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Week 8 Forum

Petersburg

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Petersburg

by [Joe Escobar](#) – Saturday, February 20, 2016, 8:32 PM

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IMPORTANT – SUBJECT LINES

BE SURE to use an informative subject line for your post, something that describes which question(s) you are addressing . Do NOT simply leave it RE: Petersburg

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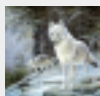
Battle of Petersburg

by [Carissa Kernutt](#) – Wednesday, February 24, 2016, 9:28 PM

This documentary added more in depth knowledge of the Civil War as well as the Battle of Petersburg. In the documentary they talk how many soldiers died under Ulysses Grants watch naming him "the butcher". Somehow even though he had twice as many casualties while fighting this siege he still won in the end by the use of trenches as an advantage. The north was severely lacking in supplies and was hit hard by the depression. In the book it talks about how Grant's siege was unsuccessful and the northerners felt the weight of the war for once, although Robert E Lee later surrender. Grant forced confederates to abandon Petersburg and Richmond, and when he pursued them they were cut off from retreating to the South. At this point everyone was longing for peace and it became clear through patriotic music. Ken Burn's displayed the battle very quaintly and narrowing it down was a worthwhile task. The way he narrowed it down helped me learn new things and explore into further study about the siege.

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Re: Battle of Petersburg

by [Edith Ortega](#) – Saturday, February 27, 2016, 8:13 PM

One could almost forgive people calling Grant the “butcher.” Most of the people, civilian and military alike, didn’t understand most of what was happening as they had not been to war themselves. Some were either too young or too old and only had old “war stories” in words, not actuality, to give them just a smidgeon of a visual picture in their minds. And a lot of the old stories were most well done in the embellishment department. Also, Ken Burns stated in his series that there were few “men” who had any wartime experience and that most of them were too old to be of any assistance.

Edie O!



Re: Battle of Petersburg/ "men"

by [Taralee O'Connor](#) – Saturday, February 27, 2016, 10:35 PM

This lack of war time experience impacted the Army of the Potomac most significantly. This particular Union Army had a re-enlistment rate of 50%. The men that replaced the men killed, wounded in battle or just choose not to re-enlist were not what most would consider excellent candidates. As stated in our textbook, "Such another depraved, vice-hardened and desperate set of human beings never before disgraced an army" These men were also described as being " bounty jumpers, thieves and cutthroats" (McPherson, 720). It is certainly fortunate for the Union that many re-enlisted due to their Pride and Patriotism and had experience as soldiers.



The Crater

by [Taralee O'Connor](#) – Wednesday, February 24, 2016, 9:30 PM

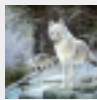
The documentary, Petersburg: The Graveyard of the Confederacy added a depth to The Crater that was unknown to me. This documentary helped by adding details to the intricacies of the Petersburg siege. Our textbook seemed to focus more on specifics of the endeavor itself, General Burnside and his lack inability to follow orders while the Burns Episode 7 gave more details of the horror that befell the black soldiers. Burns showed how the South and General Mahone felt about this particular group of soldiers with relating how the black soldiers were singled out and shot while trying to surrender. The documentary added to my understanding by adding to my mental imagery of this point on the battle with phrases like; "dirt clods the size of houses" and "body pieces flying." Ken Burns focus on the Battle of Petersburg added to to my understanding of the Civil War as a whole by focusing on this particular point in the war.



Re: The Crater

by [Alexander Nonte-Clark](#) – Friday, February 26, 2016, 4:21 PM

I think the documentary also added some depth to the aspect of morale on each side of the siege as well as the points you make. I believe that each of our sources had a slightly different way of explaining the the siege, the book always seems to feel dry on connecting with what happened and I think the Ken Burns episodes add to the events a sort of emotional aspect, and this documentary was almost a mixture of the two, in the fact that it covered the one event in great detail, and also gave the information about how the people involved. In my opinion this source was more worthwhile than the 12 minute clip of last week, because instead of being short and trying to cover a mass of things, it was long and very focused.



Re: The Crater

by [Edith Ortega](#) – Saturday, February 27, 2016, 8:14 PM

I agree that General Mahone who ordered his men back to the rim of the crater to "pour fire down upon them", then said: "Take the white man! Kill the N*****!" was a man that had I been a soldier myself, I would gladly shoot him myself.

But Burns' also showed that the North (though not 100%) in regards to the black population was more accepting of them. Grant made clear what he thought of and how he saw the black soldiers in comparison to the white soldiers by suspending the prisoner exchange system that had been operating up until then. The South was told that it must agree to have "NO DISTINCTION WHATEVER BETWEEN WHITE AND COLORED PRISIONERS." Lee and Davis declined the conditions of reinstatement of the exchange system.

Edie O!



Re: North & Waiting It Out
by [Taralee O'Connor](#) – Sunday, February 28, 2016, 5:00 PM

Yes.

The North was more accepting depending on ones ethnicity, religion and socioeconomic circumstance. The textbook gave a better and more detailed picture of the Irish riots and anti- emancipation sentiment. The Irish were concerned about losing jobs to freed black worker flooding in their city. Being the most underrepresented group make them easily manipulated by the Democratic agenda (McPherson, 606–610). This situation in the North made Lee's strategy to keep the Union's Army at bay long enough for the Presidential election was Brilliant!!!

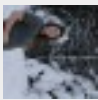
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Further Depth
by [Alexander Nonte-Clark](#) – Wednesday, February 24, 2016, 9:31 PM

I think that the documentary added more to what I could already envision about what the siege was like and how it differed from other battles in the sense that it was a sort of hold out instead of a back and forth. It seemed to pretty much cover some accomplishments and failures like The Crater about the same as the other pieces did. Overall I think that this narrow view was worthwhile, because it was a major part of the history of the Civil War.

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Re: Further Depth
by [Carissa Kernutt](#) – Friday, February 26, 2016, 7:41 AM

The way Burn's displayed a narrow view on the Battle of Petersburg definitely helped paint a positive picture for all of us. It helped expand our prior knowledge from the readings. During the siege Grant lost twice as many men compared to Lee, which eventually Lee surrendered as he had no way to get around Grant to head South.

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Re: Further Depth
by [Thomas Brokaw](#) – Friday, February 26, 2016, 7:08 PM

I believe Grant kept moving to his left flank (south) to get around Lee and take Petersburg as key to taking Richmond. There is only about 20 miles separating the two. Lee was trying to protect both Petersburg and Richmond from Union capture.

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Re: Further Depth
by [Edith Ortega](#) – Friday, February 26, 2016, 6:49 PM

I agree that it added to vision of what a trench war fighting style was like, compared to an open battlefield or bushwhacking style. Ken Burns pointed out that first a tunnel had to be excavated beneath the rebel soldiers without their knowing, then the laying of the explosives with fuses to light them. He also talks about the length of time necessary to see it through, though in the end the lack of a ladder proved to be their undoing.

In McPherson's book, the idea for this endeavor was described the following way:

This was the famous battle of the Crater. In conception it bid fair to become the most brilliant stroke of the war; in execution it became a tragic fiasco. A section in the center of the Union line at Petersburg held by Burnside's 9th Corps lay within 150 yards of an enemy salient on high ground where the rebels had built a strong redoubt. One day in June, Colonel Henry Pleasants of the 48th Pennsylvania, a Schuylkill County regiment containing many coal miners, overheard one of his men growl: "*We could blow that damn fort out of existence if we could run a mine shaft under it.*" A prewar mining engineer, Pleasants liked the idea,

proposed it to his division commander, who submitted it to Burnside, who approved it. Pleasants put his regiment to work excavating a tunnel more than 500 feet long. They did so with no help from the army's engineers, who scoffed at the project as "claptrap and nonsense" because ventilation problems had limited all previous military tunnels in history to less than 400 feet.

So between Burns' time table and McPherson's description of how it came about, I would say that those two sources alone give one heck of a picture on the memory reel of the human mind.

McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom, pg 758

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Siege of Petersburg

by [Mariah Marelli](#) – Wednesday, February 24, 2016, 9:51 PM

With all of the battles mentioned in the textbook, to the smaller number of battles selected for the Ken Burns series, to the emphasis on this single campaign, was this narrow focus on Petersburg a worthwhile task?

A lot of battles were mentioned in the textbook, they were described in not a ton of detail. The Ken Burns series covered a small number of battles compared to the textbook, but they covered the battles in more detail than the textbook was able to. I think it was worthwhile for the Ken Burns series to focus on the Siege of Atlanta and the Siege of Petersburg. It was important to focus on these battles because they were critical turning points for Union during the war. These battles were essential for the Union’s victory against the confederacy. They also allowed for the reelection of Lincoln, which pretty much insured that the Confederacy would fall. They would never gain their independence from the Union. If the Ken Burns series hadn’t focused on the Siege of Petersburg and Atlanta I wouldn’t have understood just how important these battles were in the war.

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Major battles

by [Thomas Brokaw](#) – Friday, February 26, 2016, 8:13 PM

There certainly does seem to be an emphasis on some major battles. It seems that many battles amounted to more or less killing frenzy and had no strategic value. Soldiers seemingly traveled about until they ran into each other and then the killing began. The futility of battle has been expressed many times in the Burns series by way of words from a soldier's diary. The siege of Petersburg and Richmond was important because it was the vice-like grip of Grant and Sherman that finally broke the back of Lee and the Confederacy. With the 1864 elections coming up both Grant and Sherman were both under pressure to take Richmond and Petersburg. If they had not taken these cities before the election McClellan could have become president and ended the war. If that would have happened it would have meant that a President McClellan would have likely overturned the emancipation proclamation. And if emancipation would have been overturned then when would blacks have gained their freedom?

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Re: Major battles

by [Edith Ortega](#) – Saturday, February 27, 2016, 8:11 PM

I agree that there is an apparent emphasis on some of the major battles, but also there is the emphasis on the moral of not only the soldiers but civilians in the cities where the battles take place. People being driven out by relentless cannon fire, looting, and destruction of land and buildings. And of those who stayed put ... having to look upon the wanton death, desolation and destruction of what was once their homes, proved to be unnerving to the point of insanity for most. And I agree that if we had been given a ‘President McClellan’ that he would have thrown out the Emancipation Proclamation and the black population would probably still be fighting for the right to be called ‘human’ not animal.

Edie O!



"President McClellan"

by Tyler Moffett - Sunday, February 28, 2016, 10:07 PM

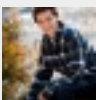
In the Civil War series they made it seem like McClellan was very popular and a good candidate to become president. With a strong resume as a general for the Union army and liked by most he had a good chance. He rallied support from the south and most thought he was going to win. Lincoln had a spectacular campaign strategy to win the election over McClean and that was a huge point in the civil war. I can't believe even McClean's own soldiers in the Army of the Potomac went against him in the election.



Re: Petersburg film: very good for several reasons

by Thomas Brokaw - Wednesday, February 24, 2016, 11:48 PM

The narrow focus film on Petersburg was a worthwhile task because it added many details that helped to put the last year of the war in more clear perspective. Where Burns spends more time with quotes, pictures and sound effects, the Petersburg film spends its time mostly with one historian or another providing detail after detail that paint the picture and put into perspective the events surrounding the siege of Petersburg. Where Burns is effective in visual senses, the Petersburg film paints just as good of a picture with good storytelling. I thought the focus on the personality of Grant was very good, including the details regarding his HQ at City Point and his preference to sleep in a tent rather than to sleep in a nice house. The Petersburg film also better covered Petersburg's fortifications with details of the trench warfare like the boredom, disease and snipers. I also liked the tour through the various line fortifications that stood as barriers to slow down advancing soldiers at perfect rifle range. There was more regarding Sheridan and his campaign in the Shenandoah Valley. The coverage of the Crater was different. The Burns film pointed out the 300 black soldiers in the Crater were gunned down, most trying to surrender, while the Petersburg film left that part out. There was also more time spent pointing out the gallantry of the southern soldiers in the face of insurmountable odds. Also pointed out was the confederate soldiers respect for the northerners Thanksgiving holiday in Petersburg. The northern soldiers were portrayed as green recruits led by incompetent generals while the southern soldiers were portrayed as patriots who became weak due to starvation, disease and attrition. Overall an excellent focus piece, as well as a worthwhile southern spin to counter the Burns northern spin.



Petersburg

by Tyler Peckham - Thursday, February 25, 2016, 11:58 AM

The documentary added a lot to my in-depth knowledge of the war. I feel like this documentary had a lot more detail about specific parts of the war. They talk about the generals an about their motives and plan of attack. I feel like narrowing down on Petersburg helped me understand this part of the war very well. The book has so much information Ill tend to get lost and have to go back, re-read, then make sense of it all. The documentary helps explain a lot and gives a good detail for you to have a fuller understanding



Buttler bottled up at Bermuda Hundred

by Thomas Brokaw - Thursday, February 25, 2016, 3:25 PM

I agree with your comments regarding generals and their motives. I found relevant events about Grant's buildup to taking Petersburg were missing from the Burns series. For example: Grant's attack on Cold Harbor in the Burns series (*Burns, Episode six, Move by the Left Flank*) made Grant appear to have been slow to arrive at Cold Harbor and careless with his disastrous assault against fortified positions. What the *Petersburg film* pointed out was that General Butler and his 33,000 soldiers that were supposed to support Grant had gotten themselves pinned down in a peninsula called Bermuda Hundred. Buttler was contained by General PT Beauregard and 18,000 Confederate soldiers and could not help Grant. This affected Grant's strategic plans allowing Lee to prepare at Cold Harbor. To make matters worse, General PT Beauregard was able to chase

Buttler and his 33,000 Union troops into a peninsula keeping them contained while sending a portion of his already smaller army to assist Lee. The Burns film made Grant out to appear careless, while now I believe he was hobbled by the unskilled General Butler. Concerning Buttler and his Army of James being trapped in a peninsula Grant said, "as if it had been in a bottle strongly corked." (*Battle Cry of Freedom, p724*)

General Buttler's weakness near Drewry's Bluff and his subsequent hasty retreat into a peninsula were important enough events that Burns should have included them in his film. Lincoln should carry some blame for his roll in placing a politician like Buttler in a field commander position when he clearly lacked the background to be effective.

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Re: Petersburg
by [Tyler Moffett](#) – Friday, February 26, 2016, 1:21 PM

I totally agree with you on the motives part about the Petersburg video. If i remember correctly the kens burns video was making the Petersburg war seem like grant didn't really have a plan and was just trying to take Richmond. After watching the Ptersburg video it was very clear that Grant had a plan on how to attack Lee and take over Richmond. In the video it made it clear that Grant had 120,000 troops and that Lee had way less i think it was 70,000. it made it clear that grant wanted to attack Lee on all fronts because he knew Lee's army was a lot smaller and could not face all 120,000 troops. Grant swarmed Lee on many fronts and was able to take over Richmond.

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Re: Petersburg
by [Alexander Nonte-Clark](#) – Friday, February 26, 2016, 3:57 PM

I also believe that the documentary added to knowledge that we had already gathered on the subject of Petersburg. It was nice, for a change, to have a further in depth look at what went on in the battle, as opposed to this happened, people died, this side won, and on to the next one. We were told about the conditions living in Petersburg during the siege, more in depth about Union failure (The Crater for example), and other information about the event. Petersburg was very significant in that it was a very important win for the Union, and I think it was good that we took the time to focus in on it and the factors that led to it.

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Re: Petersburg
by [Edith Ortega](#) – Saturday, February 27, 2016, 8:17 PM

I agree that it would have been nice to have an in depth discussion about the events leading up to the siege and how it came to be such an important battle during the civil war. Not even the Mini-Series: North and South Books I & II, gave any insight to the details of how the battles were fought. They focused mainly on just a few characters and how it affected the people during that time period. I would have loved to see more details concerning the toll that the battles took, not only on the civilians but the soldiers as well.

Edie O!

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Re: Petersburg – worth the extra effort?
by [Edith Ortega](#) – Thursday, February 25, 2016, 4:33 PM

I think the focus on Petersburg was not only a worthwhile task, but that it filled in a lot of missing information that you don’t learn in a history class sayin the 5th or 6th grade. Maybe not even in high-school.

For instance the crater scene in the Ken Burn’s series, describing a **30 FEET DEEP, 70 FEET WIDE, 250 FEET LONG hole in the ground**, isn’t common knowledge. At least not to the northern states that I am aware of.

And even the information about the missing Ladders is something you don't hear about in regular history classes. They follow the curriculum: This event started the war, we fought, we won some, we lost some. The dates were...blah blah....war ended so we continued with our regularly scheduled lives. The end. Period.

My apologies for the scattered ramblings. Will do better on the rest of them.

Edie O!

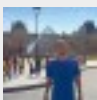
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Also surprised I hadn't heard of the Battle of the Crater
by [Thomas Brokaw](#) – Saturday, February 27, 2016, 1:20 PM

I was also surprised I hadn't heard of the Battle of the Crater. I was intrigued with the original idea of blowing a hole through the Confederate lines and was puzzled as to why General Burnside didn't plan beyond the explosion. He would have had a lot of time to think about it. Instead there was an hour delay in attacking the Confederate line breech and they should have gone around the crater. The explosion was apparently greater than expected and the need for ladders may have reasonably been overlooked as the crater was probably deeper than anticipated. What should not have been anticipated was the difficulty in moving soldiers through the area that had just been blown up. There had to be unopposed areas on each side of the crater that would have been better choices for penetrating the Confederate defenses.

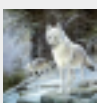
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Re: Also surprised I hadn't heard of the Battle of the Crater
by [Tyler Moffett](#) – Saturday, February 27, 2016, 1:44 PM

After lots of time for general Burnside to think of this plan to dig the hole and blow up all the gun powder under confederate lands you would think he would of thought of everything. For him to not bring ladders or ropes to get out was suprising i do agree. However when the troops blew up the hole wasn't general Burnside back in a tent drinking whiskey and let his troops get burned to death? If Burnside was present at the time do you think there would have been ladders or the attack would have been directed differently?

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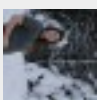


Re: Also surprised I hadn't heard of the Battle of the Crater
by [Edith Ortega](#) – Saturday, February 27, 2016, 8:15 PM

Very true. If one decides to blow up a section of land and thus create a significant hole (crater), then one should know well enough to make sure that there was some ladders available. Also just in case the explosives were accidentally set off earlier than planned, there should have been a contingency plan for going around the crater, so that the enemy couldn't take advantage of the mishap the way the Confederacy did. Hind sight is 20-20 some say. But it wouldn't have helped in this case is what I'm thinking.

Edie O!

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Re: Also surprised I hadn't heard of the Battle of the Crater
by [Carissa Kernutt](#) – Sunday, February 28, 2016, 7:55 AM

I agree! If General Burnside decided to actually go forth with the plan and add an escape for his troops this would've been successful. But his lack in problem solving did not work out during the explosion. You would think he would even know the size of the explosion as well, I mean after all he is a General in the Civil War.. Although he had his troops push through the exploded area, they could've easily went around it. Something doesn't seem right to me.



Video on Petersburg

by [Tyler Moffett](#) – Thursday, February 25, 2016, 6:21 PM

In order to fully understand material you can't just look at one source. You need to look at different sources and hear all sides to the story before making assumptions. I feel like the video on Petersburg did a great job of explaining the battle in depth. I learned a lot of new information on the battle of Petersburg that was not in the civil war series, or the textbook. It starts about by giving detailed information about general Grant and his strategy to keep attacking Lee because he knew he had more troops. Lee was able to move his troops around and thats why the south was able to keep up for so long.



Lee moving his troops around

by [Thomas Brokaw](#) – Friday, February 26, 2016, 7:51 PM

Grant's generals were, for the most part, not as good as the southern generals, his soldiers less motivated, the terrain less familiar. Grant leveraged what he did have: more soldiers, more supplies, more cannons and mortars. Grant maintained constant pressure on Lees more meager resources until Lee had to give it up. He used both battles to drain Lees troop strength and a siege to cut off the city from the outside world and create persistent and increasing internal stress on the enemy. There is approximately 20 miles between Richmond and Petersburg and Lee decided to protect both cities by deploying soldiers across some 35 miles of trenches, adding to his slowly shrinking army. As Lees troop levels fell he had to keep moving his soldiers from one place to another to shore up weakened perimeter areas, and in doing so he was continually thinning perimeter defenses everywhere.



Re: Lee moving his troops around

by [Edith Ortega](#) – Saturday, February 27, 2016, 8:16 PM

In comparing the strengths of both the Union and the Confederacy, you are correct in your saying that Grant had the numbers and supplies and tenacity to wear down Lee’s forces and resources. But I wouldn’t say that Grant had less able bodied generals in which to utilize the resources of the Union. Nor would I say that his soldiers were less motivated than Lee’s. Each side had its share of ups and downs when it came to moral. And each side had its share of ‘idiot’ plans which amounted to little more than “playground” bullies fighting to see who gets to be ‘king of the hill.’

I will agree that continuous pressure from Grant, caused Lee to grow weary of a war that he never wanted a part of to begin with. And that by cutting off supply lines while adding persistent and increasing internal stress, cause Lee to make some crucial mistakes when redeploying his dwindling troops.

Edie O!

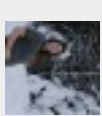


Re: Lee moving his troops around

by [Tyler Moffett](#) – Sunday, February 28, 2016, 10:16 PM

Lee moving his troops around and having strong command of his army was his greatest tool. Once Grant realized Lee's strategy and number of troops he than began to attack Richmond from all sides because. Grant knew that he had the numbers against Lee and his planned worked and he was able to take Richmond. I also agree and don't think Grant soldiers were less motivated than Lee, Lee was just more of an aggressor so his soldiers were attacking more than grant.

Re: Video on Petersburg

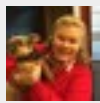


by [Carissa Kernutt](#) – Saturday, February 27, 2016, 9:51 AM

I agree with your statement that you need outside resources to fully understand history and the material that we are given. The video on Petersburg definitely went more in depth about the siege and more in depth about General Grants strategy. He pushed Lee South and eventually he couldn't hold up anymore. Although Grant lost more soldiers, in the end he won the battle as Lee gave up.

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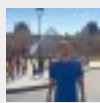
Astute Insight

by [Taralee O'Connor](#) – Sunday, February 28, 2016, 9:11 PM

Petersburg: The Graveyard of the Confederacy helped weave events more clearly. Grant’s insight into the blunders and miscalculations of Union Generals helped to accomplish his goal of beating Lee. This was made evident by Grant’s words. The Union Army had “acted independently and without concert like a bulky wagon team no two horses pulling together”. Grant helped drill down on the issues they were having and enacted a new strategy. This was ultimately successful for him and the North.

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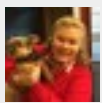
Qualifications of the Soldiers

by [Tyler Moffett](#) – Sunday, February 28, 2016, 9:55 PM

As stated in the textbook a lot of the union army was not qualified to fight. Re enlistment was high and soldiers did not have much training. However the north had a way bigger army and more supply coming from the industrialized north. In the Civil War series they even said Abraham Lincoln fought this war with a hand behind his back and didn't use nearly all the soldiers he could have. The rich boys were still competing in college sports during the civil war at Yale or Harvard i believe. Even though the soldiers were not qualified the north was able to succeed because of the supplies they had and the number of soldiers.

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Re: Northern Soldiers

by [Taralee O'Connor](#) – Sunday, February 28, 2016, 11:50 PM

True, It did say Lincoln fought the war with a hand tied behind his back. The North had a seeming endless supply of supplies and soldiers. I found it so interesting to read in our textbook, some immigrants were practically kidnapped into service by "runners" and some allowed themselves to be captured to avoid the fighting. We have been able to get a better picture using all the sources provided us.

Very interesting reading and viewing!

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