

**FROM THE HISTORY CHANNEL®
A SPECIAL PRESENTATION**

SHERMAN'S MARCH



In November of 1864, Union General William Tecumseh Sherman launched a new kind of military campaign. After three years of battle and over 350,000 casualties, the Civil War burned on, with no possibility of end on the horizon. General Sherman, a man who had been plagued by difficulty and self-doubt, saw a vision for how he could both bring and end to the war, and recuperate his stature as a military leader. Sherman's plan was to destroy the Confederate infrastructure and finally bring an end to the war. *Sherman's March* tells the story of how this vision unfolded, and the dramatic human consequences of the campaign known as Sherman's "March to the Sea." This program traces the path of the general and his troops as they blazed through the South after strategically torching Atlanta. The story follows Sherman and his army of over 60,000 men as they set off on a trail South, with the goal of ravaging key Southern military strongholds. They achieved victory in Savannah, Georgia before moving up the coast to seize key posts in South and North Carolina. Sherman ordered his troops to burn crops, confiscate supplies, destroy buildings, and rip up rail tracks--anything that could be considered useful to the Confederates was utterly pulverized in the process. Civilian homes were plundered and destroyed during the march, leading to tremendous criticism of this new form of battle Sherman dubbed "total warfare."

Sherman's March, a two hour special presentation, draws upon new scholarship and uses innovative filming techniques to retell the story of the enigmatic general and his controversial military tactics. Using first-person commentary from soldiers drawn from personal accounts and diaries, this documentary helps bring the significance and effects of the march into clearer view. A focus on several important aspects of this campaign, including the role of ex-slaves and African American soldiers, provides a rich and complex interpretation. Leading historians and experts provide the historical context and analyze the meaning of these events. Today, Sherman is considered to be one of the

foremost architects of modern warfare. Educators and their students will find this program to be a revealing and gripping new window through which to view the Civil War.

Curriculum Links:

Sherman's March would be useful for American History and American Culture courses and would be an excellent companion for course units on the Civil War. It is appropriate for high school students. Due to intense scenes depicting violence and sensitive language, we recommend that teachers view this program in its entirety before airing it to students. This documentary fulfills several National Standards guidelines as outlined by the National Council for History Education including: (1) Patterns of Social and (2) Political Interaction, Civilization, Cultural Diffusion and Innovation and Conflict and Cooperation.

Vocabulary:

Using the dictionary at www.merriamwebster.com, an Internet resource such as www.history.com, or an encyclopedia, students should define or explain the significance of the following terms:

“Bummer”

Forge

plunder

redemption

retreat

emancipation

pillage

rations

retaliate

“total war”

Discussion Questions:

1. Based on this documentary, what words would you use to describe William Tecumseh Sherman? How and why do you think the “March to the Sea” was important to him as an individual?
2. What role do you think Sherman’s friendship with Ulysses S. Grant played in his ability to carry out plans for his march?
3. Why do you think Sherman’s next step after conquering Atlanta was to take Savannah, Georgia?
4. What role did freed slaves play in Sherman’s March? Why do you think freed slaves were so interested in seeing Sherman in person? Do you think they would have been conflicted about joining this march? Discuss.
5. What event occurred at Ebenezer Creek? How do you assess this incident? Do you think the Union troops had a moral obligation to help the freed slaves? Discuss.
6. What was Sherman’s “Special Field Orders, Number 120”? What was its meaning and significance?
7. Why do you think Sherman decided to forge onward to South Carolina after achieving victory in Savannah? Why were the Union troops particularly determined to attack South Carolina?

8. What were the key turning points in Sherman's March? Do you think the Confederates stood a chance of overcoming Sherman's troops at any junct ure in the march?
9. What role did technology play in Sherman's March? Did both sides have the same capabilities? Discuss.
10. How do you think Sherman's March affected the conclusion of the Civil War? How is the march remembered today? What do you think is the legacy of the march?
11. Some historians would argue that Sherman's march was not one event, but a series of distinct Civil War battles. Why do you think it is useful, if at all, to think of the march as one connected event? Discuss.
12. Sherman's called his Southern campaign "total war." What does this term mean, and how does it describe Sherman's march? Do you think these tactics were just and fair given the terms of war? Discuss.

Extended Activities:

1. Sherman and his troops first embarked on their march in November of 1864 and culminated the next year in North Carolina in March of 1865. Break students up into groups of four or five. In order to further visualize the territory they covered and the meaning of the march in the broader context of the Civil War, create a map and illustrated timeline of Sherman's March. These maps should trace and demarcate the route followed by Sherman and his troops, and key points of conflict along the way. If possible, also pinpoint on these maps the location of other key Civil War battles. These maps should be accompanied by a written document with 10 bullet points describing the most important turning points and events which took place during Sherman's March.
2. The costs and consequences of Sherman's March are described throughout this documentary through the first-person narratives of soldiers, Sherman and other military leaders, ex-slaves, and Southern civilians. Keeping in mind the insights you gained from watching this documentary, write a letter or journal entry from the perspective of one of the historical figures in this documentary. Share these letters with your class or group.
3. Several key Civil War battles and other events are highlighted in this documentary, including the Battle of Griswoldville, The Battle of Fort McAllister, and the incident of Ebenezer Creek. Working individually, students should chose one of these events (or any other significant event featured in this documentary) and research the event at the library or on the Internet. Then, students should write short essays of 2-3 pages describing this incident and analyzing its importance in the broader context of the Civil War. Students may also want to write newspaper articles on one of these events as if they were Civil War era reporters.
4. One of the most important primary sources related to Sherman's March is General Sherman's "Special Field Orders, Number 120." Ask students to break up into groups of three to five. At the library or using the Internet, ask students to locate this document. Students should read the document and write a short essay or set of bullet-points describing this document and why it was important. A representative from each group should share these reports with the larger class or

group. Groups may also want to debate the Field Orders, discussing whether or not they agree with the tactics Sherman described and that his troops ultimately carried out.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Books

Ayers, Edward L. *What Caused the Civil War?: Reflections on the South and Southern History*, (W.W. Norton, 2006).

Hakim, Joy. *War, Terrible War 1855-1865 (A History of US, Volume 6)*, (Oxford University Press, 2002).

Sherman, William T. *The Capture of Atlanta and the March to the Sea: From Sherman's Memoirs*, (Dover, 2007).

Smith, David. *Sherman's March to the Sea 1864: Atlanta to Savannah*, (Osprey, 2007).

Websites

The History Channel Civil War site:

<http://www.history.com/minisites/civilwar/>

Civil War Maps, From the Library of Congress:

http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/civil_war_maps/

A helpful website from The Smithsonian:

<http://www.civilwar.si.edu/>