

# How the battle of gettysburg changed the civil war



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The military situation in 1863 was crucially influenced by the Southerners' defeat in the bloodiest battle in the history of the American Civil War - the three-day battle of Gettysburg. General Lee's army lost all the benefits of its previous victories and was forced to leave the occupied territory of the Union. Meanwhile, in the Western theater of military operations, the troops of Generals Grant and Banks gained absolute control over the valley of the Mississippi River, dividing the territory of the Confederacy in two. 1863 ended with the defeat of the Southerners in Chattanooga, which was a unique gateway to the East. It was the strategic turning point of the war. Several years of war before the battle of Gettysburg were a time of military success and economic collapse of the blockaded South. The Federals suffered defeats, but retained their economic and political advantages. Military defeats, in no small measure, were due to failures of command authorities. "Generals-politicians" were much better in intricacies of a political struggle than in the art of war in battlefields. President Abraham Lincoln had to change and shuffle his "brave Generals" periodically. As far as the warfare proceeded, a new galaxy of generals made mark; generals able to withstand the brilliant Southerners, such as General R. Lee and Gen. T. Jackson. Lee's Gettysburg campaign had to thwart the Federal army plans for the summer, ease the pressure on the besieged Vicksburg, take away the burden of the army munitioning from Virginia, and, which is the most important, to threaten Washington to persuade it to peace negotiations. Repulse of the Southerners' attacks at Gettysburg and defeat of the invincible Lee, are considered as the watershed in the war, but this statement is true only if the battle of Gettysburg is viewed together with the capture of Vicksburg, which occurred on the same day in the Western

theater of operations. The Southerners fought desperately, as always, but this time the Northerners did not give up in courage and perseverance. The forces were roughly equal: 75 000 Southerners resisted 88 000 Northerners. The losses in the battle were great - the Northerners lost 3 000 dead and 23 000 wounded and the Southerners, respectively, about 4 000 dead and 28 000 wounded. The battle ended on the United States Independence Day that strengthened morale of the Northern army defending the integrity of the state. On the other hand, the outcome of this battle was a terrible shock to the inhabitants of the South, obstinately believing in invincibility of their “ brave boys’ and General Lee. References Boritt, G. S. (1997). *The Gettysburg Nobody Knows*. New York: Oxford University Press.