7 lays the foundation for the northern cause. The next chapter does the same for the southern cause from General Lee's point of view. The two chapters work together for building the plot framework required to understand the battles that follow.



Part 2, Lee (May 1864): Chapter 8

Part 2, Lee (May 1864): Chapter 8 Summary

J.E.B Stuart, Confederate cavalry commander, delivers messages to General Lee. Lee observes Grant's army from a vantage point on the other side of the Rapidan River. He asks General Longstreet about how Grant might think. Longstreet, who had fought with Grant in Mexico, describes Grant as an uncomplicated and stubborn man. Lee thinks that this will make defeating Grant easier by waiting for him to make a mistake and then taking swift advantage of it. As he watches Grant's army, he detects that it is breaking camp and going on the move. Lee expects to confront Grant in the Wilderness, an area of thick growth located a few miles southwest of Fredericksburg.

Part 2, Lee (May 1864): Chapter 8 Analysis

General Lee's assessment of Grant is based on very little information. He may have fought with Grant in Mexico but cannot remember any distinguishing characteristics. Longstreet knows more about Grant. He tells Lee that once engaged with Grant, the man will not back down. This could very well be an unreliable observation, but Lee has no choice but to take it on face value. He formulates a preliminary strategy of waiting for Grant to make a mistake, thus foreshadowing his future actions.

The fundamental difference in Confederate thinking is brought out in this chapter. The cliché is that Southerners were fighting for states' rights, and by default, the right to retain slavery. Instead, Lee sees it as a fight for independence from the federal authority in Washington. This turns the conflict into one between strong versus weak central governments. The Confederation has a far weaker central government than the Union. Combining this observation with the words of Lincoln in the previous chapter, the true significance of the Civil War becomes clear. If the South had won, the Union might have disintegrated. The fact that the North won is reflected in our present system of having a strong central government, which is a point of contention in current political debate.

An oddity of the Civil War is also brought out. The troops on either side speak the same language, share similar cultures, and can be friendly enough to trade tobacco for coffee and other barter. They can individually decide a temporary truce for the mutually beneficial transactions. This observation is presented through Lee's thinking rather than constructing a scene involving the bartering soldiers, a method of keeping focused on Lee's character. The technique reduces drama but does bring out this strange characteristic of the Civil War.

A combination of simple narrative and Lee's flashbacks gives the back stories of commanders such as Stuart. Lee is shown to have been extremely upset over Stuart's behavior at Gettysburg. The implication is that this one man may have lost the war, which is a subject of speculation among historians. By Stuart's actions and his overly

zealous need to please Lee, he admits to feeling extreme guilt about having let the general down at Gettysburg. Lee thinks that Stuart will have plenty of opportunities to exonerate himself in future battles. This is an effective use of foreshadowing.



Part 2, Grant (May 4, 1864) Lee (May 5, 1864): Chapters 9-10

Part 2, Grant (May 4, 1864) Lee (May 5, 1864): Chapters 9-10 Summary

In Chapter 9, Grant's army approaches the Wilderness from the northwest. Generals Sedgwick and Warren cross the Rapidan River at the westerly Germanna Ford with Burnside holding back on the other side of the river. General Hancock crosses at Ely's Ford to the east. Grant's strategy is simple. Lee has to confront the Union army in the Wilderness to stop its march toward Richmond. Grant will present a unified fist to Lee and defeat him.

Chapter 10 moves a day ahead and takes the viewpoint of Lee. He is in Ewell's camp when he wakes up, and the Confederate army has made its way into the Wilderness. So far all is quiet. Lee does not know the positions of the Federal soldiers. He waits for Longstreet's troops to catch up and does not want to start the battle until then, when the army will be at its full strength. Lee goes to visit General Hill, who has become ill. Hill's sickness comes and goes. On this morning he is better and rides his horse out to meet Lee on a road. Stuart rides up to talk with Lee a little later. A small unit of Federal soldiers comes out of the woods and sees the generals. Lee wonders if they know who he is. The Federal leader, a sergeant, signals his men back into the woods. They could have killed Lee but for some reason backed away and the battle starts slowly. Lee receives word from Longstreet that his division would not be coming until the next morning. The Federal forces move forward, and a few muskets fire sporadically. By late morning the musket fire becomes denser and continuous.

Part 2, Grant (May 4, 1864) Lee (May 5, 1864): Chapters 9-10 Analysis

Chapters 9 and 10 describe the preparations for the battle in the Wilderness, alternating the points of view between Grant and Lee. The fact that neither general knows the other's position strongly foreshadows the difficulty of fighting in the Wilderness. Without any chance of aerial observations, it becomes a matter of guesswork where units are, how they are configured and their strength.

In Chapter 9, Meade's unorthodox flag hints at a change in the man's attitude. Instead of bitterness toward the politicians in Washington, he may have taken high hope that Grant will lead the Union to victory. The irony is that Grant sees the flag as being pretentious and more fitting for the ancient age of the Roman Empire. Nevertheless, Grant allows the flag and reveals his dry wit, a primary character trait.



The ending scene of the young Federal soldier who dies from a Confederate gunshot brings the story closer to the ground and marks the first stage of the battle. It also prepares the reader for the subsequent stages. Many guns will be fired, many men will die, and many others will be wounded.

Chapter 10 opens with Lee waking up and preparing to visit Hill. Through conversations with his generals, he learns that nobody has yet been able to determine the positions and strength of the Federal soldiers. An element of desperation sets in because Longstreet will not arrive until the next morning. The intermittent musket shots add to the building tension because they signal the first stage of the battle and Lee is not prepared.

The arrival of the small Federal unit indicates that time has probably run out. Lee and his generals tense up. They are in a deadly situation and only by some unknown circumstance does the unit backup into the woods without firing a shot. Meanwhile, the musket fire intensifies. Lee's time has indeed run out.

The plot in this chapter builds tension, brings it to a peak with the threat from the Federal unit and releases tension when the unit retreats. Immediately the tension builds past the peak as the full battle begins. The sensory use of sight with the Federal unit appearing and disappearing and sound exemplified by the musket fire increases dramatic effect.



Part 2, Grant (Morning, May 5, 1864) Lee (Late Evening, May 5, 1864): Chapters 11-12

Part 2, Grant (Morning, May 5, 1864) Lee (Late Evening, May 5, 1864): Chapters 11-12 Summary

The day begins in Chapter 11 with more fighting. Unknown to Grant, Lee's forces are very close. Meade sends a communication to Grant, informing him that the enemy is advancing on the Orange Turnpike. The battle has developed into two fronts. Grant wants to press onward, to split Lee's army in two. Meade expresses caution, but Grant knows that his forces outnumber Lee's because Longstreet has not joined his 60 thousand with Lee's 40 thousand.

Chapter 12 flashes ahead to the evening of May 5. The fighting had moved back and forth all day for both sides, neither gaining or losing significant ground. Lee's strategy is to attack into confused Federal units. The Confederates take quite a beating, had fought all day without a break and are in need of Longstreet's relief by nightfall. The fighting stops when the sun sets. In the early morning of May 6, Lee's army is in confusion. The weakness of Hill's division is not well known, nobody knows exactly where the other divisions are located or what condition they are in. While looking down the road, the battle comes to Lee. Bullets fly through the air and his soldiers fall back, engulfing him in the retreat. A large group of Federal soldiers charge out of the woods. Lee finds himself among cannons and their crews. The artillery fires into the oncoming Federal soldiers but there are too many of them. The crew members are cut down until the remaining soldiers cannot keep up the barrage. Taylor, one of Lee's staff members, pleads with the general to move back, away from the danger. Lee sees the arrival of Longstreet, which is a welcome sight.

Part 2, Grant (Morning, May 5, 1864) Lee (Late Evening, May 5, 1864): Chapters 11-12 Analysis

The first full day of battle in the Wilderness reveals why this land is so difficult for both sides. The thick brush, trees, swampy areas, and general tangle of vegetation creates heavy shadows that make identifying the enemy difficult even if seen. Uncertainty keeps both sides checked.

In Chapter 11 Grant expresses his frustration with bad intelligence. Nothing that had been thought true the day before proves to be so. Lee has advanced to meet him rather than digging in farther south. However, his character is not to wallow in anger or shrink from a difficult fight. He issues orders, tries to keep his army in line and proceeds to



attack Lee's forces. One method he uses to reduce his anger is to carve on a piece of wood with no sculpture in mind. He takes relief instead from the act of cutting wood alone as if slicing the throats of his frustrations and perhaps those who frustrate him.

The chapter closes with an observation that the Confederates might have made, wondering why Grant sent his men into this impossible battleground. The observation carries with it another unstated question, "Why do the Confederates have to fight here too?" Both sides are suffering. Neither can get an upper hand. The whole thing must seem useless and stupid to the soldiers doing the fighting and dying.

Chapter 12 brings Lee dangerously close to the battle. His men are naturally concerned about the risk he takes because losing Lee could very well take away the last thread of hope for victory. Lee is fortunate to not be hit by all the whizzing bullets, known as minie balls, around him. Just as the situation looks grim with the cannon crews falling and the big gun fire diminishing, Longstreet's fresh troops arrive to turn back the Federal charge.

The scene with Lee and Stuart brings out more of the religious side of Lee and a more general spiritual side of Stuart. Stuart may have not been sleeping while standing but deep in a meditation focused on the fire. He tries to explain this but Lee immediately interprets what Stuart is thinking into conventional religious terms. A contrast of character comes out, reinforced by Stuart's dashing behavior versus Lee's reserved manner.

The scene where the veteran Confederate soldier shoots the wounded young soldier about to be burned to death by a brush fire adds high drama for the end of May 5th. The drama continues into May 6th with Lee finding himself in the thick of battle, peaking just as Longstreet arrives. This is a smooth lead-in to the next chapter, which is about Longstreet.



Part 2, Longstreet (Mid-Morning, May 6, 1864) Hancock (Late Afternoon, May 6, 1864): Chapters 13-14

Part 2, Longstreet (Mid-Morning, May 6, 1864) Hancock (Late Afternoon, May 6, 1864): Chapters 13-14 Summary

In Chapter 13, Longstreet's reinforcements arrive after marching thirty miles in less than two days. He orders his men into the skirmish lines with the intent of slowly but steadily pushing back on the enemy. The Confederate flank holds and the Federal soldiers must retreat back to their defenses. Longstreet is shown an unfinished railroad cut that could hide a buildup of troops to attack the Federal left flank. He orders Major Sorrel to lead three brigades down the cut and attack as soon as possible. The flank attack works, placing Hancock's Federal soldiers into a deep V. The Federal soldiers retreat from the two-sided attack. Longstreet continues to push ahead, but the troops become confused and fire on each other. The advance is stopped to gain order.

Chapter 14 gives Hancock's viewpoint after the retreat from the frontal and flank attacks. The troops gather behind a wall of logs and reorganize while the Confederates also reorganize. During this break in the fighting, the Federal soldiers move their big guns closer for defending Hancock's position. The battle becomes a waiting game. The Confederates attack first straight into Hancock. Meanwhile, Burnside brings his Federal soldiers against Hill on the Confederate left flank, and Ewell moves his Confederates against Warren's Federal soldiers, who are trying to hold a crossroads on the Orange Turnpike. The center of Hancock's line weakens as Ward withdraws his troops due to a brush fire having reached the log wall and igniting it. Hancock orders the center to be strengthened despite the fire, however the Confederates have already broken through. The Federal soldiers push back until the Confederates have to retreat through the fire and into an open field where they are defenseless. Many succumb to the flames before reaching the field.

Part 2, Longstreet (Mid-Morning, May 6, 1864) Hancock (Late Afternoon, May 6, 1864): Chapters 13-14 Analysis

Chapters 13 and 14 illustrate the ebb and flow of this battle in the Wilderness. First the Confederates execute a successful attack, driving the Federal soldiers behind their log wall situated along Brock Road. Then another assault is made on the center of the Federal line, resulting in a breakthrough. However, the Federal soldiers rally and push



the enemy back into a raging fire where many are burned to death. Those that escape the flames are shot in the open field beyond. The assault ends up a failure for the Confederates.

Interspersed with the battle narrative are back story observations regarding earlier battles. This narrative technique helps the reader understand how the war has changed, what the officers are thinking during the present battle, and gives insight into the main characters. The narrative also includes observations about the present battle from no particular character's viewpoint, as if looking on from a high vantage point. This shifting point of view emulates cinematography techniques common in modern popular films.

Chapter 14 ends with a touch of drama placed after the battle when Hancock surveys the charred log wall and the burned bodies of the Confederates. He says, "The soldiers have seen something new, a new horror, a new way to die. They have seen the face of hell" (pg. 161.) Hancock's concludes that no further attacks will come this way. Thematically, this reinforces the idea that soldiers may be brave and generals tactically strong, but no one wants to run straight back into the horror of death by fire. The implication is that the usual way of death by musket ball, cannon shot, saber slash, or bayonet stab is preferred.



Part 2, Lee (Late Afternoon, May 6, 1864) Grant (Evening, May 6, 1864): Chapters 15-16

Part 2, Lee (Late Afternoon, May 6, 1864) Grant (Evening, May 6, 1864): Chapters 15-16 Summary

Chapter 15 is a short accounting of Lee's feelings after the failed assault on Hancock's center when the log wall burned, the attack was repulsed, many Confederates died, and nothing was gained. While reviewing the day, Lee becomes upset that Ewell had not taken the initiative to attack the Federal right flank when the opportunity arose. He reflects on how Ewell had become less effective since losing his leg from battle wounds and since he had brought his wife along on this campaign. However, Lee can do very little to make his generals perform any better.

In Chapter 16, foreign dignitaries visit Grant's headquarters. The dignitaries talk about how civilized war was during their glory years and are shocked at how brutally fatal modern warfare has become. Grant dismisses their opinions as being the talk of old soldiers out of touch with today's realities. He tolerates their visits, while Meade expresses outright contempt for them. The next morning Grant walks down a hill accompanied by Elihu Washburne, a politician largely responsible for Grant's advancements. They discuss the attack of last evening and what damage had been done. Washburne warns Grant that an election is coming up and Lincoln might not win another term. From Washburne's viewpoint, Grant should focus on taking Richmond and Jefferson Davis. The advantage would be symbolic but would help Lincoln win the election. Grant argues that the symbolic victory would be useless. From his viewpoint, the only way to win the war is to defeat Lee's army and force surrender.

Part 2, Lee (Late Afternoon, May 6, 1864) Grant (Evening, May 6, 1864): Chapters 15-16 Analysis

Chapter 15 is a short accounting of Lee's feelings after the failed assault on Hancock's center when the log wall burned, the attack was repulsed, many Confederates died and nothing was gained. He sits on dead tree that is riddled with minie balls and contemplates the dead soldiers. Longstreet had been badly wounded, and Lee thinks about the implications of losing yet another good general. He concludes that Longstreet is too stubborn to die at this time, but thinks that God will not give a victory without taking something in return, such as Stonewall Jackson during the earlier part of the war. For this situation, the battle outcome is still unknown, and therefore Lee believes that Longstreet should survive his wound.



While reviewing the day, Lee becomes upset that Ewell had not taken the initiative to attack the Federal right flank when the opportunity arose. He reflects on how Ewell had become less effective since losing his leg from battle wounds and since he had brought his wife along on this campaign. However, Lee can do very little to make his generals perform any better.

In Chapter 16, foreign dignitaries visit Grant's headquarters. They talk derisively about Grant's habit of whittling wood and how that is not the way an army's general should behave. The dignitaries talk about how civilized war was during their glory years and are shocked at how brutally fatal modern warfare has become. Grant dismisses their opinions as being the talk of old soldiers out of touch with today's realities. He tolerates their visits, while Meade expresses outright contempt for them.

That evening when Sedgwick on the Federal right flank reports no activity, Gordon and Ewell attack. The Federal flank collapses but the oncoming darkness makes it impossible for the Confederates to follow through. The attack leaves the Federal soldiers panicked that they may be cut off from their supply line by morning. Grant calms down his generals and refutes the wild rumors of Confederate movements in the night. He reassures everyone that no such movements are possible and that the attack on the flank had been a minor skirmish.

The next morning Grant walks down a hill accompanied by Elihu Washburne, a politician largely responsible for Grant's advancements. They discuss the attack of last evening and what damage had been done. Washburne warns Grant that an election is coming up, and Lincoln might not win another term. From Washburne's viewpoint, Grant should focus on taking Richmond and Jefferson Davis. The advantage would be symbolic but would help Lincoln win the election. Grant argues that the symbolic victory would be useless. From his viewpoint, the only way to win the war is to defeat Lee's army and force surrender.

The next day Lee's troops head toward Spotsylvania to the south. The battle in the Wilderness turned out to be indecisive, neither side gaining an advantage over the other. However, Lee expected the Federal soldiers to do what they had always done, go back north. This time Grant pushes southward with determination.

Chapter 15 reveals more of Lee's beliefs about God. He interprets the battle outcome as an exercise in God's will and that this divine will is fair. If something is won, something else must be sacrificed. This philosophy helps Lee to understand why Stonewall Jackson died in the early part of the war and gives him comfort that Longstreet will survive his wound, even though it seems fatal. Nevertheless, Lee has regrets. The battle could have been decisive had Ewell performed better and taken the initiative rather than waiting for Lee's orders.

The scene where Lee sits upon the dead log that had been shot into splinters and reflects on the dead soldiers shows how he could easily lose focus on the overall battle. Lee must force his thoughts away from individual soldiers and toward his generals. If he were to lose this focus, the army might as well run away from the battle and let the



Federal soldiers take their objectives. Nothing effective could be done against the Federal soldiers without strong leadership.

Lee's internal conflict is between his duty and his humanity. His method of coping has its base in religion and its expression through anger toward Ewell, most of it internal. He does let Ewell know about the anger through a hard look, which is a reoccurring characteristic of Lee.

Chapter 16 opens with the foreign dignitaries visiting Grant's headquarters. They are shocked with the savagery of modern warfare because when they were in war, the tools of war were not as efficient. The minie balls are deadly at hundreds of yards, where the old unrifled muskets and simple round balls had very short ranges and far lower accuracy. Cannon rounds in the older wars were solid iron balls. For the Civil War, the cannon rounds are exploding hollow iron balls and shrapnel canisters designed to kill as many soldiers as possible.

The evening attack brings out how terrified the Federal soldiers are to be fighting in the Wilderness. Their imaginations run wild on how Lee's army is surrounding them, and it takes Grant's stubborn willpower to calm everyone down. Where Lee's character suppresses anger, Grant's character uses it to figuratively club his generals into line. An offsetting trait is his dry wit in the face of danger. Both characters are men of few words spoken at the right times.

When Grant discusses the war with Washburne, they bring out an overview of the current political situation. President Lincoln is under pressure to end the war and since he has not done that by Election Day, he might lose. This could change Grant's role as leader of the entire Federal army. The political recommendation is to take Richmond, capture Davis, and thereby increase Lincoln's chances of reelection. Grant rejects this idea as having no real importance in the war, showing how unimportant politics are to him. His entire focus is on beating Lee's army into submission and ending the war. This conflict between the political and military sides of war is presented almost entirely through dialogue, which is a technique of showing the conflict rather than telling it through narrative. The sparse narrative around the dialogue serves to describe setting and behaviors while leaving the conflict to the characters.



Part 2, Lee (May 9, 1864) Grant (May 9, 1864): Chapters 17-18

Part 2, Lee (May 9, 1864) Grant (May 9, 1864): Chapters 17-18 Summary

After the draw battle in the Wilderness, Lee races south to set up the defenses at Spotsylvania. In Chapter 17, Lee has beat Grant and has his men dig trenches from which to fight. He thinks about his generals and how weakened some of them have become. Ewell could not take the initiative like Stonewall Jackson had in the early war. Hill is still a good leader but has an illness that takes him out of the action intermittently. Longstreet was too often slow to move ahead, and the others were not remarkable but dependable. Stuart had successfully cut off the Federal drive south, giving time to dig the trenches. The strategic Petersburg rail center has to be defended because it is a major supply line for Lee's army. He must hold the line at Spotsylvania but the Federal soldiers have an advantage in that Lee cannot threaten their supply lines.

Chapter 18 opens with a description of General Sedgwick, commander of the Sixth Corps. A graduate of West Point, he has experience in Mexico, from the first Seminole Wars to the Indian battles in Utah and the fights over slavery in Kansas. Sedgwick comes to his end when a sharpshooter's ball hits him below an eye, killing him before the fight begins. Grant receives the news that Sedgwick has been killed. He cannot believe this bad turn of events and how a good commander with that much experience could be cut down so easily. Grant suffers in his tent over the loss and then orders a colonel to find out if Meade had chosen a replacement for Sedgwick.

The first attack on Lee's center fails due to lack of coordinated support. Grant gathers his generals together and demands answers as to why the attack failed, meaning why did the generals not carry out his orders. The situation is very tense until General Warren suggests that a war council would have helped. Grant rejects the suggestion and tells his generals that everyone must do their jobs correctly the next time.

Part 2, Lee (May 9, 1864) Grant (May 9, 1864): Chapters 17-18 Analysis

Chapter 17 consists of all narrative that describes Lee's defenses and the expected lack of support from Richmond. The use of trench warfare is new in that previous wars had been fought over open country with the occasional use of existing walls for cover. Digging trenches had not been considered the manly way to fight. If the use of quickly raised log walls had been a breach of war protocol, the use of trenches is considered to be not fit for war at all. However, Lee has no choice. His side of the war has become entirely defensive and he cannot expect reinforcements. The leadership under his



command has suffered the loss of effectiveness, and the supplies his army receives are meager.

The narrative moves into what Lee is feeling. His stomach tenses as he considers his chances but then he thinks of Stuart and the spirit of his leadership and cavalry. The tension turns to hope if his other leaders can rise to the occasion as he expects Stuart will. The chapter ends with an ominous statement that another change has happened that will keep the Confederates awake through the night. This creates curiosity about what that change might be.

Chapter 18 starts with the unexpected death of a key general, Sedgwick. From this event onwards, things turn from bad to worse. Grant accepts a plan to break through Lee's center, thus cutting the enemy in two. The first thrust is successful and Colonel Upton maintains the center break for an hour. However, the other troops that were to have pushed through never show up. Upton is forced back, which gives Lee a victory due to Federal incompetence. Grant is deeply upset over this failure, lets his generals know how he feels, and tells them that since he cannot court-martial them all on the spot, he will have to settle for demanding that they perform their jobs the next time.

This chapter explains why the Federal soldiers have not won the war so far. Communication is lacking and perhaps misunderstandings on Grant's authority cause some commanders to disregard his orders. Grant uses his anger, reinforced by his biting wit, to ensure that his generals understand who is in command. In another time and place, he might have threatened them all with beheading. For this war the threat of court-martial is enough.

Chapters 17 and 18 foreshadow the battle that is to come. Lee must play defense throughout, while Grant must push his larger but disorganized army forward. A chessboard simile is used to help illustrate the respective positions. Lee has to use strategy because he lacks chessboard pieces. Grant's pieces have minds of their own and so strategy cannot be effectively carried out, even if well constructed, because his pieces refuse to move forward.



Part 2, Stuart (May 11, 1864) Lee (May 11, 1864) Chamberlain (May 14, 1864): Chapters 19-21

Part 2, Stuart (May 11, 1864) Lee (May 11, 1864) Chamberlain (May 14, 1864): Chapters 19-21 Summary

Stuart prepares his Confederate cavalry to meet Sheridan's larger force. Sheridan's cavalry column stretches ten miles long, the largest force of this kind ever, and outnumbered Stuart by three to one. On top of this, Stuart knows that Sheridan's men have been equipped with seven-shot repeating carbines. He expects the Union cavalry to move straight south to Richmond. His troops await the confrontation at the Yellow Tavern. Sheridan's forces instead dismount and form battle lines. The lines head straight for Stuart's position, and he realizes that Richmond is not the goal. Instead, he is their target. A thunderstorm breaks out, giving Stuart's men welcome cover. However, the rain also penetrates and dampens some men's gunpowder, rendering their carbines useless. The fight lasts all morning and into the afternoon, a confused battle in the mud and rain. Stuart manages to rally his troops and push the Federal soldiers back, but one Union soldier does not retreat. He raises his pistol and shoots Stuart in the stomach.

While Stuart fights in the rain, Lee's situation is described in Chapter 20. The heavy rain seems to have stopped the Federal advance. Strangely, the Union band plays loudly while the Confederates compete with their instruments and voices. However, scouts report to Lee that the music is just covering the sounds of a Federal movement. The rain continues through the night and Lee is sure that fighting will not resume until after the weather clears. The trenches form a U shape, called the Mule Shoe, with the curve outward toward the enemy. Lee receives a message that the Federal soldiers are massing for an attack. Grant has placed Hancock before the Mule Shoe, Burnside to the Confederate right flank, Wright and Warren to the left flank. They attack at first light despite the fog and rain.

The rain has soaked the Confederate powder, so no volley could be shot at the oncoming Federal soldiers. The Federal soldiers break through, and the fight becomes more hand-to-hand than shooting, bayonets jabbing and muskets used as clubs. For once the Union attack is well coordinated with twenty thousand troops break into the Mule Shoe, forcing Lee's men back. Lee and Gordon rally the fleeing men, form a line, and push the Federal soldiers out of the Mule Shoe. With their momentum halted, the Union troops withdraw but only a few feet from the Confederate wall. Lee orders his men to dig another trench away from the wall. A shorter trench that would be easier to defend now that his army has been reduced by thousands of men killed or captured. At nightfall, Lee returns to his tent, where he learns that Stuart has died. Lee takes the news very hard.



Chapter 21 brings Chamberlain back into the action. He had been assigned to court-martial duty during his recovery from his wound, a position that he found to be confining. Chamberlain returns to his Fifth Corps command and witnesses the aftermath of the Mule Shoe battle. His men are subdued after the bloody battle an act very differently from other battles.

Part 2, Stuart (May 11, 1864) Lee (May 11, 1864) Chamberlain (May 14, 1864): Chapters 19-21 Analysis

In Chapter 19, part of Stuart's back story is told. He is familiar with Sheridan's cavalry units and their usual tactic of holding ground rather than moving ahead. Stuart thinks about his wife and children and how long it had been since he last saw them. He then considers the larger force, the superior weapons, and stronger horses of the Federal soldiers. What Stuart does not know is that Grant has given Sheridan permission to attack and eliminate the Confederate cavalry. The bits and pieces come together dramatically when Stuart realizes that Sheridan's objective is actually to kill him. The drama reaches its high point when Stuart is shot.

The long buildup to the battle scene and the relative shortness of the battle description enhance the dramatic effect of Stuart being shot. Although his side wins, Lee's army may have lost its greatest cavalry commander. Ironically, Stuart thought that God was on his side, bringing on the thunderstorm before the fight began. Stuart's death is cold and premeditated, where "the man lowered the pistol, still looked at him with the cold eyes, then turned, walked away, disappeared into the black rain" (pg. 202.) The imagery is that of a cold-hearted demon, which fits with Stuart's godliness and promotes the story of this battle into a mythological good versus evil theme.

Chapter 20 describes the Mule Shoe and Grant's attack that nearly cuts the Confederate army in two. The weather is sloppy, wet, and miserable throughout the battle. Rather than casting this in a good versus evil theme, the descriptions keep to hard reality. The attack reduces Lee's force by thousands. The terrible struggle at the wall becomes a stalemate. Lee has to retrench his troops and reassess his tactical situation without any knowledge of Grant's intentions. To make things worse, Lee hears of Stuart's death. The pressure becomes too great for Lee and he breaks down in tears.

Chapters 19 and 20 work together and create a tragic story. Things turn from relatively secure to falling entirely apart. At first Stuart and Lee believe the bad weather is to their advantage and that the hand of God is protecting them. The tragic story involves dashed hopes, a dead hero, and a cause that appears hopeless. Even though Stuart's men achieve victory over Sheridan's, Grant's attack causes severe damage to the main Confederate force. The tragedy ends with a great leader crying out of desperation, which is a classic scene.

Chapter 21 serves to reintroduce Chamberlain to the action and describe the scenes after the battle. Gettysburg and Fredericksburg had been bad, but the Mule Shoe was worse. This part of the Civil War is often glossed over in other histories. In this story, the



horror is graphically described, including both the battle scenes and the aftermath. Chamberlain and Tom try to think about better times. The conversation turns to home and their mother but the war creeps in. Chamberlain warns his younger brother that not coming home would kill their mother. A bit earlier, the older brother had embarrassed Tom and now he layers on guilt. Immediately, Chamberlain realizes what he has done and stops any further attempts at expressing what he feels. A question is left hanging whether Chamberlain has unwittingly foreshadowed his brother's death.



Part 2, Lee (May 24, 1864) Grant (May 25, 1864): Chapters 22-23

Part 2, Lee (May 24, 1864) Grant (May 25, 1864): Chapters 22-23 Summary

In Chapter 22, Lee discovers that Grant has not retreated and is moving his army toward the North Anna River with the intent to cross and move farther south. Lee quickly moves his forces to the southern bank of the river where he sets up a V defensive formation, the apex facing Burnside, the left flank facing Warren and Wright, and the longer right flank facing Hancock. Before Ewell can bring the right flank to the river, Hancock's men cross and occupy the intervening woods. Lee is very angry that Ewell failed to secure that part of the river crossing and tells him so. He orders Ewell to push the Federal soldiers back before they have time to entrench. Ewell fails to do this as well, but Grant's army is split in two. With darkness approaching, Lee has to wait until the next day before he can take advantage of the opportunity.

Chapter 23 gives Grant's viewpoint. He is aware that Lee has succeeded in splitting his army and that the Confederates could have put him into a very bad situation. Lee has taken no action and this remains a mystery and a stroke of luck. Grant orders his generals to move to the southeast and secure a strategic crossroads known as Cold Harbor. Lee's cavalry and some of the infantry try to stop Grant but Sheridan's cavalry succeeds in defending the Federal's move. Grant's army is no longer split, and both sides prepare for a battle, the line running north and south, Grant on the eastern side and Lee on the western. The first Federal assault on the third of June results in disaster because the Confederates had dug in and freely shot down Grant's men who advanced across an open field. Many Federal soldiers die, nearly forty percent of Grant's army. When Grant surveys the field, he cannot believe this has happened. That evening he wrestles with his feelings and admits to having made a serious mistake. He then decides to push south and cross the James River, maneuvering where his army can do the most harm to Lee's. Grant slips away from Cold Harbor by splitting his army. The heavy artillery and supply wagons take a route to Wyannoke Landing, where they cross the James over a pontoon bridge a half mile long. The army crosses on boats further upstream. Grant's objective is to take the rail center at Petersburg and thereby break part of the Confederate supply line.

Part 2, Lee (May 24, 1864) Grant (May 25, 1864): Chapters 22-23 Analysis

The war drags on in Chapters 22 and 23 because both sides make serious mistakes. Lee is frustrated because Ewell will not take the initiative like Stonewall Jackson had. Jackson however is dead and Lee has to remember that the war is completely different



in its current stage. He must work with the leadership he has, which is inferior to what he once had. Gordon is his best officer. He wishes he had more like him. Casting his regrets aside, Lee makes a good move at Cold Harbor by entrenching his line.

Grant makes a serious mistake at Cold Harbor and literally hands fifty thousand of his troops over to the Confederate minie balls. The horrific scene that he sees at the field of battle numbs him and then upsets him terribly. He cannot find any other justification than his own misjudgment of Lee's strength. Grant is tempted to start drinking and resists the temptation. This choice refutes the commonly held belief that he was an active alcoholic during the war and after while President of the United States. Rather than wallowing in regrets, Grant takes his failure and turns it into a hard resolve to beat Lee's army into submission. He crosses the James River and prepares to take Petersburg.

While Gettysburg is considered the turning point in the Civil War, and with good justification, the Cold Harbor disaster is what turns Grant's will from strong to absolute intensity. His only desire from this point on is to crush Lee's army. Until this time, he has been resolved to move south rather than retreating north. Now he intends to cut off the Confederate supply lines, push them westward and surround them. At this point he does not have a clear plan on how to accomplish this but he knows he will somehow.



Part 3, Lee (June 15, 1864) Chamberlain (June 18, 1864): Chapters 24-25

Part 3, Lee (June 15, 1864) Chamberlain (June 18, 1864): Chapters 24-25 Summary

As Lee prepares his army for the upcoming battle with Grant in Chapter 24, he listens to a captain under General Beauregard. The captain requests extra troops because Beauregard faces an unknown number of Federal soldiers under unknown command. Because so much is not known, Lee dismisses the captain without having made a commitment. However, Lee also realizes that Grant's next objective could be Petersburg rather than Richmond. Lee sends Early's troops to attack Washington and thereby reduce Grant's force near Petersburg. In response, Grant sends the Sixth Corps under Wright. The Federal soldiers set up their defenses in Washington before Early can do any damage. At Petersburg, the Federal soldiers fail to take it due to hesitation on their part. This allows Lee to reinforce his defenses around the city.

In Chapter 25, Chamberlain leads his Fifth Corps toward Petersburg along with Meade's forces. He unwittingly has his men set up camp too close to the Confederate line, which is just over a nearby rise. Chamberlain then learns from an artillery captain that the Fifth Corps have been ordered here to protect the cannon crews from infantry attack. The Confederates begin firing their cannons and Chamberlain realizes that his men are easy targets. General Griffin orders Chamberlain to take out the Confederate artillery. Chamberlain forms his men into lines and advances on the Confederate trenches. The Confederates fire one volley and then retreat, taking their artillery with them.

Chamberlain realizes that the easy battle was due to the Confederates having been too far forward. He surveys the main Confederate line through his field glasses, concluding that the next fight will be far more difficult. A courier brings a verbal order from Meade that Chamberlain is to attack immediately. He refuses because it would be suicide to do so without support from the rest of the army and sends the courier back with a written request for the support. Meade sets the time of attack in the afternoon and support does come.

When Chamberlain attempts to ensure that his flank will be covered, he is rebuked by General Cutler who says that he will do what needs to be done when the time comes. A corporal tells Chamberlain to take care. Chamberlain thinks he knows the man, but the man only reminds him of another soldier who had earlier died in battle. They both carried themselves the same as if knowing they would die that day. Chamberlain reflects on how both men were calm and had absolutely no fear, but a casual way about them and honesty from their clear perceptions. Once the battle begins, Chamberlain moves his brigade forward. A muddy creek must be crossed, slowing the advance. The Confederate artillery opens up, taking out the flag bearer in an instant and leaving no trace of the man behind. Chamberlain is hit and falls but is still alive.



Part 3, Lee (June 15, 1864) Chamberlain (June 18, 1864): Chapters 24-25 Analysis

Lee understands that the bloodbath at Cold Harbor was no Confederate victory but a monumental mistake on the Union side. He takes no pride in the butchering. On the other hand, he still has a war to run. After the Federal soldiers cross James River, the command goes to Beauregard. Lee worries that shifting command to him would cause undue confusion in his army when he needs everyone to perform faultlessly. His attempt to force Grant to divert troops to Washington works but it has little impact on the Federal army. Lee has few good options left to him and the trench fighting is purely defensive. He wishes that he could be as mobile as before and misses Stuart's leadership of the cavalry.

Chamberlain has his own problems. The Federal army suffers from egos like General Cutler, who could turn out to be unreliable once the battle begins. Some veterans and many fresh recruits make up his brigade. He knows the men will charge forward, but he is unsure that the fresh troops will perform well enough. The initial part of the battle encourages the new recruits, and this helps them prepare for the full charge into cannon and musket fire.

The corporal who reminds Chamberlain of another veteran soldier facing his own death serves to bring out an oddity about war. Those men who have some kind of premonition of their own deaths carry themselves differently. They walk in a casual manner and do not feel the normal fear other soldiers have. Their abilities to perceive the truth of the situation seem heightened, and as with this corporal, they may express concern for the safety of others. Perhaps the corporal saw something in Chamberlain that indicated he would be wounded in the battle.

The arrival of Merrick's support shows that the Federal army is developing better communications and coordination. However, Chamberlain does not see whether Cutler ever shows up to protect his flank. His wound early on in the fight disallows this as his men prepare him for transport to the field hospital.



Part 3, Grant (June 18, 1864) Chamberlain (June 29, 1864): Chapters 26-27

Part 3, Grant (June 18, 1864) Chamberlain (June 29, 1864): Chapters 26-27 Summary

Near a major river supply port, Grant eats with his officers in Chapter 26. The main course is roast beef, cooked very well done the way Grant like it. For dessert, he has a sugary date, which is a luxury item now readily available from the supply ships. General Meade rides into the camp to confer with Grant. They discuss the performance of Meade's troops during the battle. Coordination was still lacking, but Grant says that he has become accustomed to this, which surprises Meade. Grant explains that much ground has been covered, the enemy is largely defeated and with the Federal supply lines wide open, his army can take the time to select opportunities. They continue to discuss the weaknesses in the army but Grant assures Meade that all will be rectified over time. Grant goes to the dock to meet President Lincoln. Lincoln has been nominated for a second term, and now he is anxious to find out when the war will be over. Grant explains the situation that time and patience are needed for convincing Lee to surrender. Lincoln agrees and tells Grant that he will exercise patience. Grant then takes Lincoln on a tour of the camp, showing him many captured Confederate cannons.

Chamberlain's wound nearly killed him, but the doctors succeed in patching him up sufficiently to send him out on a hospital boat that takes him to the naval hospital in Annapolis. He cannot see the wounded soldier next to him but he hears the nurses talking in low voices about his condition, which must be serious. A thunderstorm develops and the loud thunderclaps cause many of the wounded men to scream out as if being bombarded. Chamberlain's wife comes to visit him along with his brother Tom and Lieutenant Colonel Gilmore. Gilmore reads Chamberlain's promotion order to Brigadier General that had been issued under the impression that he had died from his wound.

Part 3, Grant (June 18, 1864) Chamberlain (June 29, 1864): Chapters 26-27 Analysis

The tremendous advantage that Grant has over Lee is the Union supply line, now capable of delivering by water. Herds of cattle provide the beef for Grant's table and all his men. This in turn gives Grant the advantage of time. He can wait for Lee's men to starve and weaken. Meanwhile, Lee is restricted to fighting from trenches and has little mobility as a result. The war has become a siege.



Lincoln's nomination for a second term is a critical part of the strategy to end the war. His opponent in the primaries was George McClellan, who ran on a peace platform. The big question of whether the Republicans, Lincoln's party, were still willing to end the war victoriously for the Union had been answered.

Lincoln is presented as a tall, lanky and likable person. The Federal troops welcome him warmly, especially now that they are well fed and not in immediate danger. The entire mood of the army has lightened as victory seems near and relatively easy to secure.

Chamberlain's experience in the hospital brings out the drama of post-surgery recovery in the Civil War. The hospital is full of wounded men, some horribly so. They will carry their monstrous deformations for the rest of their lives because restorative plastic surgery has not yet been developed. Chamberlain can see only the wall and hear only whispered voices. He is likely heavily sedated with opium and so he experiences several hallucinations. The thunderstorm causes the wounded men to panic from PTSD or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, which is a psychological condition from war that is not well understood. However, the symptoms are the same for these men as with many combat veterans today.

Chamberlain's promotion to general carries with it high personal importance. His father had thought Chamberlain to not be soldier material and certainly not fit to lead as a general. The promotion would make Chamberlain's father proud, thereby proving an important point and gaining his father's wholehearted approval. The method employed to bring out the grim irony of having been issued the promotion posthumously—by dialog—combines both showing and telling. Gilmore reads the promotion order aloud to Chamberlain, which gives a better dramatic effect over straight narrative exposition. Conversely, Chamberlain's hospital experience before being visited is largely straight narrative exposition. This technique reduces the horror of the hospital scenes, which is important but not the central theme of the chapter. The central theme is that Chamberlain has at last made his father proud.



Part 3, Grant (July 27, 1864) Lee (July 30, 1864) Grant (July 30, 1864): Chapters 28-30

Part 3, Grant (July 27, 1864) Lee (July 30, 1864) Grant (July 30, 1864): Chapters 28-30 Summary

While Grant plays a waiting game in Chapter 28, he follows the advancement of Sherman during his march to the sea. Sherman's opponent is Johnston who has a small force of Confederates. As Sherman advances, Johnston retreats without engaging the larger Federal force. Confederate President Davis grows impatient with Johnston's constant retreats and replaces him with Hood, who is expected to put up a fight. Former miners work on digging a tunnel underneath the Confederate lines, an idea that Henry Pleasants had developed using his engineering experience. The plan is to dig the tunnel, load it with explosives, and blow a hole in the Confederate fortifications. General Burnside reports to Grant that the tunnel is ready and that General Ferrero will lead his division of Black soldiers into the breach. The soldiers have been trained specifically for this mission. Grant balks at using an all-Black division of inexperienced soldiers and what might happen if they suddenly appear behind the enemy's line. Burnside attempts to argue for using Ferrero's troops but fails. Grant is mostly concerned about the inexperience and not the racial side of the issue or the political advantage that President Lincoln may be seeking. Grant orders Meade to use the Fifth and Eighteenth Corps instead.

In Chapter 29 the Federal soldiers put the new mortar technology to use against the Confederate trenches. The mortars lob large steel balls in a long arc directly into the trenches with crushing force. Meanwhile Confederate sharpshooters snipe at the Federal soldiers. In the trenches, some of the Confederate troops can hear the faint sounds of the Federal soldiers digging the tunnel. The explosives in the tunnel go off, creating a massive crater in the Confederate line. The Federal soldiers advance, and the Confederates scramble. They point a cannon directly down into the crater, where Federal troops are moving in and trying to climb the dirt wall, firing downward to good effect. The crater becomes a death trap for the Federal soldiers as the Confederates bring muskets and bayonets up. Ferrero's Black troops move into the crater, and their presence angers the Confederates to the point that they stop taking prisoners. The attempt at breaking through becomes a disastrous slaughter of Federal troops.

Chapter 30 briefly describes what went wrong in the fight. Ferrero's troops might have done better going through the breach first because they had been trained for the mission. Four thousand Federal soldiers had died in the crater, and Grant is naturally very upset.



Part 3, Grant (July 27, 1864) Lee (July 30, 1864) Grant (July 30, 1864): Chapters 28-30 Analysis

The blowing of a large hole in the Confederate line by the use of a tunnel filled with explosives is a clever idea and a new one in warfare. Digging tunnels beneath city walls had been a siege technique used in ancient times, the point being to undermine the walls and cause them to topple. In this application, explosives blow out a huge crater. The unforeseen trouble comes in when Federal soldiers pour into the crater and become trapped there, the opposite wall being too steep. Meanwhile, the Confederate troops shoot directly down into the hole filling up with the defenseless enemy. The clever idea becomes a slaughter and a complete failure. Although not as bad as the mistake at Cold Harbor, Grant must bear the responsibility and disregard his understandable desire to lash out at the officers who had promoted the idea.

The brief mention of the new mortar technology dovetails with the tunnel plan. Innovation in war technologies and tactical schemes are hallmarks of the Civil War. Nevertheless, some technologies fail and some tactics prove to be deadly and counterproductive. The tunnel explosion did not result in an effective breach of the Confederate line and cost the Federal soldiers dearly. Vivid portrayals of soldiers being trapped and packed together so tightly that they could not fight back accentuate the utter failure of the new tactic. It is not tried again for the rest of the war.

Other histories of the Civil War give credit to Sherman's march to the sea as being one of the most important strategies for winning the war. The march cuts the Confederacy in two, but in this story the cutting of supply lines closer to Lee's army takes on a higher importance. Grant must force Lee to surrender, and although Sherman's march helps, it is still not the most important tactical approach. Chapter 30 brings up the chess metaphor again at its conclusion. As with checkmate, Grant must surround Lee enough that all options other than surrender become impossible. With Sherman to the south, the potential for this outcome becomes clearer to Grant.



Part 3, Lee (September 1864) Grant (November 1864) Lee (November 1864) Grant (Christmas 1864): Chapters 31-34

Part 3, Lee (September 1864) Grant (November 1864) Lee (November 1864) Grant (Christmas 1864): Chapters 31-34 Summary

In Chapter 31, Lee receives word that Hood had evacuated Atlanta after attempting to stop Sherman's march to the sea three times, each attempt a failure. Meanwhile, Grant's army extends the battle lines, forcing Lee to extend as well with no reinforcements. The Confederate line thins. He appeals to Davis with an idea to bring in new recruits from Georgia, but at this point in the war Davis has no influence. Georgia is in survival mode and keeps all its forces for its own defense. Furthermore, Lee can either defend Petersburg or Richmond, not both.

In Chapter 32, Grant receives word that Sherman has captured Atlanta. The news spreads throughout his army, raising the spirits of the men. What had been seen as only a siege had now turned into a victory that the newspapers could write about. However, Early had taken and hold control of the Shenandoah Valley. The Federal soldiers grow concerned about this because Lee's army might try to move westward into the Valley. Grant sends Sheridan to reclaim the Valley, and Sheridan succeeds with a force of 40,000 men compared to Early's 15,000. This cuts off any hope that Lee's army could gain supplies from the Valley or move there. While Grant spends time with his family, he visits with General Hancock, Meade's replacement. Washington had lost patience with Meade's leadership. Hancock, an older man, would be an asset for recruiting new soldiers even if his ability to lead might not be strong. Grant accepts the change without protest. Then Grant learns of Lincoln's reelection. This is also good news for his army because the men think that it means the war will soon be over with the Union victorious.

To Lee the news of Lincoln's reelection is not good, as explained in Chapter 33. He had hoped that the peace movement in the North would have pushed Lincoln out and the easiest way to achieve peace would be to abandon the war effort, thus allowing the Confederacy to go its own way. He receives the news that Hood, having gone north after the fall of Atlanta, had tried to take Nashville, a major rail hub. The attempt failed and the Confederates lost their big guns, many commanders, and many more men. The thought that Sherman might move north strikes Lee. This would nearly surround his army. By Christmas of 1864, Lee's army is starving and desertions are high. The people of Richmond bring whatever they can out to the army for Christmas dinner.

In Chapter 34, Grant receives a telegram that informs him of Sherman's taking of Savannah, thus completing his march to the sea by Christmas and debunking all the



predictions of failure. Grant decides that Sherman's next move will be north. Pondering the newspaper reports from northern and southern papers, Grant thinks about the war and how everyone is involved, if not directly in the respective armies, then indirectly in supporting the armies. He justifies Sherman's actions during his march, even though the actions may have been brutal.

Part 3, Lee (September 1864) Grant (November 1864) Lee (November 1864) Grant (Christmas 1864): Chapters 31-34 Analysis

The contrast between north and south during the Christmas season of 1864 is presented in Chapters 31 through 34. Lee's situation is desperate and becoming worse. He cannot expect supplies or reinforcements. The campaigns to stop Sherman and to take Nashville fail. His greatest fear that Sherman will move north becomes a reality once Grant makes the decision. Christmas dinner for his troops, provided by the people in Richmond, consists of not much more than bread and sweet potatoes. The scene of the food being carted out to the Confederate lines is pathetic in that no meat can be provided.

Meanwhile the northern troops feast on fresh beef and all the bounty that can be shipped to them. Victories follow victories in a steady pace. Grant has almost completely surrounded Lee's army and most of Lee's supply lines either cut or soon to be captured. Lincoln has been reelected, dashing another of Lee's hopes that the northern peace movement would successfully place a pacifist in Washington and that the new President would call for an immediate end to the war. Instead, the people have gone with the idea that the Confederacy must be eliminated for the Union to continue existing.

Where Lincoln starts his second term with high hopes, Davis seems to be losing his mind. He makes unreasonable demands on Lee to hold both Petersburg and Richmond and Lee wonders exactly how this is to be done. This is not the first time that messages from Davis make no sense. At first, Lee had thought that Davis simply did not understand the situations. Now he knows that a lack of understanding is not the problem. The Confederate government does not want to understand and instead clings to fantasies.

The Christmas scene of Lee riding his horse into Richmond is dark and dreary. This also contrasts with Grant's scene, in which he works comfortably with his family around him and decorations, although meager, add color within his log cabin. The only bright part of Lee's scene is the generosity of the Richmond population.

Grant's thoughts about the war bring out questions on whether Sherman's march to the sea was truly as brutal as popularly thought. Certainly fields and buildings were burned along the way, but the infrastructure that supported Lee's army had to be destroyed. Sherman is given credit for coining the phrase, "War is hell," from a speech that he



delivered. However, Grant rejects the criticism that civilians should not be targeted during wartime. If war and hell are synonymous, that hell should be shared by everyone and not just the soldiers. Grant also thinks about the land torpedoes, known in modern times as landmines, used by the armies. They will injure or kill civilians as well as soldiers without discrimination.

The biting theme of Grant's observations could be true today. Collateral damage during bombings, whether smart bombs or drone bombs, is a fact of modern warfare. Civilians often are targeted during attempts at ethnic cleansing, and certainly with terrorist bombings. Whether this is right or wrong may not be the point. Grant feels that this is simply a consequence of warfare that cannot be avoided.



Part 3, Grant (February 3, 1865) Lee (February 1865): Chapters 35-36

Part 3, Grant (February 3, 1865) Lee (February 1865): Chapters 35-36 Summary

Chapter 35 gives the scene of Confederate officials visiting Lincoln near Grant's headquarters. The officials, consisting of the vice president, assistant secretary of war, and president of the senate first pass by Lee's army before entering the Union encampment and being escorted by Federal soldiers to Lincoln, who is in a steamer on the river. The peace negotiations go nowhere because Lincoln wants the Confederacy to rejoin the Union. Davis has given the officials orders to not agree to this under any circumstances. Lincoln later discusses the negotiations with Grant. The President says that he was willing to give a blank sheet of paper to the Confederates, on which they could have laid out their requirements. Lincoln was even prepared to allow slavery in the South if it meant preserving the Union. When the officials arrived, both armies were overjoyed that peace might be at hand. Soldiers left their fortifications and stared across the field at one another. Celebrations were underway. Then the officials left, the news that no peace had been arranged spread, and that night the cannons on each side begin their usual barrages.

In Chapter 36, Lee considers what must happen next. He accepts the high leadership of the entire Confederate army, which means he no longer must deal with other generals as equals. The message from Richmond is that the South needs strong central leadership during this time and Lee thinks this might go so far overboard that he becomes the dictator of the Confederacy. He does not want this to happen.

Part 3, Grant (February 3, 1865) Lee (February 1865): Chapters 35-36 Analysis

The one peace conference of the Civil War fails. Neither side is willing to give in on whether the Confederacy should be allowed to stand or if it should be pulled back into the Union. The failure deeply saddens Lincoln and puts Lee back into his worsening situation. The soldiers on both sides reveal their desires for peace through their celebrations and are disappointed when they discover the failure.

When Lincoln tells Grant that he would have been willing to allow slavery, the idea that the Civil War was about the states' right to secede from the Union is reinforced. Nevertheless, slavery is an emotional issue if not political, as shown by the Confederates' reaction to seeing Black soldiers in the crater during the failed attempt to blow a hole in the Confederate line as revealed in Chapter 29.



When Lee considers what it might mean to be the supreme commander of all the Confederate forces, he thinks about the possibility that we would become a dictator. He finds the idea repulsive because he admires George Washington as a soldier and the first President of the United States. The Confederacy was supposed to be a looser union of states than the north and not a return to tyranny. Still, he accepts the assignment in order to more efficiently use what force the south has left. He does this without fanfare or any celebration. Lee considers it is his duty to win this war and not an opportunity to advance his political career.

In Chapter 33, imagery is used to vividly portray the oddness of the peace conference. A fancy carriage brings the Confederate officials to Lincoln. It passes along the Confederate line first before crossing over to the Federals. The carriage driver looks this way and that, nervous to be so close to the enemy. The two armies rise from their defenses and stare at each other, then have celebrations to welcome the peace that does not come. The ending scene is at night with the cannons firing and a return to the business of war.

Chapter 34 is primarily narrative that reveals Lee's strategy for continuing the fight. His primary concern will be addressed, which is stopping Sherman's move northward. With full command of the army, he no longer needs to negotiate with other generals. This is his only use of the supreme command and he rejects the possibility of taking over Richmond through a military coup. His attitude reflects the fact that although states' rights may be the primary political issue that keeps the war going, everyone involved wants freedom and is against tyranny. The North wants freedom for all people while the South wants freedom for the states, and strangely from the modern perspective, the freedom to maintain slavery. In the nineteenth century, this way of thinking was not as strange because the United States was founded with slavery and counted each slave as three-fifths of a person during the early Censuses. The Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States abolished slavery and was ratified in December of 1865.

An argument can be made that states' rights was the only reason for the Civil War, but the buildup to the war refutes this argument. The nation had split between abolitionist and slave states, and the issue was of high importance to territories entering the Union during this time. Lincoln had issued the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 as well, which set the Union firmly on the side of abolitionists. His willingness to compromise with the Confederacy to bring the South back into the Union does not change this fact. Rather, the willingness to compromise illustrates how desperately Lincoln wanted to end the war.



Part 3, Lee (March 23, 1865) Gordon (March 25, 1865) Grant (March 26, 1865) Chamberlain (March 29, 1865): Chapters 37-40

Part 3, Lee (March 23, 1865) Gordon (March 25, 1865) Grant (March 26, 1865) Chamberlain (March 29, 1865): Chapters 37-40 Summary

Lee visits General Pickett in the first part of Chapter 37. He detects that Pickett had lost his will to fight at Gettysburg when he led a disastrous charge. Although Lee understands, he decides not to put Pickett in critical places. Lee worries that more of his generals might be losing their wills to fight.

General Gordon proposes a battle plan to Lee, which is accepted. In Chapter 38, the story of the battle is told from Gordon's point of view. His plan involves the taking of Fort Stedman at night and turning the Union cannons on the Federal entrenched line. Then his men are to take other forts along the line and do the same thing. The plan depends on stealth and surprise. Positioning his troops goes smoothly enough. The attack starts and the Confederates break through the Union line, taking Fort Stedman. However, the strength of the Union artillery is terribly underestimated. Three full batteries of cannon, positioned behind the fort, open up. Batteries to the left and right do the same. The Confederates fail to secure enough cannons to complete their mission and must retreat on the run.

In Chapter 39, Grant discusses the Confederate attack on Fort Stedman with Lincoln. Grant worries that Lee might move out of his present position, which would lengthen the war. Lincoln reassures Grant that the war is still his call and that Washington politics will not interfere with his decisions. Sheridan returns to learn that the rumors of him being assigned away from Grant's position are false, planted to thwart information leaks to the press and thereby to the enemy.

Chapter 40 brings Chamberlain back to the war. His troops engage the Confederates from the south across Gravelly Run. Sheridan's troops have concentrated at the courthouse and Warren's forces backup Chamberlain. The attack begins with Chamberlain too far forward. He takes a wound that is not fatal, a minie ball that first hit his horse in the neck and then cut his side. The wound is not fatal to the horse either, and Chamberlain rides back to the battle. He dismounts and takes a look at the field of battle. Confederates surround him and demand that he surrenders. Thinking quickly, Chamberlain pretends to be a Confederate officer, and the ruse works due to his



uniform being dirty and soaked in blood from his and the horse's wounds. He then leads the Confederates straight into his own men who surround and capture them.

Part 3, Lee (March 23, 1865) Gordon (March 25, 1865) Grant (March 26, 1865) Chamberlain (March 29, 1865): Chapters 37-40 Analysis

Chapters 37-40 describe the initial battles of the Civil War endgame. Grant's overall plan has not yet been revealed, but he needs to keep Lee from retreating to the south. Meanwhile, Lee must come up with a plan, which Gordon provides. It is a bold plan that must be carried out flawlessly and it is a plan of last hope. However, the plan turns out to be flawed from the beginning because the Union artillery is stronger than anticipated, and the need for Confederate cannon fire had not been foreseen to cover the retreat.

The scene before the battle for Fort Stedman gives drama to the story. A Confederate soldier is nearly caught while moving a board across a cornfield. A Union soldier challenges him but the Confederate says he is just gathering corn for rations. The Union soldier says that he will not shoot a hungry man gleaning dropped corn from the fall harvest. This exchange had happened before and the Confederate considers the Union soldier to be a friend. When ordered to shoot the Union soldier, he refuses. Instead, he hollers a warning and shoots into the air, which sets off the attack.

A similar drama appears in Chapter 40. Chamberlain is captured by Confederate troops but pulls off a ruse. Confederates also cheer for him after he shows outstanding courage, being so close to the action when his training has taught him to stay one hundred fifty yards to the rear.

Irony happens when Gordon captures a Union officer at the beginning of the battle for Fort Stedman, only to see the same officer during the retreat. The Union officer nods as if to say that the attack had been hopeless from the beginning. For Chamberlain, the irony consists of the cheer from the Confederates and his captors being captured themselves through his quick-witted ruse.

The scene of Grant and Sherman at dinner with Grant's wife Julia brings in a touch of humor. Sherman teases Julia about being around when such top secret information is to be discussed. Julia plays along and puts on a southern belle accent. The humor helps take the edge off the battle scenes, as does the ruse that Chamberlain uses toward the end of his battle.



Part 3, Lee (March 31, 1865) Chamberlain (April 1, 1865) Lee (April 2, 1865): Chapters 41-43

Part 3, Lee (March 31, 1865) Chamberlain (April 1, 1865) Lee (April 2, 1865): Chapters 41-43 Summary

In Chapter 41, Lee reflects on the state of his army after the failed attempt to implement Gordon's plan and the Union's successful push from the south. His cavalry is greatly outnumbered and his lines stretched thin. He worries about Pickett and his important mission to hold a flank because if he fails, the Federal's could take over an important rail line. Chamberlain links up with Sheridan in Chapter 42. The push against Pickett near the intersection of three roads known as Five Forks starts out confused. Sheridan displays a stubborn side that reminds Chamberlain of Grant, but his leadership does bring order to the attack. Pickett is driven back, along with Fitz Lee's cavalry. Chapter 43 opens with the Federal soldiers pushing hard on Lee's front. The Confederates are in retreat while Lee attempts to understand the situation. He sees that an orderly retreat across the Appomattox River is still possible, and that the bridges can be burned once his army reaches the other side.

Part 3, Lee (March 31, 1865) Chamberlain (April 1, 1865) Lee (April 2, 1865): Chapters 41-43 Analysis

The battles described in Chapters 37-40 have weakened Lee's lines to where soldiers are six feet apart. During the Federal push from the south described in Chapters 41-43, the lines become even more weakened with soldiers ten feet apart. The Federal soldiers discover this and push straight on through, encountering mostly feeble resistance. Lee attempts to hold onto Petersburg but is pushed back by an all-out assault. His only option is to retreat across the Appomattox River, yet still he has hope that the Union army can be split and defeated if he can make a rail line that would take his army southward. However, the end of the Civil War is very near.

Chamberlain's near argument with Sheridan over who has command and who is in the wrong place comes from Chamberlain's viewpoint. After Sheridan corrects the confusion, Chamberlain realizes that the ham-handed approach to leadership was entirely justified for the situation. This shows the fair balance that Chamberlain has developed in his understanding of war where death and destruction are required to achieve objectives and feelings cannot be spared when plans fall apart.

Chapter 43 ends with Lee overlooking the retreat of his army, with a reference to how he overlooked the retreat after Gettysburg at the beginning of the book. The munitions



magazine in Petersburg blows up and cannon rounds explode in the night sky. The dramatic scene is oddly beautiful, like the Fourth of July, thinks Lee. This thought turns to a statue of George Washington in Richmond. Lee refuses to believe that the Federal soldiers would harm that statue, no matter what other damage they might do to the city, thus emphasizing the theme that both sides have common origins.

Two Federal soldiers shoot and kill General Hill. This scene develops through about an equal amount of narrative and dialog, and to good effect. It is not known until later that the officer shot is indeed Hill, one of Lee's better leaders. During the scene, the officer remains unnamed. The soldiers look over the body and assess that the shots went clean through the heart, as if examining a deer carcass. They express pride in having taken down an officer, another parallel to hunters taking pride in having killed a buck with large antlers. Irony plays a part in that the soldiers have no idea who they killed or how Lee will take the loss.



Part 3, Lee (April 4, 1865) Grant (April 5, 1865) Lee (April 6, 1865) Grant (April 7, 1865): Chapters 44-47

Part 3, Lee (April 4, 1865) Grant (April 5, 1865) Lee (April 6, 1865) Grant (April 7, 1865): Chapters 44-47 Summary

Lee expects a shipment of rations for his men to arrive in Chapter 44. His army is starving and discarding their muskets. When he arrives, he discovers that the train from Richmond contains no food, just ammunition to continue the war. In Chapter 45, Grant takes Petersburg and the Federal soldiers take Richmond. Grant thinks that Lee has only one way to go, toward Danville. Grant rides out to Sheridan's position south of Amelia, where Lee's army has dug in. Lee, Sheridan, and Meade have a conference in which Grant decides to cut off Lee's retreat to Danville.

Chapter 46 opens with Lee considering two alternatives. He can try to make Danville before the Federal soldiers get there or try for Lynchburg in Tennessee, which would take his army westward. He then learns about food rations in Farmville for his starving army and decides to go there first. The Federal Second Corps engage with Gordon's troops at Saylor's Creek, resulting in heavy Confederate casualties. At Farmville, men are still lining up to receive rations when the train pulls away due to pressure coming from Federal soldiers. Lee's troops have failed to burn all the bridges because the Federal soldiers were pressuring them. Lee decides to turn his troops to the next rail station at Appomattox. In Chapter 47, Grant's army gathers in the abandoned town of Farmville. Grant offers Lee a chance to surrender, which is turned down.

Part 3, Lee (April 4, 1865) Grant (April 5, 1865) Lee (April 6, 1865) Grant (April 7, 1865): Chapters 44-47 Analysis

The end of the Civil War draws near as both armies concentrate around the town of Appomattox on the river of the same name. Lee is drawn there to collect rations for his starving troops. Grant is drawn there because that is where Lee will be.

The portrayal of Lee is a man of high hopes with not much on which to base them. He has witnessed firsthand the condition of his men. They abandon muskets and packs to keep on moving, a mass of men without the ability to fight. Only a few units can still put up resistance, and these panic easily as the Federal soldiers engage. Additionally, the shipment of ammunition rather than rations has seriously stricken down moral. Farmville



does provide food, but that food has to be taken away before all or even most of the men could be fed. The next stop is the fateful town of Appomattox, where the food has gone.

Grant recognizes Lee's hopeless situation after Lee's troops fail to burn the bridges. Grant's cavalry has already crossed, along with infantry support. He knows that Lee's troops are starving, and that any victory for the Confederates is not possible. The Federal soldiers have taken many Confederate prisoners without a fight, whole units that just drop their arms and surrender. To avoid any further bloodshed, Grant offers a chance for Lee to surrender. Lee's refusal astonishes Grant. He wonders if Lee expects the Federal soldiers to just give up and leave. This exchange of communications underlines Lee's irrational hope for victory or for escape to Tennessee.



Part 3, Chamberlain (April 8, 1865) Lee (Night, April 8, 1865) Chamberlain (Dawn, April 9, 1865) Lee (Morning, April 9, 1865) Grant (Afternoon, April 9, 1865): Chapters 48-52

Part 3, Chamberlain (April 8, 1865) Lee (Night, April 8, 1865) Chamberlain (Dawn, April 9, 1865) Lee (Morning, April 9, 1865) Grant (Afternoon, April 9, 1865): Chapters 48-52 Summary

Chapter 48 gives Chamberlain's view of Saylor's Creek. He sees that it was not a battle at all but an abandonment of equipment and animals by the Confederates. No sign of combat remains, only the broken cannon and carts. That night, he receives orders from Sheridan to move his forces forward to Appomattox, and Chamberlain immediately responds. In Chapter 49, Lee camps with what remains of his army near the town of Appomattox. He thinks about how the war has gone, the loss of good generals and soldiers, how what remains of his army consists of those men who will fight to the end. He talks with his nephew Fitz Lee about what cavalry had taken over the town. Fitz thinks that it is either Custer or Devin. Lee then discusses their chances with Longstreet, who believes that their forces can break through.

Chamberlain approaches Appomattox in Chapter 50. He receives orders to move forward and reinforce Sheridan's cavalry. General Ord contradicts Sheridan's orders by telling Chamberlain to not go over the crest of a hill because he would expose his troops to fire. Chamberlain ignores the order and moves ahead. A few cannon shots come his way but what remains of Lee's army is not organized. Many men do not have muskets and most of the cannons are simply parked and not ready for battle. Chamberlain halts his troops while a Confederate officer rides his way under a white flag. The officer tells Chamberlain that Lee is ready to surrender. Lee prepares to surrender in Chapter 51. He first consults his generals and assesses his troop strength. The remaining men are willing to fight but their numbers are too low. Lee cannot see the sense in carrying on, especially after he receives another offer from Grant to meet and discuss the terms of surrender. Lee orders his generals to continue the ceasefire until he can complete the surrender with Grant. The Confederates protest his decision.



Part 3, Chamberlain (April 8, 1865) Lee (Night, April 8, 1865) Chamberlain (Dawn, April 9, 1865) Lee (Morning, April 9, 1865) Grant (Afternoon, April 9, 1865): Chapters 48-52 Analysis

The Civil War comes to an end with Lee's decision to surrender. No further bloodshed will be allowed, although a Federal lieutenant is shot while Chamberlain talks to the Confederate officer under a white flag. The musket ball kills the man instantly, marking this the final death of the war. His name is given as Lieutenant Clark of New York. This scene gives high drama to the war's end.

General Lee must take the best course of action to avoid further bloodshed. He knows that if his forces fight on, a massacre will result. Conducting guerilla warfare would only lead to more suffering for his soldiers and civilians caught in the crossfire. The only good alternative is surrender and he hopes that Grant will be fair. Longstreet assures Lee that Grant is a fair person. When Lee's men cry out while he rides away to Appomattox adds drama to this scene as well.

Chamberlain sees civilian carriages and clothing at a Saylor's Creek crossing in Chapter 48. Civilian involvement in the war makes him wonder if the Federal soldiers are seen as demons. This foreshadows what Lee considers important while he considers surrender and that the war should end decisively in order to spare civilian lives. In a previous chapter, Lincoln expresses his desire for the South to rejoin the Union and for the emotional wounds to heal. Grant agrees with Lincoln, and now Lee joins them in the desire to heal the nation. The Confederacy can no longer exist although Lee had tried as best he could to maintain and defend it. This takes a great deal of courage because Lee realizes that the Federal soldiers could hang him as a traitor despite Grant's fairness.



Part 3, Chamberlain (April 12, 1865) Lee (April 12, 1865) Grant (April 14, 1865): Chapter 53-55

Part 3, Chamberlain (April 12, 1865) Lee (April 12, 1865) Grant (April 14, 1865): Chapter 53-55 Summary

Chamberlain and Griffin accept the Confederate arms in Chapter 53. The Confederate troops respond to their officer's commands, General Gordon. They fix bayonets, stack the muskets into conical configurations with the butts down and bayonets up, deposit their cartridge boxes, and drape the Confederate flag over one of the stacks. Upon this action, many Confederate soldiers break ranks and weep over their fallen flag while the Federal soldiers look on. A few moments later, they reform the ranks. Chamberlain makes an order to carry arms to the Federal soldiers, a formal salute to the surrendering Confederates. Gordon returns the salute. In Chapter 54, Lee decides not to attend the surrender of arms ceremony. His decision is based on the strong possibility of his presence causing disruptions, since his men identify him as a symbol of their cause. Instead, he rides through his camp and reflects on the war, and then rides into the countryside. Grant goes to Washington in Chapter 55 and visits Lincoln. Lincoln suggests that Grant could run for office, and Grant thinks this is a bad idea. He prefers the relative simplicity of military service over politics. Lincoln asks Grant to stay but Grant does not do so because his wife wants to go to their home in New Jersey and reunite with their children. In New Jersey, Grant learns of Lincoln's assassination.

Part 3, Chamberlain (April 12, 1865) Lee (April 12, 1865) Grant (April 14, 1865): Chapter 53-55 Analysis

The surrender of Confederate arms to the Federal soldiers is a ceremony full of emotion. However, in defeat Lee's soldiers show remarkable discipline and only break down briefly when their flag is lowered. The salute that Chamberlain orders and Gordon answers symbolizes the fact that the soldiers on both sides respect each other.

Lee's reflections on the war summarize the overall feelings for himself and his men. The reasons for defeat had nothing to do with their performance or courage. Superior performance, courage, and strong leadership kept the South in the war for longer than expected if only numbers were to be analyzed. The North outnumbered them and had better supply lines and more highly developed manufacturing. What defeated the South was Grant's stubborn advances and the North's willingness to sacrifice however many lives it would take to end the war in victory.



The death of Lincoln is arguably a disadvantage for the South but the abuses of the carpetbaggers during Reconstruction could have happened anyway. This story speculates that Lincoln would have controlled the situations, but it is merely a speculation on what might have happened. Chapter 53 foreshadows Grant's election to president, which did happen. History usually does not speculate, but historical fiction is free to do so.



Part 4, Lee (Blue Ridge Mountains, September 1870) Grant (Mount McGregor, New York, July 1885) Chamberlain (Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, Spring 1913): Chapters 56-58

Part 4, Lee (Blue Ridge Mountains, September 1870) Grant (Mount McGregor, New York, July 1885) Chamberlain (Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, Spring 1913): Chapters 56-58 Summary

Lee has moved to Lexington in Chapter 56. He has taken a position with Washington College to rebuild it and also works with his church. He becomes sick and dies in his home.

In Chapter 57, Grant writes his memoirs at a house in the Blue Ridge Mountains. He has contracted throat cancer and knows he does not have much time left. Samuel Clemens, famously known as "Mark Twain," his publisher, comes to visit. After small talk, Clemens asks if Grant is near the finish of his memoirs.

Chamberlain revisits Gettysburg for a reunion of Civil War veterans in Chapter 58. He has done this for many years and has grown old. He walks to where his part of the battle occurred, which is an area known as Little Round Top. Grant reminisces about some of the veterans who have died since the war ended. An automobile drives through the battleground. The year is 1913 and so cars are new technology. Chamberlain thinks about how the world has changed. He dies in 1914.

Part 4, Lee (Blue Ridge Mountains, September 1870) Grant (Mount McGregor, New York, July 1885) Chamberlain (Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, Spring 1913): Chapters 56-58 Analysis

These three chapters cover the lives of the three main characters, Lee, Grant, and Chamberlain. Lee's death is dramatically portrayed as a speculative look into the afterlife. He moves onward with soldiers from both sides toward whatever awaits them, possibly heaven because Lee lived his life as a devout Christian. Grant leaves behind his finished memoirs, including two volumes published by Samuel Clemens, and they



become best-sellers immediately. Grant had worked on these memoirs into the final month of his life, dying two days after completing the manuscript. Clemens had given Grant a generous royalty advancement of half a million dollars, the equivalent of 11.8 million in today's money because Grant had been a victim of a swindle that left him destitute. Chamberlain lives into his eighties, faithfully attending the reunions at Gettysburg. The irony in his death is that World War I starts six months later, which becomes an even bloodier conflict than the Civil War due to mechanized warfare, symbolized by the automobile he sees while attending his last reunion.

Both Lee and Grant continue to serve their country until death. Grant becomes the eighteenth President of the United States, serving from 1869 to 1877. His presidency, although not outstandingly remarkable, does maintain order when chaos threatens to overrun the country. He leaves behind his memoirs, which are still published today. Lee does not write his memoirs because he can see that doing so would bring further harm to the South. He rebuilds Washington College and his reputation helps to make the institution thrive. His work within his church can also be considered service to his country on a local level.



Characters

Robert E. Lee

Lee commands the Army of Northern Virginia until toward the end of the war when he commands the entire army. He rides a horse named Traveler, one of the more famous horses in US history. The war is in Lee's favor until the battle at Gettysburg and he takes the blame for that loss. However, he also knows that Stuart had let him down. Stuart did not have his cavalry where Lee needed them.

Lee's character often becomes angry with the failings of his subordinates but he keeps the anger down as much as he can. His officers understand the anger from Lee's hard looks toward them. Lee thinks often about God and God's will. He often interprets his wins and defeats as the will of God and thinks that the will has balance.

The war after Gettysburg has changed, and Lee realizes this. His supply lines have been reduced and continually shrink. He must resort to trench warfare, which is a defensive tactic that restricts the movements and speed of his army. Nevertheless, he searches for ways to push the Federals out of the South up until his surrender at Appomattox.

After the war, Lee continues to serve his country until his death. He tries to write his memoirs but lacks the motivation to do so. He does not believe that the memoirs would do any good and could bring more harm to the South. Instead, he puts his energies into rebuilding Washington College and supporting his church.

Ulysses S. Grant

Lincoln promotes Grant to lead the entire Federal army after he had displayed strong leadership in battle. Grant brings a stubborn determination to the war that had not been there before. Unlike Lee, Grant often expresses his anger in terms that cannot be mistaken. He can make tactical mistakes such as the failed attack at Cold Harbor, but he always takes responsibility. He knows that winning the war is a matter of time.

Grant surprises Lee in that he continually pushes southward. Lee had become accustomed to the Federals retreating back north in almost all cases. Not only does Grant continue pushing, he has Sherman marching to the sea and coming back north to surround Lee's army. Grant's overall strategy is to keep pushing Lee and cutting his supply lines. The strategy eventually works.

After the war, Grant serves as President of the United States for two terms. He contracts throat cancer and writes his memoirs with the help of Samuel Clemens, his publisher and well-known author by the pen name Mark Twain. Grant's motivation to write his memoirs is strong because a bad business deal had left him destitute. The generous royalty advance puts him back in good financial condition. He succeeds in



finishing the memoirs before his death and the two-volume set becomes an immediate best-seller.

Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain

Chamberlain becomes noticed after his bayonet charge in the Battle of Gettysburg. He continues to lead his forces courageously and effectively while under Grant. However, his character serves to give a different perspective on the Civil War.

The story gains insight into the wounded through Chamberlain's eyes. He also ponders the nature of war and what it might mean, which is not such an important question for others who had chosen military careers before the war. Chamberlain serves because of the war and would have followed an academic path otherwise. He is sensitive to the impact of war on civilians more so than other generals and may have a better understanding in the aftermath of the Civil War. While other generals argue about various details of the war, Chamberlain reflects on the fading importance of it as the world moves onward toward the mechanized World War I.

James Longstreet

Longstreet is one of Lee's most trusted commanders. Longstreet arrives at the Wilderness just in time to keep the battle a draw rather than a Federal victory. Lee often confers with Longstreet on strategies. Just before surrendering, Lee asks if Longstreet can see any other way.

William Tecumseh Sherman

Sherman is a good friend of Grant's. Sherman's march to the sea cuts Lee off from the west, and his march northward strengthens Grant's position. Grant and Sherman plan the endgame of the Civil War together.

Philip H. Sheridan

Sheridan leads the Federal cavalry, which vastly outnumbers the Confederate cavalry. He pushes for more combat involvement but Grant also wants Sheridan's forces to be the eyes of the army.

J.E.B Stuart

Stuart leads the Confederate cavalry. He has a flamboyant style and enthusiasm. He let Lee down at Gettysburg and has a strong desire to make up for that. Stuart dies in battle before the end of the war.



George Gordon Meade

Meade is one of Grant's most trusted commanders, a parallel to Lee and Longstreet. Until Sherman arrives, Grant discusses strategies with Meade and places him in critical positions during the battles after Gettysburg.

John B. Gordon

Gordon comes up with the Confederate plan to take Fort Stedman and implements it. The plan fails because Gordon did not know the strength of the Federal artillery batteries behind and alongside Fort Stedman. He oversees the surrendering of Confederate arms to Chamberlain, and returns the salute that Chamberlain orders.

Jefferson Davis

Davis is the President of the Confederacy. He fails to give the support that Lee needs at a critical time, shipping out ammunition instead of food. Davis is imprisoned after the war for nearly two years.

Abraham Lincoln

Lincoln is the President of the United States. He promotes Grant to lead the entire Federal army, promises to stay out of the way and gives Grant all that he needs to win the war. Shortly after Lee's surrender, John Wilkes Booth assassinates Lincoln.



Objects/Places

Gettysburg

The Battle of Gettysburg turns the Civil War in favor of the North. The battle occurs before the beginning of the story but Lee and Chamberlain often reflect on the battle.

Bristoe Station

A.P. Hill attempts to attack Chamberlain at Bristoe Station. The Federals defeat Hill, who was unaware of the enemy's strength.

The Wilderness

The fight in the Wilderness becomes a draw. Neither side can gain decisive advantages in the thick growth.

Spotsylvania

The Federals break through the Mule Shoe, which is a defensive structure shaped like a U and are subsequently pushed back due to Lee's strong leadership.

North Anna River

Lee sets up a V shaped defense on the southern side of the North Anna River. Grant loses about forty percent of his army trying to break through.

James River

The Federals regroup and take different routes into the south. At the James River, the artillery and supply wagons cross on a long pontoon bridge while the army crosses farther upstream.

Fort Stedman

General Gordon attempts to take Fort Stedman and turn the cannons on the Federals. The plan fails.



Gravelly Run

Chamberlain pushes the Confederates westward across Gravelly Run.

Five Forks

The battle at Five Forks results in the Federals pushing the Confederates away from Petersburg.

Petersburg

Lee tries to defend Petersburg because it is a critical part of his supply line. The Federals take Petersburg and force Lee to retreat.

Appomattox

Federal forces manage to surround Lee's shrunken army at the town of Appomattox. This is where Lee surrenders his army.

Musket

The musket is the primary weapon used in the Civil War. The barrel is rifled to increase accuracy, a bayonet can be affixed to the barrel and the weapon can also be used as a club.

Minie Ball

The minie ball is a conical lead casting with a hollowed end. When fired, the hollowed end flares out to engage the barrel rifling and keeps the gasses from leaking around the ball.

Canister

Canister is a cannon round that spreads a wide swath of shrapnel, usually iron or lead balls.

Torpedo

The Civil War era torpedo is called a mine today and served the same purposes.



Themes

Honor and Courage

The soldiers in the Civil War have a high degree of honor, perhaps more so in the South than the North. In the South, all soldiers are volunteers as opposed to the North that implemented a draft. Some of the Federal soldiers must have feelings of resentment due to being forced to serve.

Honor among the commanders of both armies is of high value. Some commanders take this beyond reason and try to raise themselves above what reality supports but these types make up a very tiny minority. The greatest display of honor comes at the end of the war, when Chamberlain orders his men to salute the Confederates and General Gordon returns the salute.

While some soldiers run from battles, most surge forward even into certain death or mutilation. The minie ball and canister cannon fire make the Civil War the most bloody of conflicts. The introduction of trench warfare brings another horror to the battle field. To be involved in the Civil War takes a high degree of courage and to stay to the bitter end even more. Lee's remaining troops display the most courage because they fight on when the cause is clearly lost and their rations usually meager or nonexistent.

Confederates cheer Chamberlain when he displays extraordinary courage during one of the final battles. He also contemplates what kind of courage soldiers have when they know the next battle will kill them, concluding that this may not be courage at all but the lack of fear.

Military Tactics

The story describes many tactics used in the Civil War. Lee uses the strategy of position and strength against oftentimes outweighing numbers to good effect. He depends on the speed of his army and the better communications that are possible with smaller forces. However, his luck runs out at Gettysburg when the Federals force a confrontation. Lee would have preferred a different location. Nevertheless, his tactics work well enough to defend Petersburg until the Federals whittle down his army and press it into retreat.

On the defensive almost continually after Gettysburg, the tactic of trench warfare comes into play. Lee finds this tactic effective for preserving the strength of his army while killing many more Federals than would have been otherwise possible. However, he has mixed feelings about the honor of the tactic. Later in the war, Grant's army adopts trench warfare, thus leading to the extensive use of trenches in World War I.

Maintaining his supply lines becomes extremely important to Lee. Grant does not worry so much about this because he has no parts of Lee's army to his rear, and as he



penetrates deeper into Virginia, water routes improve his supply lines. Protecting supply lines is a fundamental principle in warfare tactics. Without food, weapons, and ammunition, the army cannot continue to fight. Losing his supply lines leads directly to Lee's defeat, although superior Federal troop numbers toward the end are just as important.

The Meaning of War

Chamberlain's character acts as the conscious that observes war. He is not a natural soldier, so the madness of war strikes him right away. He ponders on the sense in it and does come up with reasons to continue fighting in spite of his wounds. One reason is personal because he wants to earn the pride of his father. Another reason is political where he believes that slavery should be abolished. On the emotional side, he finds war to be exciting and in some ways fun. Yet there are always reminders of the horrors in war such as the discarded civilian carriages and clothing he sees while crossing Gravelly Run.

Not explicitly expressed but strongly implied is that war advances technologies. Muskets are rifled and minie balls have longer killing ranges. Cannons fire canisters and exploding balls. Torpedoes are used to mine waterways and fields. Field surgeons learn more about medicine.

The story does not try to define the meaning of war directly. It does express what the war means to the main characters, what it might mean to their wives, and how common soldiers look at war. What can be taken on this theme is that war means different things to different people, but it will always involve suffering and death, glory and honor, charity, and cruelty. In Chamberlain's case, war also means a significant change in character. The other professional soldiers do not change because they had already experienced war earlier.

Style

Point of View

Jeff Shaara uses the omniscient limited third-person point of view. The point of view is omniscient or all-knowing because he exposes the innermost thoughts and feelings of the main characters and gives quoted dialog among the characters. The point of view is limited because the author selects a main character and sees the story through that person's eyes. He moves the point of view from character to character for a single event, mostly battles but including periods between battles in order to give an overall picture. Where appropriate, he moves the point of view to a high level away from any character to describe historical perspectives. The point of view is third-person because no one character narrates the story. The narrator is the author, and the assumption is that the narrator is reliable. In other stories, the narrator may not be reliable, especially if a character does the narration in first-person point of view.

The use of shifting point of view lends a sense of dynamic cinematography to a story, as if in a movie where the camera angles and perspectives move from close in to one character, farther out to include other characters and sweeping panoramic views. An additional point of view that written fiction has over most movies is the narrator's voice explaining what characters feel and think, how scenes have developed and sometimes what meanings can be taken from the story.

Grant's POV gives the thinking of the North in regards to the war, and Lee's point of view gives the South's. These perspectives are in conflict but also share common ground in the Revolutionary War and the founding of the United States. Chamberlain's point of view is from the Federal perspective as well, although he does not interpret the war as sweepingly historic. He is closer to the ground and more intimate with the personal impacts of war.

Setting

Most of the action happens in Virginia north and west of Richmond. The timeframe covered is from July, 1863 to the end of the Civil War on April 9, 1865 when Lee surrenders his army. The periods up to 1913 are touched upon in Part Four. The setting is largely outside and military-oriented. Some of the story happens within command tents and buildings. A few scenes occur in Washington involving Grant and Lincoln, and in Richmond involving Lee and Davis.

Many of the settings are at night with natural star and moonlight. Usually the troops on either side move only during the day but at times night movements become necessary, such as the opening scene where Lee's army must cross the Potomac River after being defeated at Gettysburg. Rain also adds to the darkness of battle scenes. An example is the scene in which Stuart is shot.



Other scenes are well-lit and even pleasant, although a war is still being fought. Varying the mood of scenes helps build and release tension throughout the story, which is a basic plot structure that moves ahead to the ending climax at Appomattox when Lee surrenders to Grant.

Language and Meaning

The language that the author uses seems designed for fast readers who tend to skim. Descriptive narratives contain many impressions strung together with commas. Dialogue tends to be in the more formal language of the nineteenth century used among educated people. Occasionally the author uses regional dialect when common soldiers speak.

Most of the words that the author uses are generally understood today. A few are from the period and are no longer used in general conversation. However, the meanings of these words are easily found in dictionaries and on the web. The meaning is kept clear as a result, but conciseness is sacrificed for the greater good of vibrant descriptive narrative. The author both shows and tells. This occurs often in the same sentence.

The use of literary symbolism is kept to a minimum. Instead, the symbolism is physical and obvious such as the flags of nations and corps, the uniforms of officers and soldiers, cannons, and muskets. These symbols depict wartime, and although unique to the Civil War, they are similar to the symbols of other wars ancient and modern. They can be broadly categorized as banners, identities, and weapons.

Structure

The book is organized into four parts and 58 chapters, of which most are short. An introduction and afterword are included. A front piece entitled To the Reader explains that this is the third book in a Civil War trilogy and why this story is different from the first two books. The chapters swing from Lee to Grant to Chamberlain with occasional chapters on other major players in the war. The author uses a tension-release plot structure that leads to the climax and includes anticlimactic scenes to wrap up any loose ends. The Afterword briefly describes the lives of Federal and Confederate officers after the war.

Part 1 gives the story of Lee's retreat after Gettysburg and a failed attack on the Federals. It introduces Chamberlain who begins as a relatively minor character but becomes very important by the end of the story. Parts 2 and 3 describe the primary battles after Gettysburg and the overall political implications of the Civil War. At the end of Part 3, Lee surrenders to Grant. Part 4 follows the climax of Lee's surrender with anticlimactic chapters on what Lee, Grant, and Chamberlain did after the war. Quotations from the Gettysburg Address precede each part.

Chapters tend to conclude with unresolved tension or unanswered questions left in the reader's mind. This technique is sometimes referred to as a cliffhanger ending and

works to move the reader through the story. Other techniques involve resolved tension and answered questions, but use more subtle ways of capturing and maintaining curiosity. These techniques usually depend on unresolved or incomplete thematic ideas, such as with mysteries, rather than plot flow.



Quotes

"Lee nodded, looked now out in the darkness, to the far trees. 'He should have hit us here. We gave him an opportunity. God...gave him an opportunity. The rains slowed us, kept us here. Now, God has taken his opportunity away.'

Lee paused, and Longstreet waited.

Lee said, 'I don't understand His ways...I thought it would never be like this. The Almighty was with us, the fight was ours...we should have won the day. But it was not to be. I thought...I understood. But now, He is allowing us to go back home'" (Chap. 1, Lee, pg. 17.)

"The army, he knew, was not like any other organization, any business. If you are here, he thought, you fight for your country, and you are not allowed to change your mind. How odd...We are fighting-some of us anyway-for...freedom? And soldiers are not free" (Chap. 3, Chamberlain, pg. 40.)

"Lee stood back, let his son move close, and he helped her stand. She held herself against Custis's arm, looked at Lee, and he saw a coldness in her eyes, the change in her mood. She said, 'Tell Mr. Davis...tell him we have lost our home, we have lost children. The longer this goes on, the more we will lose. Tell him there are too many widows...too many mothers missing their sons. There are enough gravestones! Tell him that!'" (Chap. 6, Lee, pg. 62.)

"If we lose this war, something of great value will be lost with it. History will record that the idea did not work, that our piece of paper did not carry the power of a monarchy, the Constitution was not as efficient as the power of an elite ruling class, that it is acceptable for one class of human beings to possess and dominate another. There is a significance to this that goes far beyond our borders, and far beyond our time" (Chap. 7, Grant, pg. 82.)

"The darkness was lit now by the fires rolling through the brush in front of them, and many did not sleep, had seen this before and so could not keep their eyes away. The veterans did not fear death from the quick deadly stab of the lead ball as much as what they now saw. They prayed they would not be caught watching the slow hand, the fiery beast moving toward them, clawing along the floor of this awful ground until it swept past, burning the breath out of the men whose wounds would not let them escape" (Chap. 12, Lee, pg. 135.)

"He still didn't understand that, how the good men, the honorable men, could betray their oaths as officers, betray their country. He had asked himself, tormented himself



with the question: When this is over, will we still be friends? Will I be able to look him in the eye and not see a traitor?" (Chap. 14, Hancock, pg. 157.)

"Then they would hear the guns, a sound like nothing heard in Europe, not even in the days of Napoleon, and then the wounded would flow past, wagons and ambulances filled with the screams and faint cries of the men who endured the horror of this most modern war. When that experience had passed, the visitors did not venture far from the tents, there was not quite as much boasting of their own heroics and how much more civilized war had once been. Even those from the most remote lands knew they were seeing the new face of war, and when they left, there was something different about them, something subdued" (Chap. 16, Grant, p. 167.)

"He walked to the edge of the trees, heard music now, a tuneless mishmash of banjos and harmonicas. The fires spread all along the road, far along the wide shallow hills. They know, he thought, the men know. If I could just convince the people who give them the orders" (Chap. 23, Grant, pg. 235.)

"He saw their faces again. It doesn't matter to them, not anymore, not the men who have done this so many times. There are always guns. Sometimes you see them right in front of you, the sharp bright blast that sweeps away the man beside you, but more often you never see them, you only hear that they can do to you, the high scream, the sudden shattering blast, moving the ground under your feet" (Chap. 25, Chamberlain, pg. 271.)

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"The faces spread the terror, the savagery, the mindless insanity of the beast, and the men who held on to their humanity stared in utter horror as the rules of war, the last fragile string of human decency, was pushed aside by those whose blind hatred would only be fed by slaughter" (Chap. 29, Lee, pg. 312.)

"Men had been leaving the lines every night, some on their own, one by one, slipping away from their posts on the skirmish line, sometimes a whole section of the picket line. At first the blue sharpshooters had been wary, steady fingers on tight triggers, suspicious of the ragged enemy who approached, the same men they had sought out for so long down the barrel of the musket. But there was no treachery, no fight in these



rebels who came across the line, who called out in harsh whispers, who waved small pieces of white in the moonlight" (Chap. 33, Lee, pg. 337.)

"There's a lot of revenge-minded people around Lincoln, a lot of pressure on him to make them pay, punish anyone who called himself a rebel. He knows that won't work. We're still one country. Our job is pretty clear, take the fight out of them. His job...a lot tougher, the whole business of forgiveness. He has to take us forward, heal the wounds" (Chap. 39, Grant, pg. 383.)

"He stood then, a last glance at the young man's face, turned to the horse, leaned on the saddle, thought, You have to remember...you can never forget this. This is what a soldier does, this is what you volunteered for. You make the decisions, you make the choices, you stand up to God and claim in all your arrogance that you are in command" (Chap. 42, Chamberlain, pg. 421.)

"He rode back up the hill, toward the field where more of the army was spreading out, the men still anticipating the relief from the weakness, the awful emptiness. He could not look at them, at the faces, thought still of Richmond, could see it now in his mind, men in blue adding to their celebration, digging through the great warehouses stacked high with the food that could save his army" (Chap. 44, Lee, pg. 444.)

"It did not make sense, all the loss; the death of so many did not take away their spirit, but instead strengthened it, made them a better army. He had to admit that if he had underestimated Grant, it was because he had underestimated what the people in the North would allow him to do" (Chap. 49, Lee, pg. 476.)

"Grant frowned, thought of Julia. The same thing would come from her, the scolding at his ignorance. Grant listened again, shook his head. 'No, afraid not. I know two songs. One's Yankee Doodle.' He paused, thought a moment, could recall some very poor harmony in a disreputable bar in San Francisco, the indiscreet words still lodged in his memory. He was suddenly embarrassed, glanced at Rawlins, said, 'The other one isn't'" (Chap. 47, Grant, pg. 465-466.)

"You don't create honor, it creates you. I saw that today, I saw it in the man's face, in the eyes, in the man's heart. We prevailed on the field, we defeated his army...but we did not defeat him" (Chap. 52, Grant, pg. 505.)

"Grant smiled, and Clemens was now in front of him, the playful teasing a mask for the man's eyes, examining Grant with dark concern" (Chap. 57, Grant, pg. 538.)

Topics for Discussion

Describe two primary reasons why the Civil War was fought.

Compare and contrast the characters of Grant and Lee.

What advantages did the North have over the South?

Why can Gettysburg be considered the turning point in the Civil War?

Why was Sherman's march to the sea important?

Describe the imagery used to present Stuart's death.

Why did the Confederates raise a cheer for Chamberlain?

What tactical advantage did trench warfare have over open field battles?

How did the minie ball improve the accuracy and range of Civil War muskets?

What issues did the Civil War resolve and what issues did it create?

Why might have Lincoln's assassination made Reconstruction worse for the South?

Compare and contrast the post-war home lives of Grant and Lee.