

Bringing the american civil war to an end

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Even 150 years after its conclusion, the American Civil War still touches many. The immortality of this piece of history stems from its intimacy to the American people. Its nearness in geography, chronology, and genealogy bring it quite close to home on all levels. Far more than a collection of facts, the wealth of history found in the stories of individuals makes the war a collection of people.

Through personal accounts, we can still feel the horrors of battle, the scars of loss, and the relief or regret found in making peace. For example: November 12, 1864, mere days before the start of Sherman's March to the Sea, a senior member of Major General Howard's staff described the emotion at the departure of the last train headed north. " We watch with throbbing hearts and possibly with trembling lips and moistened eyes this last link that binds us to home and friends and all we hold dear. It fades away... and the whistles shriek their last farewell." On January 31, 1865, not long after the swath of destruction Sherman wrought from Atlanta to Savannah crippled the Confederate war machine, the U. S.

Congress approved the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution and abolished slavery. Three days later, despite having only two functional armies remaining, Confederate Vice President Alexander Stephens rejected Lincoln's terms of peace. Grant's forces took Richmond, the Confederate Capital, on April 3, 1865, leading to Lee's surrender the following week. This was to be the last victory Lincoln would see, as he was shot on April 14, 1865 and died the next morning, just three days before Johnston's surrender to Sherman ended the war. Truly, the loss of their beloved president made this a bittersweet victory for the Union. The desire for life and liberty driving the

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Civil War, deemed worthy of life-and-death devotion by thousands upon thousands of men, women, and children just like us, holds little difference from our own wishes and worries today.

Through our studies in and of humanity, including this segment of American history, we stand to gain experience and wisdom beyond our own limited years.