Overview:
"The army that holds the high ground wins; the army with superior numbers wins." During the American Civil War more than once this ideal was proven wrong. This lesson explores the battles of Antietam and Fredericksburg in 1862. It compares how numbers were outweighed by topography and prior knowledge of battlegrounds, but also how superior numbers claimed victory. Students will use topographic maps to form a conjecture as to which side will win the battle.

Connection to National Geography Standards:
Geography Standard 1: How to use maps and other geographic representations, geospatial technologies, and spatial thinking to understand and communicate information.

Geography Standard 13: How the forces of cooperation and conflict among people influence the division and control of Earth’s surface.

Geography Standard 15: How physical systems affect human systems.

Geography Standard 17: How to apply geography to interpret the past.

Connection to Oregon Geography Content Standards:
HS.14: Create and use maps, technology, imagery and other geographical representations to extrapolate and interpret geographic data.

HS.15: Analyze and illustrate geographic issues by synthesizing data derived from geographic representations.

HS.22: Analyze how humans have used technology to modify the physical environment (e.g., dams, tractor, housing types).

Connections to Common Core:
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.3: Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.7: Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.
Objectives:
In completing this exercise, students will be able to:
♦ find elevations of various points on a topographic map
♦ determine which opponent on a battlefield is entrenched on the high ground
♦ evaluate battle summaries by comparing them to maps and place themselves in the Generals' "shoes".

Grade Levels: 9-12
Time: 90 minutes

Materials:
♦ Attached PowerPoint
♦ Synopsis of "Battle of Fredericksburg"
♦ Synopsis of "Antietam: The Bloodiest Day"
♦ Students will need a notebook or notebook paper, pen or pencil and access to technology for further research

Background:
The concept of a topographic map is, on the surface, fairly simple. Contour lines placed on the map represent lines of equal elevation above (or below) a reference datum. To visualize what a contour line represents, picture a mountain (or any other topographic feature) and imagine slicing through it with a perfectly flat, horizontal piece of glass. The intersection of the mountain with the glass is a line of constant elevation on the surface of the mountain and could be put on a map as a contour line for the elevation of the slice above a reference datum.
(http://geology.isu.edu/geostac/Field_Exercise/topomaps/topo_map.htm)
Students should have a basic understanding of the history of the Civil War, specifically political and economic ideals behind the Union view and the Confederate attitude.

Procedures:
Use the attached PowerPoint to:
Have students find these elevations at Antietam:
Confederate positions:
♦ east of the Dunker Church,
♦ the Bloody Lane and
♦ the Richardson/Eshleman Line to the West of the Burnside Bridge
Union positions:
♦ East Woods at 13 P R or Pennsylvania Regiment,
♦ Roulette Farm and
♦ Burnside Bridge
Answer these questions (on each slide):
♦ Does either side hold the high ground?
♦ Is either side entrenched?
Following the Antietam section of the PowerPoint students will read the attached "Antietam: The Bloodiest Day" selection.
Knowledge Check:
♦ Was there a clear winner at Antietam?
♦ If you had been in General McClellan’s (Union) position what would you have done differently? Cite specific passages from the text.
♦ If you had been in General Lee’s (Confederacy) position what would you have done differently? Cite specific passages from the text.
Have students find these elevations at Fredericksburg (note that this map was drawn up in 1931):

**Confederate positions:**
- Marye’s Heights,
- Lee’s Hill and
- Lee’s Headquarters

**Union positions:**
- Stafford Heights,
- Shannon Flying Field and
- The Slaughter Pen

**Answer these questions (on each slide):**
- Did either side hold the high ground?
- Extension: Look up to discover if either side was entrenched.

Following the Fredericksburg section of the PowerPoint students will read the attached "Battle of Fredericksburg" selection.

**Knowledge Check:**
- Was there a clear winner at Fredericksburg?
- If you had been in General Burnside’s (Union) position what would you have done differently? Cite specific passages from the text.
- If you had been in General Lee’s (Confederacy) position what would you have done differently? Cite specific passages from the text.

**Assessment:**
Antietam: Answer these questions (on each slide): Does either side hold the high ground? Is either side entrenched?
Fredericksburg: Answer these questions (on each slide): Did either side hold the high ground? Extension: Look up to discover if either side was entrenched.
Written evaluation of battle summaries comparing synopsizes and topographic maps.

**Extensions:**
Have students research primary sources from both or either battle (divide them into groups and have them become experts on one battle or one aspect of a battle). Compare the primary sources to the provided summaries and maps, how accurate are the summaries? Is there another interpretation of the material?

Possible research sites:
- Library of Congress [www.loc.gov](http://www.loc.gov)
- Civil War Trust [www.civilwar.org](http://www.civilwar.org)

On the Civil War Trust site there are also Animated maps (short videos) of each battle, the teacher may choose to use this layer for the entire class or have students in their groups view these resources.


Battle of Fredericksburg

Summary: The Battle of Fredericksburg was an early battle of the civil war and stands as one of the greatest Confederate victories. Led by General Robert E. Lee, the Army of Northern Virginia routed the Union forces led by Major General Ambrose Burnside. Burnside ordered one futile frontal attack after another against the entrenched Confederate forces on the high ground of Marye’s Heights, generating astounding Union casualties that eventually reached twice that of Confederate casualties.

Preparation for Fredericksburg: Major General Ambrose Burnside had reluctantly accepted his appointment to replace Maj. Gen. George McClellan as commander of the Army of the Potomac in early November 1862. President Abraham Lincoln was hoping for a military victory to give more credence to and win political backing for the Emancipation Proclamation, which would go into effect January 1, 1863. Burnside proposed moving the Union army to Falmouth, directly across the Rappahannock River from Fredericksburg, and making a direct attack on the Confederate capitol of Richmond, Virginia, circumnavigating Gen. Robert E. Lee’s forces who were then in Culpepper blocking Union advances south and at Winchester in the Shenandoah Valley.

The Battle of Fredericksburg Begins: Burnside’s entire Union army had arrived in Falmouth by November 19, but the pontoons that he planned to use to cross the Rappahannock were delayed and, when they did arrive, heavy snowfall prevented all military operations for a week. During this long delay, Lee anticipated Burnside crossing the Rappahannock and ordered Lt. Gen. James Longstreet and Lt. Gen. Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson to a line along the river just outside the town of Fredericksburg. The Rebel troops had ample time to find advantageous defensive positions and establish supply lines and even bring up a large, 30-pounder artillery piece from Richmond by rail to supplement their six- and 12-pounder field pieces.

In the early morning hours of December 11, the Union soldiers began to assemble the pontoon bridges to make a direct crossing into Fredericksburg, hoping speed and surprise would bring success. However, Brigadier General William Barksdale’s Mississipians delayed the crossing by taking positions in the town and shooting the Union soldiers attempting to assemble the bridges. In response, Burnside ordered Fredericksburg to be shelled, though the shelling had little to no effect on Barksdale’s men. Finally, in mid-afternoon, Burnside had several groups of soldiers row across the river to establish a foothold and drive Barksdale’s troops out of the town. After a bloody prolonged fight in the streets, Barksdale’s remaining soldiers finally withdrew and the pontoons could be assembled—but the Mississipians had purchased an extra 12 hours for Lee to establish his forces. Union troops crossed into Fredericksburg on December 12 and looted and vandalized what remained of the city.

Robert E. Lee Digs In On The High Ground: Lee’s Confederates were in a seven-mile long, curving line, with the five divisions of Longstreet’s corps on the left along Marye’s Heights, west of town. Heights south of Fredericksburg to the south end of Prospect Hill were held by the four divisions of Stonewall Jackson’s corps. Burnside decided to attack both flanks rather than strike with the full force at the center. The main thrust would be made by Maj. Gen. William B. Franklin’s Grand Division, consisting of the 1st and 6th corps, against Jackson’s position, while Maj. Gen. Edwin Sumner’s Grand Division—2nd and 9th corps—would "distract" Longstreet on Marye’s Heights. In a misstep, Burnside waited until the morning of December 13 to issue orders to Franklin and Sumner rather than issuing them after their meeting on the 12th. When he did finally issue the orders, his wording was ambiguous, at best, about how forcefully Franklin was to mount the attack south of the city.

In the morning fog on December 13, Franklin ordered a single corps, Maj. Gen. Joseph Reynolds’ 1st Corps, to move into place south of the city along the railroad. As the fog lifted, Major John Pelham opened fire on Union lines using a single gun he had moved into position on Prospect Hill ahead of the Confederate line. Able to delay the Union advance for about an hour and reveal the Union battle plan, Pelham retreated back to the Confederate lines at about 11 a.m.

Stonewall Jackson At Fredericksburg: After adjusting his lines, Reynolds had the Confederate line heavily shelled for an hour, though with little effect or response from Jackson, who had ordered his gunners to hold
attack, the Confederates responded, pushing them back. An artillery duel ensued, with Union guns now landing hits on their targets. In the early afternoon, Reynolds ordered his two remaining infantry divisions to approach the Confederate line, where they found a hole in the line left by Jackson, who wrongly assumed the terrain—swampy woodland—was impassable. Finding the advantage in attacking the Confederates, Union major general George Meade began to roll up the Confederate lines. Jackson ordered his reserves to counterattack, while Meade sent word to Brig. Gen. David Birney for reinforcements that would never come; Birney refused to coordinate efforts with Meade. Left unsupported and facing an overwhelming onslaught, Meade retreated, with the Confederates pushing their advantage. The area of intense fighting would become known as the Slaughter Pens. By late afternoon, Jackson had readjusted his lines and tried to goad the Union into attacking, but Meade refused to respond. With darkness approaching, the battle south of Fredericksburg came to an end.

**Slaughter on Marye’s Heights:** The battle to the north, with Longstreet on Marye’s Heights and Sumner emerging from the city streets, was even less successful for the Union. Sumner’s men had to cross about half a mile of open ground that included a mill race (a trench five feet deep, 15 feet wide, and filled with three feet of water) before approaching a stone wall, behind which Longstreet had his men entrenched, with artillery on the heights behind them. As the fog lifted and artillery booms from the battle downriver were heard, Sumner began ordering wave after wave of divisions to advance toward Marye’s Heights. Throughout the day, the Union divisions advanced and were cut down by Confederate artillery and gunfire. Late in the day, the 9th Corps of Maj. Gen. Joseph "Fighting Joe" Hooker’s Grand Division attempted to flank the sunken road but only succeeded in adding more blue-clad casualties to the heaps that lay in the fields.

That night, a Confederate soldier from South Carolina, Richard Kirkland, risked his life to take water and warm clothing over the stone wall to the wounded and dying of the enemy; the "Angel of Marye’s Heights" is an enduring symbol of humanitarianism. Kirkland would be killed at the Battle of Chickamauga the following autumn.

Burnside intended to renew the frontal assaults the next morning, but the commanders of his three grand divisions convinced him not to. The following two days were filled with the misery and suffering of the wounded between the two lines. The night of December 15, Burnside retreated to winter camp in Stafford County.

**Aftermath of The Battle of Fredericksburg:** Confederate morale soared after Fredericksburg; they had been outnumbered and still prevailed. Union morale was already low after McClellan, popular with the troops, had been replaced by Burnside; Burnside’s missteps in strategy and leadership at Fredericksburg sowed the seeds of insubordination, leading to his ineffective second offensive against Lee in January 1863, derisively called the "Mud March." Afterward, he offered his resignation, which Lincoln accepted and replaced him with Joe Hooker, who would come to grief at the Battle of Chancellorsville.

Burnside, reassigned to the western theater, got a measure of revenge in November 1863 when Longstreet’s corps, also temporarily assigned to the west, battered itself unsuccessfully against his defensive position at Knoxville, Tennessee.

(Courtesy of Historynet.com http://www.historynet.com/battle-of-fredericksburg)
The Battle of Antietam (or Sharpsburg), fought on September 17, 1862, was the culmination of the first Confederate invasion of the North. About 40,000 Confederates, under the command of General Robert E. Lee, confronted the 87,000-man Federal Army of the Potomac under Gen. George B. McClellan. When the fighting ended, the course of the American Civil War had been forever changed.

After his significant victory at Second Manassas in late August 1862, Lee marched his Army of Northern Virginia across the Potomac River and into Maryland, hoping to find vitally needed men and supplies. McClellan followed, first to Frederick (where, through rare good fortune, a copy of the Confederate battle plan, Lee's Special Order 191, fell into his hands) then westward 12 miles to the passes of South Mountain. There, on September 14th, at Turner's, Fox's, and Crampton's Gaps, Lee's men tried to block the Federals. Because he had split his army to send troops under Gen. Thomas J. Stonewall Jackson to capture Harpers Ferry, Lee could only hope to delay the Federals. McClellan forced his way through and by the afternoon of September 15th both armies had established new battle lines west and east of Antietam Creek near the town of Sharpsburg. When Jackson's troops reached Sharpsburg on the 16th, Harpers Ferry having surrendered the day before, Lee consolidated his position along the low ridge that runs north and south of the town.

The battle opened at dawn on the 17th when Union Gen. Joseph Hooker's artillery began a murderous fire on Jackson's men near the Miller cornfield north of town. "In the time I am writing," Hooker reported, "every stalk of corn in the northern and greater part of the field was cut as closely as could have been done with a knife, and the slain lay in rows precisely as they had stood in their ranks a few moments before." Hooker's troops advanced, driving the Confederates before them, and Jackson reported that his men were "exposed for near an hour to a terrific storm of shell, canister, and musketry."

About 7 a.m., General John Bell Hood's Confederate division reinforced Jackson and succeeded in driving back the Federals. An hour later Union Twelfth Corps troops under Gen. Joseph Mansfield counterattacked and by 9 a.m. had regained some of the lost ground. Then, in an effort to extricate some of Mansfield's men from their isolated position near the Dunker Church, Gen. John Sedgwick's division of Edwin V. Sumner's corps advanced into the West Woods. There Confederate troops struck Sedgwick's men on their front and exposed left flank, inflicting appalling casualties. Meanwhile, Gen. William H. French's division of Sumner's corps moved up to support Sedgwick but veered south into Confederates under Gen. D. H. Hill posted along an old sunken road separating the Roulette and Piper farms. For nearly 4 hours, from 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., bitter fighting raged along this road (afterwards known as Bloody Lane) as French, supported by Gen. Israel B. Richardson's division, also of Sumner's corps, sought to drive the Southerners back. Confusion and sheer exhaustion finally ended the battle here and in the northern part of the field.

Southeast of town, Union Gen. Ambrose E. Burnside's troops had been trying to cross a bridge over Antietam Creek since 9:30 a.m. Some 400 Georgians had driven them back each time. At 1 p.m. the Federals finally crossed the bridge (now known as Burnside Bridge) and, after a 2-hour delay to reform their lines, advanced up the slope beyond. By late afternoon they had driven the Georgians back almost to Sharpsburg, threatening to cut off the line of retreat for Lee's decimated Confederates. Then about 4 p.m. Gen. A. P. Hill's division, left behind by Jackson at Harpers Ferry to salvage the captured Federal property, arrived on the field and immediately entered the fight. Burnside's troops were driven back to the heights near the bridge they had earlier taken. The Battle of Antietam was over. The next day Lee began withdrawing his army across the Potomac River.

More men were killed and wounded at Antietam on September 17, 1862 than on any other single day of the Civil War. Federal losses were 12,410, Confederate losses 10,700. Although neither side gained a decisive victory, Lee's failure to carry the war effort effectively into the North caused Great Britain to refuse recognition of the Confederate government. The battle also gave President Abraham Lincoln the opportunity to issue the Emancipation Proclamation, which, on January 1, 1863, declared all slaves free in states still in rebellion against the United States. Now the war had a dual purpose: to preserve the Union and end slavery.

(Information from Teacher's Packet of Antietam National Battlefield Teaching Materials)
Battles of Antietam & Fredericksburg 1862
The Uphill Battle

Lesson Plan by Tabitha M. Richards

Topographic Map

**Datum**: a point of reference.

The concept of a topographic map:
- **Contour lines** - lines of equal elevation above or below a reference datum (look in the key).

- To visualize what a contour line represents, picture a mountain and imagine slicing through it with a perfectly flat, horizontal piece of glass.

- The intersection of the mountain with the glass is a line of constant elevation on the surface of the mountain and could be put on a map as a contour line for the elevation of the slice above a reference datum.

You will find the elevations of the Confederate Line east of the Dunkard Church (slide 4), the Bloody Lane (slide 5) and at the Richardson/Whiteman Line to the west of the Burnside Bridge (slide 6) (red stars).

Union Line: the East Woods at 13 P.M. or Pennsylvania Regiment (slide 4), Roulette Farm (slide 5) and Burnside Bridge (slide 6) (blue stars).

Find the elevation of the hill top to the west of the Dunkard Church.

Find the elevation of the 13 P.R. (13 Pennsylvania Regiment) in The East Woods.

Does either side hold the high ground?

Is either side entrenched?

Note: the Contour interval between the contour lines is 10 feet. Also note the closer the lines appear the steeper than incline.
Antietam: The Bloodiest Day

Students will now read the informational document regarding the events leading up to, the day of, and what happened immediately following the Battle of Antietam.

Knowledge Check

- Was there a clear winner at Antietam?
- If you had been in General McClellan's (Union) position what would you have done differently? Cite specific passages from the text.
- If you had been in General Lee's (Confederacy) position what would you have done differently? Cite specific passages from the text.

Note that the Contour interval between the contour lines is 10 feet. Also note the closer the lines appear the steeper than incline.
Battle of Fredericksburg

Students will now read the informational document regarding the events leading up to, the day of, and what happened immediately following the Battle of Fredericksburg.

Knowledge Check

- Was there a clear winner at Fredericksburg?
- If you had been in General Burnside’s (Union) position what would you have done differently? Cite specific passages from the text.
- If you had been in General Lee’s (Confederacy) position what would you have done differently? Cite specific passages from the text.

Sources


