Name: Period:

# Civil War Overview Reading Guide

Read “Civil War Overview” on your own and highlight the most important events that happened in the War. Be prepared to discuss these events and why you felt they were the most important.

For four years between 1861 and 1865 the United States engaged in a civil war. Divisions between the free North and the slaveholding South erupted into a full-scale conflict after the election of Abraham Lincoln as president in 1860. Eleven southern states seceded from the Union, collectively turning their back on the idea of a single American nation. Lincoln, who had been in office for only six weeks, declared these acts of secession illegal, and asked Congress for 500,000 soldiers to crush what threatened to be an aggressive rebellion. In April 1861, the first shots were fired and what followed became a national tragedy of unimaginable proportions. More than 600,000 soldiers were killed and millions more wounded; large sections of the South were ravaged by violent battles; and the Union nearly collapsed under determined Confederate forces.  
  
 The war itself began hesitantly, but after the Battle of Bull Run (Manassas) in July 1861, it was clear that warfare would last for many months, perhaps even years. Huge battles raged in places such as Fredericksburg, Chickamauga and Shiloh and in Virginia and Tennessee, where 40% of the 10,000 engagements of the war were fought. Winning victory after victory over poorly-led Union forces, Confederate General Robert E. Lee invaded Maryland in September 1862. But there he suffered a major loss at the Battle of Antietam, the bloodiest engagement of the war. The following year, Lee trounced the Union Army at Chancellorsville and invaded Pennsylvania, leading to the climactic Battle of Gettysburg in which 50,000 men were killed or wounded and Lee was forced to retreat to Virginia, never to invade the North again.  
  
 In the West, Union General Ulysses S. Grant took the important Confederate town of Vicksburg on the Mississippi River on 4 July 1863, the same day that news of the Union victory at Gettysburg reached Washington. Despite these key victories, the war was still not over. Grant launched his Overland Campaign in 1864 and fought a series of major battles. He hoped to destroy Lee's army by utilizing a strategy of attrition, but the tactic failed. In retaliation Union General William Tecumsah Sherman marched from Atlanta to Savannah, burning the countryside as he went. By the spring of 1865, the South was exhausted, and on April 9, Lee surrendered to Grant at Appomattox Court House, effectively ending the war.  
  
 Though most Americans knew that the central reason behind the war was slavery, it was not until the Battle of Antietam in September 1862 that Lincoln began emancipating the slaves. On January 1, 1863, Lincoln issued his Emancipation Proclamation freeing all slaves in captured Confederate territory. From that point on, the war officially became one over the issue of slavery. Still, it was not until after the war, in December 1865, that the Thirteenth Amendment was ratified, finally freeing all slaves in America.  
  
 Economically, the war was a boon for the North and a disaster for the South. The North began the war with several advantages: more men, more money, more industrial power, and an extensive railroad system. And by the end of the war, the North continued to dominate economically, while the ravaged South struggled to recover economically and psychologically from the devastation of the war. In addition to losing many of its young men, sons, husbands, fathers, and friends to the conflict, the southern planter aristocracy was crushed in the war, and never regained its political power.  
  
 The Civil War answered many of the fundamental questions of the American experiment: free or slave, one or many, united or divided. But it did so at a tremendous cost.  
  
Write down two questions you had from this reading in the space provided:

Sample Questions:

* Was it possible for both sides to “win?”
* Was it possible for either side to “win?”

Student Questions:

Question 1:

Question 2:

Name: Period:

# The War Prayer by Mark Twain

It was a time of great and exalting excitement. The country was up in arms, the war was on, in every breast burned the holy fire of patriotism; the drums were beating, the bands playing, the toy pistols popping, the bunched firecrackers hissing and spluttering; on every hand and far down the receding and fading spread of roofs and balconies a fluttering wilderness of flags flashed in the sun; daily the young volunteers marched down the wide avenue gay and fine in their new uniforms, the proud fathers and mothers and sisters and sweethearts cheering them with voices choked with happy emotion as they swung by; nightly the packed mass meetings listened, panting, to patriot oratory with stirred the deepest deeps of their hearts, and which they interrupted at briefest intervals with cyclones of applause, the tears running down their cheeks the while; in the churches the pastors preached devotion to flag and country, and invoked the God of Battles beseeching His aid in our good cause in outpourings of fervid eloquence which moved every listener.  
  
 It was indeed a glad and gracious time, and the half dozen rash spirits that ventured to disapprove of the war and cast a doubt upon its righteousness straightway got such a stern and angry warning that for their personal safety’s sake they quickly shrank out of sight and offended no more in that way.  
  
 Sunday morning came — next day the battalions would leave for the front; the church was filled; the volunteers were there, their young faces alight with martial dreams — visions of the stern advance, the gathering momentum, the rushing charge, the flashing sabers, the flight of the foe, the tumult, the enveloping smoke, the fierce pursuit, the surrender!  
  
 Then home from the war, bronzed heroes, welcomed, adored, submerged in golden seas of glory! With the volunteers sat their dear ones, proud, happy, and envied by the neighbors and friends who had no sons and brothers to send forth to the field of honor, there to win for the flag, or, failing, die the noblest of noble deaths. The service proceeded; a war chapter from the Old Testament was read; the first prayer was said; it was followed by an organ burst that shook the building, and with one impulse the house rose, with glowing eyes and beating hearts, and poured out that tremendous invocation:  
  
 God the all-terrible! Thou who ordainest,   
 Thunder thy clarion and lightning thy sword!  
  
 Then came the “long” prayer. None could remember the like of it for passionate pleading and moving and beautiful language. The burden of its supplication was, that an ever-merciful and benignant Father of us all would watch over our noble young soldiers, and aid, comfort, and encourage them in their patriotic work; bless them, shield them in the day of battle and the hour of peril, bear them in His mighty hand, make them strong and confident, invincible in the bloody onset; help them crush the foe, grant to them and to their flag and country imperishable honor and glory —  
  
 An aged stranger entered and moved with slow and noiseless step up the main aisle, his eyes fixed upon the minister, his long body clothed in a robe that reached to his feet, his head bare, his white hair descending in a frothy cataract to his shoulders, his seamy face unnaturally pale, pale even to ghastliness. With all eyes following him and wondering, he made his silent way; without pausing, he ascended to the preacher’s side and stood there waiting. With shut lids the preacher, unconscious of his presence, continued his moving prayer, and at last finished it with the words, uttered in fervent appeal, “Bless our arms, grant us the victory, O Lord and God, Father and Protector of our land and flag!”  
  
 The stranger touched his arm, motioned him to step aside — which the startled minister did — and took his place. During some moments he surveyed the spellbound audience with solemn eyes, in which burned an uncanny light; then in a deep voice he said:  
  
 “I come from the Throne — bearing a message from Almighty God!” The words smote the house with a shock; if the stranger perceived it he gave no attention. “He has heard the prayer of His servant your shepherd, and will grant it if such be your desire after I, His messenger, shall have explained to you its import — that is to say, its full import. For it is like unto many of the prayers of men, in that it asks for more than he who utters it is aware of — except he pause and think. “God’s servant and yours has prayed his prayer. Has he paused and taken thought? Is it one prayer? No, it is two — one uttered, and the other not. Both have reached the ear of Him who heareth all supplications, the spoken and the unspoken. Ponder this — keep it in mind. If you would beseech a blessing upon yourself, beware! lest without intent you invoke a curse upon your neighbor at the same time. If you pray for the blessing of rain on your crop which needs it, by that act you are possibly praying for a curse on some neighbor’s crop which may not need rain and can be injured by it.  
  
 “You have heard your servant’s prayer — the uttered part of it. I am commissioned by God to put into words the other part of it — that part which the pastor — and also you in your hearts — fervently prayed silently. And ignorantly and unthinkingly? God grant that it was so! You heard the words ‘Grant us the victory, O Lord our God!’ That is sufficient. The whole of the uttered prayer is compact into those pregnant words. Elaborations were not necessary. When you have prayed for victory you have prayed for many unmentioned results which follow victory — must follow it, cannot help but follow it. Upon the listening spirit of God fell also the unspoken part of the prayer. He commandeth me to put it into words. Listen!  
  
 “Lord our Father, our young patriots, idols of our hearts, go forth into battle — be Thou near them! With them — in spirit — we also go forth from the sweet peace of our beloved firesides to smite the foe. O Lord our God, help us tear their soldiers to bloody shreds with our shells; help us to cover their smiling fields with the pale forms of their patriot dead; help us to drown the thunder of the guns with the shrieks of their wounded, writhing in pain; help us to lay waste their humble homes with a hurricane of fire; help us to wring the hearts of their unoffending widows with unavailing grief; help us to turn them out roofless with their little children to wander unfriended in the wastes of their desolated land in rags and hunger and thirst, sports of the sun flames in summer and the icy winds of winter, broken in spirit, worn with travail, imploring thee for the refuge of the grave and denied it —  
  
 For our sakes who adore Thee, Lord, blast their hopes, blight their lives, protract their bitter pilgrimmage, make heavy their steps, water their way with their tears, stain the white snow with the blood of their wounded feet!  
  
 We ask it, in the spirit of love, of Him Who is the Source of Love, and Who is the ever-faithful refuge and friend of all that are sore beset and seek His aid with humble and contrite hearts. Amen.  
  
 (After a pause.) “Ye have prayed it; if ye still desire it, speak! The messenger of the Most High waits.”  
  
…  
  
 It was believed afterward that the man was a lunatic, because there was no sense in what he said.  
  
  
Twain, Mark. "The War Prayer." The War Prayer, by Mark Twain. N.p., n.d. Web. 01 Dec. 2016.  
  
Write two questions about this reading in the space below.

Sample Questions:

* What is the tone of the beginning of the piece?
* What does the heavenly messenger want to convey to the people in the church?
* How does this piece relate to the American Civil War?

Question 1:

Question 2:

Name: Period:

# Discussion Study Guide:

Follow along as we discuss the following questions from class. Summarize the most important things said about each question. Write at least four questions other students ask, and summarize the most important points brought up while discussing those questions.

## Civil War Overview Questions:

What were the realities of the Civil War?

What were the most important events?

Was it possible for both sides to “win?”

Was it possible for either side to “win?”

Looking back, do you feel that either side would have changed their decision regarding secession/war? Why?

What were some of the far reaching outcomes of the Civil War?

Peer Question 1:

Peer Question 2:

## The War Prayer Questions

What is the tone of the beginning of the piece?

What imagery does Twain use at the beginning? What does it make you think of?

What imagery does Twain use when the heavenly messenger is talking?

What does the heavenly messenger want to convey to the people in the church?

How does this piece relate to the American Civil War?

Is this piece satirical? How you do know? What is Twain satirizing?

What are some areas of this text that are uncertain?

Peer Question 3:

Peer Question 4: