


The Great Debate

Who was Superior?

General Grant or Lee?



Who was better ... General Grant or General Lee?

 **Mission:** to use a range of sources to help you decide who was better - Ulysses S. Grant or Robert E. Lee.



The Great Debate - Grant or Lee ?

The following primary, secondary and tertiary sources, will help you come to a decision about who deserves the title - **The Best General of the American Civil War**. Below are areas you could focus on to prepare for a piece of writing or class debate.

Character

Background + Experience

Leadership Style

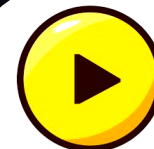
Philosophy + Tactics

Battlefield Victories

Other Reasons?

Lee scored amazing victories against the Union Army in 1863, fighting against superior numbers and better supplied troops. His victory at Chancellorsville, where he divided his army three times in the face of the enemy while being outnumbered three to one, is a master class in the use of speed and maneuver as a force multiplier. Lee also had the difficult task of finding a way to invade the northern states, which he did twice. Grant was an exceptional general as in his siege of Vicksburg, and in command of all the Union armies when he came east. There was nothing romantic about Grant's battles: he committed to a plan and then followed it through with an almost uncanny stubbornness.

Smithsonian Magazine Article.



After the attack on **Fort Sumter** Robert E. Lee was offered command of the Union army - why did he refuse?



"In every battle there comes a time when both sides consider themselves beaten. Then he who continues the attack wins."

Ulysses S. Grant.

D

"We must expect reverses, even defeats. They are sent to teach us wisdom and to call forth greater energies, and to prevent our falling into greater disasters."

Robert E. Lee.

E

"I have never advocated war except as means of peace, so seek peace, but prepare for war. Because war... War never changes. War is like winter and winter is coming."

Ulysses S. Grant.

F

"I have fought against the people of the North because I believed they were seeking to wrest from the South its dearest rights. But I have never cherished toward them bitter or vindictive feelings, and I have never seen the day when I did not pray for them".

Robert E. Lee.

G

The Union army moved stopped across the river from **Fredericksburg**. Lee moved his troops into place and they were secure in a sunken road protected by a stone wall. So strong was the Confederate position that one Rebel officer claimed *"a chicken could not live on that field when we open on it."* General Burnside (Union) decided to attack anyway. Although the Union artillery was effective against the Rebels, the 600-yard field was a killing ground for the attacking Yankees. No Union soldiers reached the Confederate lines. "It is well that war is so horrible, or else we should grow too fond of it," Lee said as they watched the carnage. The one-sided nature of the battle was reflected in the casualty figures. The Yankees suffered around 12,650 killed and wounded, while Lee lost only about 4,200 men.

History.com - Edited.

H



Robert E. Lee - painting shows him surveying the battlefield after his **victory at Fredericksburg - 1862.**

"The blacks are immeasurably better off here than in Africa, morally, socially and physically. The painful discipline they are undergoing, is necessary for their improvement as a race, and I hope will prepare and lead them to better things. How long their subjugation (enslavement) may be necessary is known and ordered only by God.

Robert E. Lee.
Letter - 1856.



"...I grieve that that drives you from our home. When I think about the calamity impending over the country, my own sorrows sink into insignificance.... Be content and resigned to God's will. I shall be able to write seldom. Write to me, as you letters will be my greatest comfort. I send a check for \$500 - it is all I have in the bank. Pay the children's school expenses...."

Robert E. Lee
Letter to wife May 8th, 1861



The myth of Lee goes something like this ... he was a brilliant strategist and devoted (committed) Christian who hated slavery and worked tirelessly after the war to bring the country back together. There is little truth in this. Lee was a devout Christian, and an good tactician. But despite his ability to win individual battles, his decision to fight a traditional war against the more populated and industrialized North is considered deadly strategic error. But even if one conceded Lee's military prowess, he would still be responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Americans in defense of the South's authority to own millions of human beings as property because they are black.

The Atlantic - [Article](#), June 2017.



STRATEGIC General Robert Edward Lee **DISTINGUISHED**

Robert E. Lee, is named best known CSA general. (Confederate States Army). He split his army into two and made the battle of Chancellorsville go down in history as Lees most significant tactical victory.

Lees Leadership approach encompassed empathy, compassion and respect for others, which was evident through his interaction with others.

Quotes:
"What a cruel thing war is.... To fill our hearts with hatred instead of love for our neighbors."
"It is well that war is so terrible, or we should grow too fond of it."

BOLD
"I cannot trust a man to control others who cannot control himself."
"To be a good soldier you must love the army. To be a good commander, you must be willing to order the death of the thing you love."

ADAPTABLE
It was within many times that Grant went on an inhumane rampage while Lee went for a more radical approach thus making Lee a better level headed General.

Grant was not inspiring he was just rough. He didnt have Lees flair of experience, and made a few mistakes.

RESISTANCE
Lee is better than Grant

GRANT = Aggressive
LEE = PEACEFUL
VS Tactical
Tactical

challenging

LOYAL

M

Tina, Student / 2021

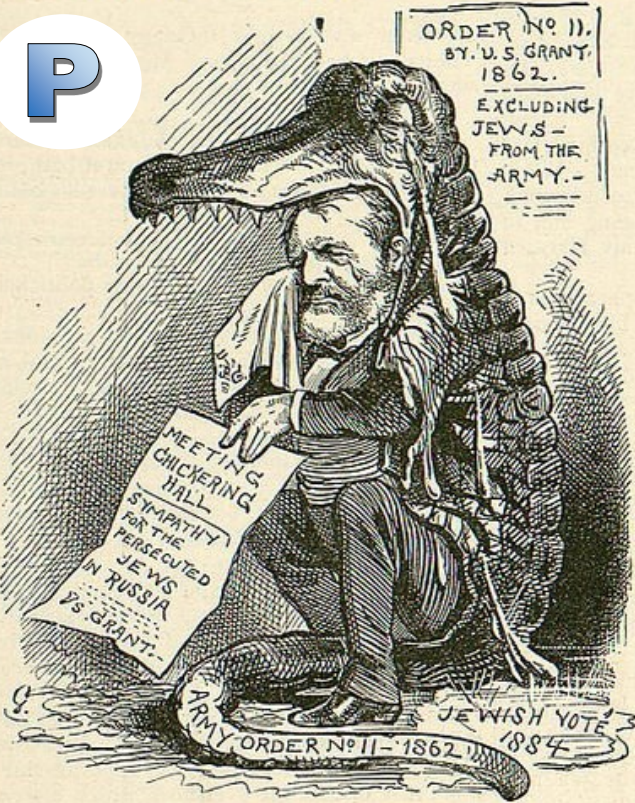
'For months Lee had been traveling with a pet hen. Meant for the stewpot, she had won his heart by entering his tent first thing every morning and laying his breakfast egg under his cot (bed) . One morning when breaking camp - Lee's staff ran around anxiously crying, "Where is the hen?" Lee himself found her nestled in her usual spot on the wagon all ready to travel'

Historian's Account



THEN AND NOW.—1862 AND 1882.

P



"OH, NOW YOU WEEP, AND I PERCEIVE YOU FEEL THE DINT OF PITY. THESE ARE GRACIOUS DROPS."

S

Letters between Grant and his generals - Cold Harbor - 1864.



Cold Harbor (battle) was Grant's third huge loss as Union forces slowly locked Lee into defending Richmond in 1864. There were an estimated 13,000 Union casualties and an estimated 1,500 Confederate casualties. However the Confederacy had only half the manpower of the Union at this point in the war. Both sides would be seriously damaged by this battle, but each would claim some sort of victory.

Virginia.Edu

Q



An illuminating exchange of letters between Grant and Lee during Cold Harbor.

R

My dear General Grant

'I do not remember that you and I ever met personally. I write this now as a grateful acknowledgment for the service you have done the country. When you first reached Vicksburg, I thought you should do, what you finally did -- march the troops across the neck, run the batteries with the transports, and thus go below; and I never had any faith, except a general hope that you knew better than I. When you got below, and took Port-Gibson, I thought you should go down the river and join general Banks. When you turned Northward - I feared it was a mistake. I now wish to say ... that you were right, and I was wrong'.

Yours very truly - President A. Lincoln.

T

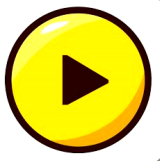
You can't be an elite horseman and hammered (drunk) out of your skull simultaneously - not for long, anyway. Did Grant drink, including at times to excess? Absolutely. But Grant tended to struggle only under very specific circumstances.

U

Historian's View of Grant



General Grant - Shiloh



H
HISTORY



As a cadet at West Point, Ulysses S. Grant was an indifferent student. But as a young soldier in the Mexican War, he had carefully studied the work of generals such as Zachary Taylor and Winfield Scott. When he took command of his own troops in the Civil War, Grant combined what he had learned with his own considerable talents to win an impressive string of battlefield victories.

PBS - Website



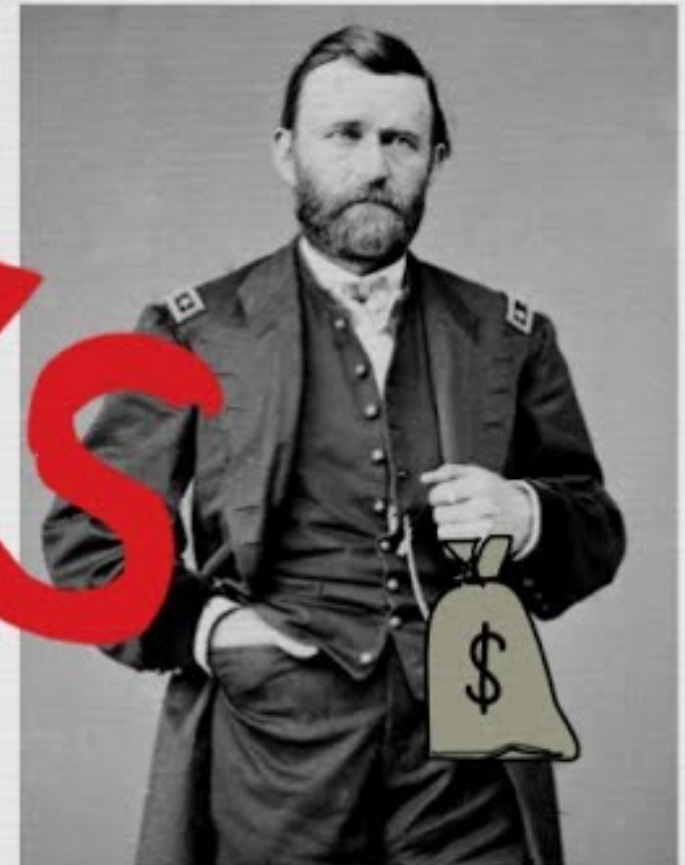
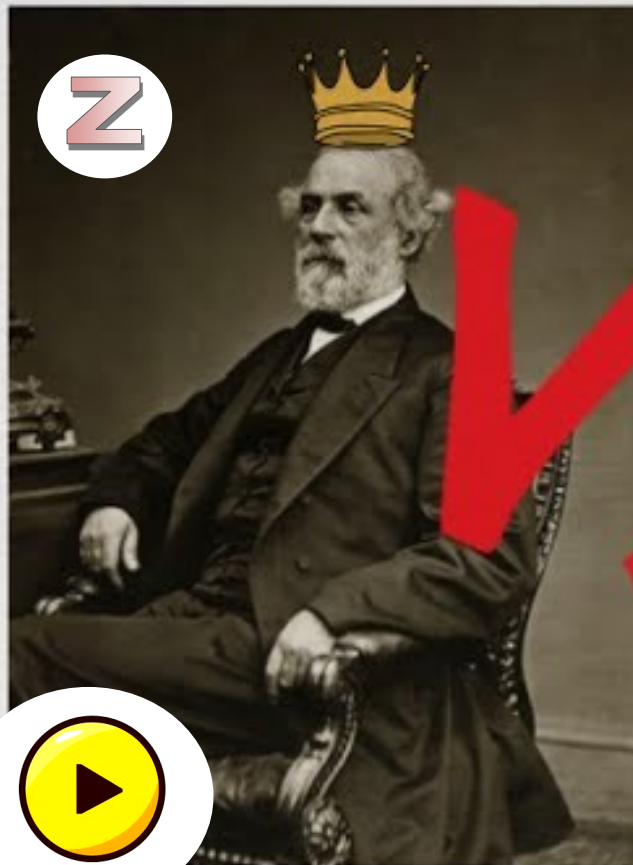
'The battle began on November 23, as Union forces drove back a part of the Confederate line. As he had at Vicksburg, Grant used river transport skilfully. That night, he floated 116 boats down the Tennessee River past the city. These troops pushed back Confederates on the Chattanooga side of the river and built a pontoon bridge. The bridge was used to bring Sherman's troops across the river. Now supplies and men could be brought across the Tennessee to prepare for an attack'.

PBS.org



'Lee graduated 2nd in the class from the Military Academy at **West Point** — without earning a single demerit (incident report!) — During the Mexican War, Lee earned three awards for bravery, both of which contributed to his later appointment as superintendent of West Point. Because of his exceptional reputation, Abraham Lincoln offered Lee the command of Union in April 1861.'

Battlefields.org ([Edited](#))



1

The Battle of Shiloh - 1862

The Confederates battered the Union army and threatening to trap it against the Tennessee River. Many troops on both sides had no battle experience. The chance for a total Confederate victory were lost with Grant's arrival on the battlefield helping the failing Union line. General Johnston directed the Confederate attack and was shot in the leg severing an artery - causing him to bleed to death. He was the highest ranking general on either side killed. General Beauregard took over, and he stopped the Union attack by nightfall then pushing it back two miles, but it did not break. The arrival of fresh soldiers helped Grant, while the Confederates were exhausted. The next day, Grant beat the Confederates for a major Union victory at **The Battle of Shiloh**.

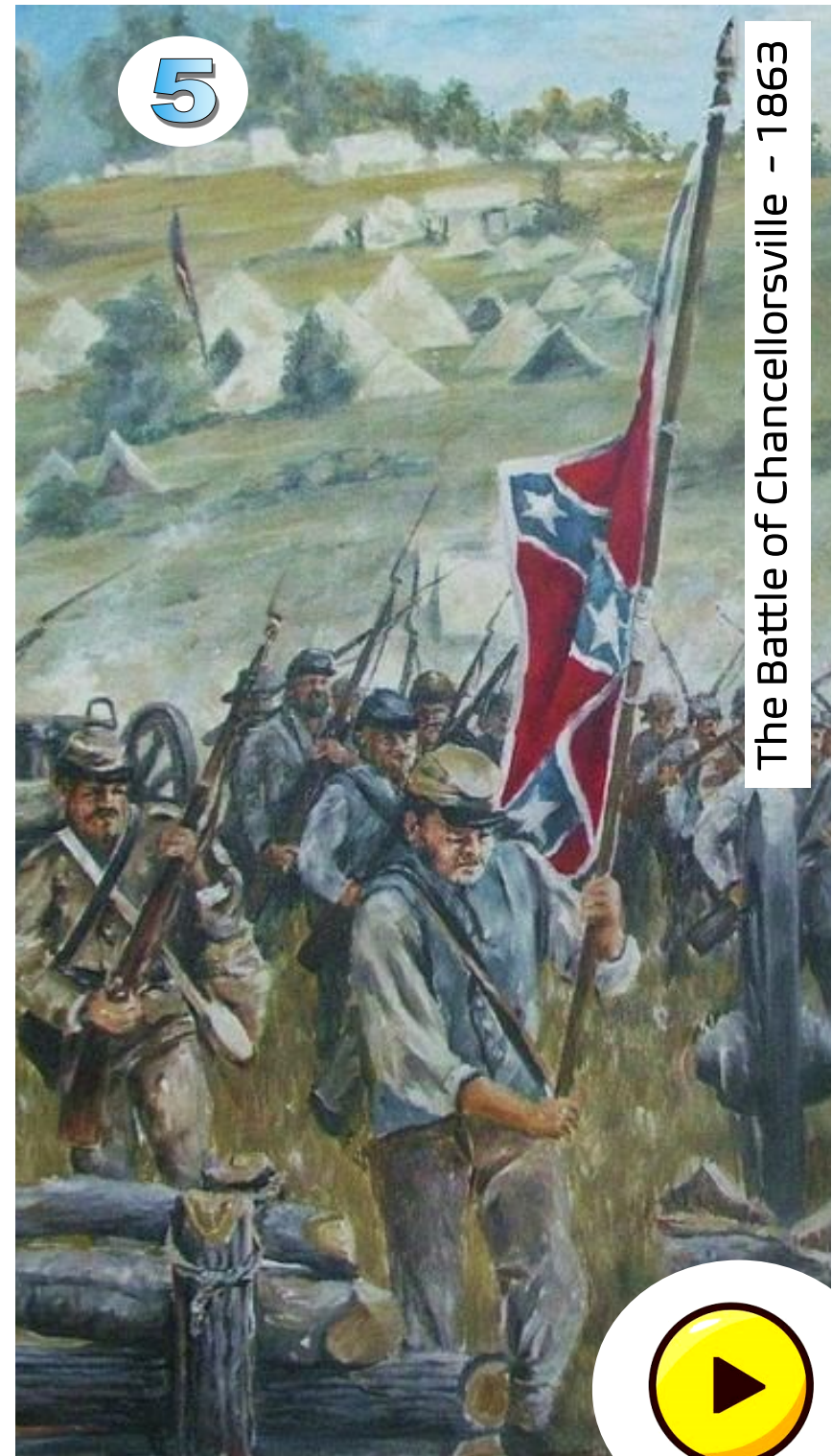
History.com - [\(Edited\)](#)

3

Before the **Battle of Chancellorsville**, the Union had replaced General Burnside with Hooker - having just lost badly to Lee at the Battle of Fredericksburg. The numbers going into the battle were - General Hooker, Union = 115,000 men, General Lee, Confederacy = just 60,000. Hooker attacked first but was held off by Lee's quick thinking. Lee had divided his army, leaving 10,000 troops to hold Fredericksburg before marching West to meet Hooker. The two armies fought in an open field. Despite his superior numbers, Hooker had his men fall back to defensive positions, opening the door for Lee to hatch the most brilliant offensive plan of his career. Lee split his army again, sending his best general "Stonewall" Jackson to attack the Union's right side and smashing into the Union line.

History.com - [\(Edited\)](#)

4

5

The Battle of Chancellorsville - 1863



Lee's once Great Army of Northern Virginia was in its final hours. The Union army, led by General Grant, had relentlessly chased the Confederate troops - this time, there would be no possible escape. Lee and his men were famished, exhausted and surrounded. "There is nothing left for me to do but to go and see General Grant," he told his staff that morning, "and I would rather die a thousand deaths."

6

Smithsonian Mag

As news of Lee's surrender spread through the Union army - they began to celebrate victory with music from the band and gunfire. At once, Grant sent out the order, "The war is over; the rebels are our countrymen again - the best sign of rejoicing ... will be to stop from all celebrations in the field."

7

Account - eyewitness.

'Many thought the Confederates traitors ... responsible for the loss of lives and property. Lee's own army had to be driven back from the capitol in some of the bloodiest battles of the war. The terms of surrender, however, would be a simple gentlemen's agreement. There would be no mass imprisonments or executions, no parading of defeated enemies through Northern streets. Lincoln's main aim, shared by Grant - was "to bind up the nation's wounds" and unite the country together again - revenge against the former Confederates was unwise and would only slow down the process.'

8

Smithsonian Mag



9

Lee Surrenders to Grant - April 09th, 1865

American Civil War

April 12, 1861 - May 9, 1865

Belligerents

 United States  Confederate States

Commanders and leaders

Abraham Lincoln	Jefferson Davis
Ulysses S. Grant	Robert E. Lee
William T. Sherman	Joseph E. Johnston
George B. McClellan	Stonewall Jackson (DOW)
David Farragut	Raphael Semmes
<i>and others</i>	<i>and others</i>

Strength

2,100,000:	1,064,000:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Union Army • Union Marines • Union Navy • Revenue Service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confederate Army • Confederate Marines • Confederate Navy

Casualties and losses

112,000+ killed in action/died of wounds	94,000+ killed in action/died of wounds
25,000 died in Confederate prisons	26,000-31,000 died in Union prisons
365,000+ total dead	260,000+ total dead
282,000+ wounded	137,000+ wounded

50,000 civilians dead
Total: 675,000-900,000 dead

10

Source	Evidence in favour of Grant	Evidence in favour of Lee
A		
B		
C		
D		
E		
F		
G		
H		
I		
J		
K		
L		
M		
N		
O		
P		

Source Investigation

Grant V Lee - interactive follow up activities available.

You can access THOUSANDS more
history teaching resources using the icHistory **Site Pass Discount.**

If you have questions about the resources or details about the site pass
offer you can message me directly phil@ichistory.com

www.icHistory.com

