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The Biggest Civil War Battles of 1863: Stones River, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, Vicksburg, Chickamauga, and the Chattanooga Campaign

Charles River Editors

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*Includes pictures.
*Includes accounts of the battles by important generals who fought them.
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The Civil War was the deadliest conflict in American history, and had the two sides realized it would take 4 years and inflict over a million casualties, it might not have been fought. Since it did, however, historians and history buffs alike have been studying and analyzing the biggest battles ever since. Naturally, Americans have long been fascinated by the Civil War, marveling at the size of the battles, the leadership of the generals, and the courage of the soldiers. Since the war's start over 150 years ago, the battles have been subjected to endless debate among historians and the generals themselves.

Of the 4 years, 1863 marked the year in which the Union truly turned the tide of the war. Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia had given the Confederacy hopes by turning away McClellan's Peninsula Campaign and winning decisive battles at Second Bull Run and Fredericksburg. In May 1863, he did it again at Chancellorsville, thwarting the Army of the Potomac and setting the stage for his invasion of Pennsylvania. After the South had lost the war, the importance of Gettysburg as one of the “high tide” marks of the Confederacy became apparent to everyone, making the battle all the more important in the years after it had been fought. While former Confederate generals cast about for scapegoats, with various officers pointing fingers at Robert E. Lee, James Longstreet, and James Stuart, historians and avid Civil War fans became obsessed with studying and analyzing all the command decisions and army movements during the entire campaign.

At the start of 1863, Robert E. Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia had been frustrating the Union in the Eastern theater for several months, but the situation in the West was completely different. The Confederates had lost control of several important states throughout 1862, and after New Orleans was taken by the Union, the North controlled almost all of the Mississippi River, which Confederate general James Longstreet called “the lungs of the Confederacy”. By taking control of that vital river, the North would virtually cut the Confederacy in two, putting the South in a dire situation. The only domino left to fall was the stronghold of Vicksburg, and both sides knew it. Ulysses S. Grant's successful siege of Vicksburg ended the day after the Battle of Gettysburg, giving the Union two vital turning points in the war.

At Chickamauga, the Union averted disaster when George H. Thomas prevented the destruction of the Army of the Cumberland, which would have certainly blunted the momentum Grant and Meade had secured in previous months at Vicksburg and Gettysburg. In fact, it might have completely changed the balance of power in the theater. After the Confederates squandered a golden opportunity to destroy a Union army in the field at Chickamauga, they lay siege to Chattanooga, only to have Grant and Sherman bring men, keep a line of supply open, and then lift the siege with the stunning battles of Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge. After the campaign, one Confederate soldier fatefully predicted, "This...is the death-knell of the Confederacy."

The Biggest Civil War Battles of 1863 comprehensively covers the major campaigns of 1863, the battles, and the aftermath of the battles. Accounts of the battles by important participants are also included, along with maps of the battle and pictures of important people, places, and events. You will learn about the the biggest battles of 1863 like you never have before.

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