

Short answer from book killer angels: the classic novel of the civil war by micha...

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September 2, Gettysburg: Modern and Traditional Battle and Longstreet's Defensive Strategy In Michael Shaara's novel, *The Killer Angels*, he underscores the importance of Gettysburg as a strategic yet human effort. Strategically, Gettysburg was an example of both a modern and traditional warfare. It presented many opportunities for both traditional and modern warfare, and also showcased Confederate General Longstreet's preference for a defensive battle, a seldom-used more modern approach to warfare from this era, in order to give his outnumbered forces its greatest offensive ability.

Traditional examples of warfare are evident in the many pockets of hand-to-hand combat in the woods, amongst the rocks in places like "The Devil's Den." This traditional one-on-one fighting was prevalent throughout the war, as troops lined up and approached each other to fight closely, with maximum thrust. Gaining the high ground on Day Two, at Little Round Top was also conventional battle strategy, which gave those forces with the most height a sure advantage over low-lying opposition. Day Three also had traditional battle tactics with "Pickett's Charge" across the field, out from the trees, and slightly up a rise, to the Union positions at Cemetery Ridge, behind a stone wall. This tactic left the Confederate troops exposed and vulnerable to the onslaught of the Union artillery and guns as they trudged towards the heavily defended Union lines, out in the open. Gettysburg also had modern warfare within its battle strategies. Holding the high ground at Little Round Top is a modern strategy still used today, as it gives a small number of troops an advantage over any large force, due to its superior strategic positioning. The Union's having protected defensive positions on Day Three

by the Union Army are superior modern battle techniques, too, as they let the Confederate Army approach their protected entrenched positions, and essentially wiped them out.

One Confederate commander, General Longstreet, had the most modern approach to warfare throughout the first and second days of the battle. Ahead of his time, with tactics that were not utilized until WWI and WWII, he ordered his men to fight from “defensive positions,” instead of lining up his men and attacking, guns fixed, in the traditional way. Having his men firing from behind rocks and trees protected them and scattered them enough, thus requiring the Union troops to approach them in order to engage. With protection from defensive positions, Longstreet was able to gain both strategic positioning advantages and neutralized his numbers disadvantage against the larger Union forces. Longstreet’s defensive strategy seemed to work, as most Union casualties resulted from this type of engagement, where traditional “line up and charge” techniques resulted in the most casualties for the Confederates. Unfortunately, Lee did not take the same defensive approach when he ordered “Pickett’s Charge” on the last and ultimate day of fighting, and was decimated.

Work Cited

Shaara, Michael. *The Killer Angels: a Novel*. New York: McKay, 1974.