

Robert E. Lee: Shades of Gray

STUDY GUIDE

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The Education and Outreach Team at
RUBICON THEATRE COMPANY

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ROBERT E. LEE SHADES OF GRAY

An in-depth
study guide
for teachers
and students.

BEYOND THE BLACK-AND-WHITE PAGES OF AMERICAN HISTORY...

Robert E. Lee - Shades of Gray is an epic tale that looks beyond the black-and-white pages of history into the gray areas of America's past. Critics call this show "a script for the ages" and an "extraordinary, stirring, tour de force performed by a brilliant actor." This is a spellbinding journey written by and starring Los Angeles Drama Critics' Circle Award-winner Tom Dugan (*Wiesenthal*).

April 9, 1865: Appomattox.

How did the most trusted soldier in the United States Army become the most dangerous man in America? Why did this deeply religious father of seven, who was firmly opposed to slavery and secession, agree to fight for The Confederacy? In the moments before offering his surrender to General Ulysses S. Grant and triggering the end of the Civil War, Robert E. Lee pleads his case to Posterity.



Tom Dugan is Robert E. Lee

"Tom Dugan brings
the period to vibrant
life in his tour de
force performance."
- LA Examiner

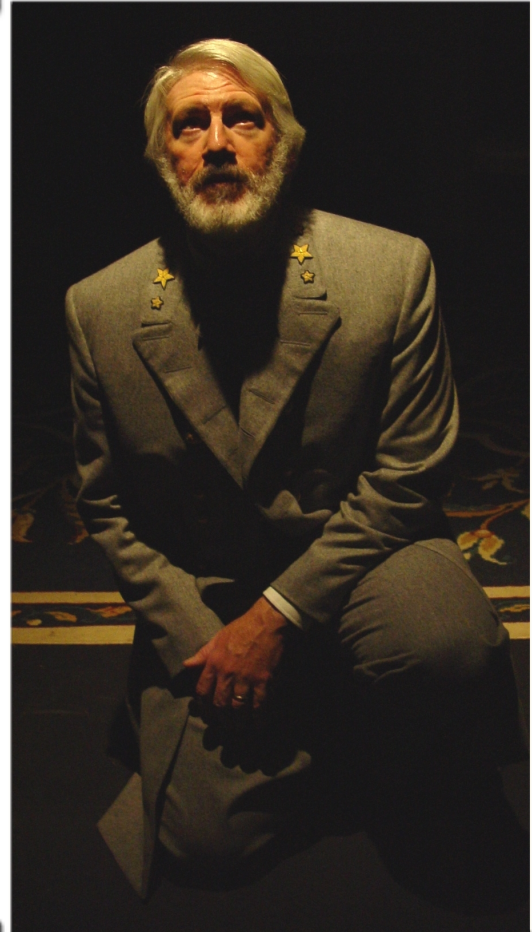


ROBERT E. LEE: SHADES OF GRAY

STUDY GUIDE

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Thank you for “crossing the Rubicon” and exposing your students to live professional theatre. We sincerely hope this study guide will serve as a effective and fun educational tool to assist in preparing your students for the experience. In an effort to help us help you, we appreciate your feedback and welcome any and all concerns or comments.

Sincerely,
The Education and Outreach Team at Rubicon

Rubicon Theatre Company
Education and Outreach Department
1006 East Main Street
Ventura CA 93001
(805) 667-2900 www.rubicontheatre.org

Dear Educators,

Given the intimate nature of our space and the personal connection between the actors and the audience, it is essential that students, especially those attending live theatre for the first time, are thoughtfully prepared. The following are some helpful guidelines that we encourage you to share with your group before attending the performance.

1. All students and staff should arrive by 9:30 a.m. and be seated before the program begins. Once the program begins, students and staff will not be able to be seated.
2. Instruct chaperones to sit throughout the theatre with the students to help reinforce appropriate theatre etiquette, if necessary.
3. Please advise your group to use the restroom before the performance begins and then again at intermission. The opening and closing of doors during the performance is very distracting to the performers.
4. Encourage positive audience participation; applause and laughter appropriate to the action are expected.
5. During the intermission, Rubicon will provide each individual with a free bottle of water and snack. Please note that all concessions must be consumed and disposed of before reentering the theatre.
6. Gum, food or drink are not permitted in the theatre.
7. Any electronic devices such as cell phones or i-Pods must remain in pockets or purses while in the theatre. Teachers will be asked to take appropriate and standard action should electronic devices be seen during the performance.
8. The taking of photos, with or without a flash and the use of any recording device is prohibited by law and strongly enforced at our theatre.

We also invite you to use the contents of this study guide to prepare your students in advance. Students who have previous exposure to the subject matter are more likely to be an attentive audience.

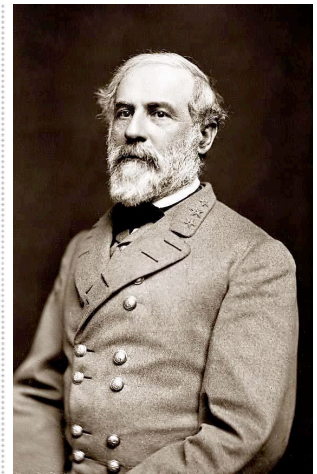
Before you arrive at the theatre ask the students to think about three questions they would like to ask the actors during the post-show “talkback” session. Direct them to focus on questions that directly relate to the play, its characters and themes. Students may also be interested to know more about the technical and scenic elements of the performance.

Thank you for your participation and look forward to personally welcoming you to Rubicon. Thank you again for your continued interest and support.

Sincerely,
Brian McDonald
Associate Producer / Director of Education and Outreach



Tom Dugan as Robert E. Lee



Robert E. Lee

Overview

The parlor in the Appomattox house is empty save for General Robert E. Lee, but Lee is not alone - Posterity sits in judgment. How did the most trusted soldier in the United States Army become the most dangerous man in America? Why did this deeply religious man, firmly opposed to slavery and secession, reject Lincoln's offer to lead the Union Army and agree to fight for The Confederacy?

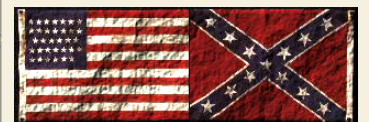
Set just moments before Lee's historic surrender to General Grant on April 9th 1865, this one-man drama places the audience in the jury box as Lee shares the extraordinary circumstances of his remarkable life.

The son of a disgraced revolutionary war hero, Lee recounts how he overcame the childhood shame of his father to graduate second in his class at West Point. He recalls his marriage to Mary, great-granddaughter of Martha Washington, and the birth of their seven children. As the country splits

in two, Lee traces the battles that made him a Civil War legend throughout the North and South for his military genius and personal integrity. He remembers how their home in Arlington, eventually confiscated by Federal troops, became a national cemetery.

From the raging battlefields of Chancellorsville and Gettysburg and back again to Wilmer McClain's front parlor, Lee asks Posterity to consider its verdict: "patriot" or "traitor"? As we hear General Grant's approaching footsteps, Lee warns against simplifying our nation's story into a comforting novel of good versus evil, saying, "Fictionalized history teaches later generations to long for the good old days, which never really were, and to despise the little good that is granted us in this present world." *Robert E. Lee - Shades of Gray* is an epic tale that looks beyond the black and white pages of our history into the gray areas of America's past.

*I cannot
trust a
man to
control
others who
cannot
control
himself.*
Robert E. Lee



Setting and Characters

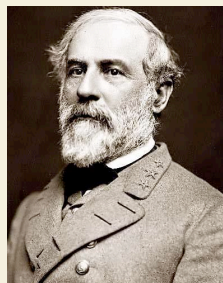
SETTING

The action takes place on April 9, 1865, the day Robert E. Lee surrenders to Ulysses S. Grant in a dusty, crossroads community called Appomattox Court House, located in central Virginia.

The play begins and ends in the front parlor of Wilmer McLean's home. It's Palm Sunday, a Christian holiday. Waiting for Grant to arrive, Lee ponders how history will remember him. Will he be branded a loser? Simply forgotten? Will people remember that the Civil War was about more than slavery? That it was about money, the Constitution, and states' rights to govern themselves independently – in the Union or out of it?

As Lee recounts the rise of his military career and the war that raged for four bloody years, the scene shifts, flashing backwards to war room meetings, battlefields, and quiet moments writing letters to wife and daughters back home. By the time Grant arrives, the small stage has encompassed a world of personal agony, triumph and ultimate defeat.

CHARACTERS



Robert Edward LEE (1807-1870)

was born in Virginia the son of a Revolutionary War hero. Lee was a West Point graduate who was decorated three times for

bravery in the Mexican War. He married Mary Custis, the great-granddaughter of

Martha Washington, in 1831. Lee, widely considered the nation's most promising soldier, though opposed to secession and slavery, remained loyal to his home state Virginia when it seceded from the Union in 1861. Lee became general of all Confederate armies and adviser to Confederate States President Jefferson Davis. By April 1865, military defeats, dwindling forces and supplies compelled Lee to surrender at Appomattox. He remained a hero to the South and accepted the post of president of Washington College (later Washington and Lee University), where he served until his death in 1870.

Confederate Generals Post Card

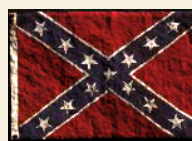


CHARACTERS

MENTIONED BUT NOT APPEARING



Edward Porter



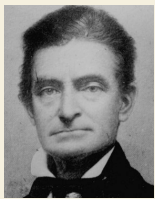
ALEXANDER (1835-1910), Colonel (Artillery), Confederate States Army (CSA); Lee's 28-year old, "young artillery officer." Alexander was in charge of the massive artillery bombardment preceding Pickett's Charge at the Battle of Gettysburg. He is noted for his early use of signals and observation balloons during combat. After the war Alexander wrote extensive memoirs and analyses of the conflict. These have

Civil War Casualties

At least 618,000 Americans died in the Civil War and some experts say the toll reached 700,000 - exceeding the nation's loss in all its other wars, from the Revolution through Vietnam.

Characters Mentioned Continued

received high praise for their insight and objectivity by generations of succeeding scholars.

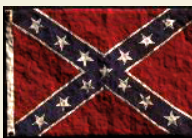


No
Slavery

John BROWN

(1800-1859), radical abolitionist who

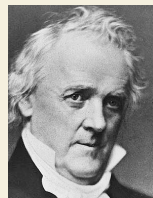
believed armed insurrection was the only way to overthrow the institution of slavery in the United States. In 1859 he led an unsuccessful raid on the Federal armory at Harpers Ferry, Maryland, hoping to arm the local slaves and start a revolution. The event ended with Brown's capture, subsequent trial, conviction, and death by hanging. The raid (and the judgment following) polarized the nation over the issue of slavery.



"Bryan" (dates

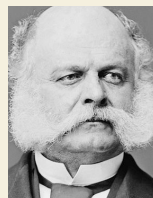
unknown), Lee's Irish mess steward in the field. The Museum of the Confederacy (www.moc.org) states that Bryan was African-American. He appears in letters and memoirs as the protector of Lee's pet chicken. (She provided an egg a day for the general's

breakfast.) Bryan becomes highly concerned when a saddle of mutton goes missing (a gift from Lee's family). It apparently fell to the use of the other officers. Lee is glad that they have it.



James BUCHANAN

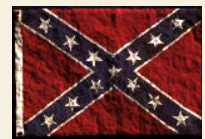
(1791-1868), 15th President of the United States (1857-1861); the only president from Pennsylvania and the only president who remained a lifelong bachelor. Candidate of the Democratic Party in 1856, Buchanan's efforts as president to maintain peace between the North and the South managed to alienate both sides of the conflict, hastening, perhaps, the secession of southern states from the Union in prologue to the American Civil War.



Ambrose

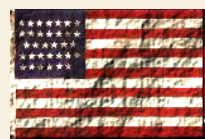
BURNSIDE (1824-1881), Major General, United States Army (USA); one of Robert E. Lee's sequential opponents at the head of the Union Army of the Potomac. His distinctive style of facial hair became known as

"sideburns," derived from his last name. For his failure at the Siege of Petersburg, he was removed from command and never given another assignment. After the war he became a railway executive. He served as Governor of, and then U.S. Senator for, his home state of Rhode Island. He died of a heart attack in that office.



Jimmy CLARK

(dates unknown), James Clark was a paroled Confederate officer at Petersburg, Virginia, returned in exchange of prisoners of war. He was instrumental in removing Lee's daughter, Agnes, from the collapsing defenses of the city. Clark and Agnes left on one of the last trains out of town. At 2:00 a.m. the next morning, Clark delivered Agnes to her mother and sisters at their home in Richmond, Virginia..

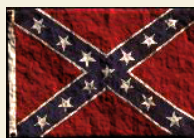
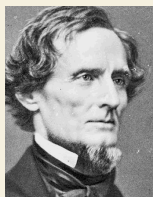


George W. Parke

CUSTIS (1754-1781), Virginia planter, the step-grandson and adopted son of

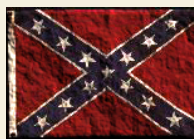
Characters Mentioned Continued

George Washington, Custis was the father of Robert E. Lee's wife, Mary Anna Custis. He used inheritance to build Arlington House directly across the Potomac River from what is today the National Mall in Washington, DC. It took 16 years to complete the mansion, which Custis intended to serve as a living memorial to George Washington.



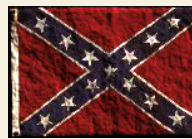
Jefferson DAVIS

(1808-1889), American statesman and politician; President of the Confederate States of America from their beginning in 1861 to their collapse and Davis's capture in 1865. Imprisoned for two years after the war, Davis became an insurance executive in the South after his release. During Reconstruction, he resented Federal military rule and Republican political authority over former Confederate states. His social views were strongly in league with Jim Crow suppression of African-Americans in the South.



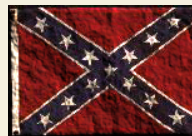
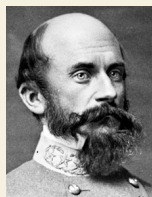
Jefferson DAVIS, Jr. (1857-1878); the son of Confederate

President Jefferson Davis and Varina Banks Howell Davis. When the Civil War broke out, Jeff was about four years old. In later years he worked for a bank in Memphis, Tennessee. Described as "rambunctious," Jeff Jr. never seemed to be highly motivated. He died of yellow fever at the age of 21.



Varina Banks

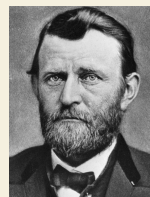
Howell DAVIS (1826-1906), second wife of Jefferson Davis and First Lady of the Confederacy in the secessionist capital at Richmond, Virginia. Smart and well educated, she had family in both the North and South. A supporter of slavery and states' rights, Varina Davis held somewhat unconventional views for her public role. She became a writer after the war and was a regular columnist for Joseph Pulitzer's New York World.



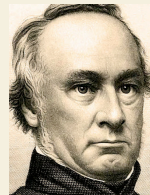
Richard S. EWELL

(1817-1872), Lieutenant General, Confederate States Army (CSA); famed corps commander under "Stonewall" Jackson and Robert E. Lee. He drove

the Union forces before him at the Battle of Gettysburg, but suddenly stopped the assault. Criticized for not pushing his opponents off the strategic heights of Cemetery Hill, Ewell's own troops were, in fact, exhausted and his opponent seemed likely to receive reinforcements. After the war, Ewell retired to work as a gentleman farmer on his wife's farm near Spring Hill, Tennessee.



Ulysses S. GRANT (1822-1885), Lieutenant General, United States Army (USA). He led Union forces to victory after initial setbacks in the Battle of Shiloh in 1862. He earned a reputation for aggression and was given command of all Union forces by President Lincoln in 1863. Grant's battlefield confrontations with Robert E. Lee eventually led to Lee's surrender at Appomattox Court House, April 9, 1865. He was elected the 18th President of the United States after the war.



Henry W. HALLECK (1815-1872), Major

Characters Mentioned Continued

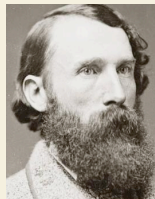
General, USA. More of a bureaucrat than a soldier, Halleck was known by the nickname (that became derogatory), "Old Brains." One observer described him as a "cold, calculating owl." Strong subordinates routinely ignored his advice and instructions. After the Second Battle of Bull Run he was removed from command as General in Chief of all U.S. forces. In 1885 he was transferred (exiled) to the Military Division of the Pacific in California. In 1869 he was given command of the Military Division of the South in Louisville, Kentucky. He died there, in office.



Henry Thomas

HARRISON (1832-1923), a spy working for Confederate Lt. General James Longstreet. Harrison provided Robert E. Lee with crucial information leading up to the Battle of Gettysburg. He appeared as an actor only once, on a bet. A Private in the Virginia Militia (photo), Harrison was discharged from the military to undertake clandestine work for Confederate Secretary of War, James Seddon. He was vulnerable to Federal prosecution for espionage. After the war he laid low, cropping up in Mexico, prospecting for gold in Montana, and working as a detective in

Cincinnati, Ohio. He died at the age of 91.



Ambrose P. HILL

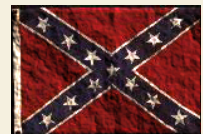
(1825-1865), Lieutenant General, CSA; commander of Robert E. Lee's Third Corps of the Army of Northern Virginia. Greatly admired by his troops, he won early fame in 1862 as commander of the Confederate "Light Division" in the Seven Days Battles against George B. McClellan's Union forces. A nervous individual, Hill often wore a bright red shirt in combat. At the Third Battle of Petersburg, he was shot dead as he rode up to the front lines of the engagement.



Joseph HOOKER

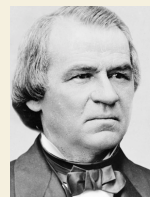
(1814-1879), Major General, USA. An able tactician, Hooker is best remembered for his stunning defeat by Robert E. Lee at the Battle of Chancellorsville in 1863. Lee twice divided his own Confederate forces, ultimately outmaneuvering Hooker's attacking and vastly superior numbers of the Union Army of the Potomac. Not well liked by subordinates, Hooker

had a reputation (not entirely deserved) for showmanship. He suffered a stroke after the war and retired from the Army in 1868.



T. J. (Stonewall) JACKSON

(1824-1863), Lieutenant General, CSA, one of the most gifted tactical commanders in U.S. military history. His nickname ("Stonewall") was earned for his coolness and courage under fire. At the Battle of Chancellorsville, Jackson and his staff were returning to their camp at night. His own troops mistook the party for Union cavalry and fired upon them. Jackson died of pneumonia while recuperating from the amputation of his left arm.

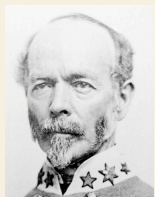


Andrew JOHNSON

(1808-1875), Vice President, then 17th President of the United States following Lincoln's assassination in 1865. Aggressively outspoken, Johnson favored quick restoration of the Confederate states to the Union. He did not favor protection for the former slaves. He came into conflict with the

Characters Mentioned Continued

Republican-dominated Congress, culminating in his impeachment by the House of Representatives on charges of violation of the Tenure of Office Act. The first American president to be impeached, Johnson was acquitted in the Senate by one vote.



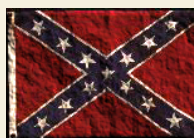
Joseph E.

JOHNSTON (1807-1891), General of the Confederate States Army. Johnston was often criticized by Jefferson Davis for his lack of aggression. Wounded at the Battle of Seven Pines (1862), he was replaced by Robert E. Lee. After the war Johnston became a railroad and insurance executive. He served a term in Congress and was the U.S. Commissioner of Railroads under President Grover Cleveland. Johnston contracted pneumonia while serving in cold weather as a pallbearer for the funeral of General William T. Sherman. He died a month later.



Anne Carter LEE

(1839-1862), second daughter of R. E. Lee and Mary Anna Custis Lee; less



outspoken, less dominant than her sisters. Black-haired with rich, dark coloring, she was a gentle, pious person who devoted much of her time to religious instructions of the slave children on the family estate. Never a strong individual, she lost sight in one eye after a childhood accident. She contracted typhoid fever and died at the age of 23.



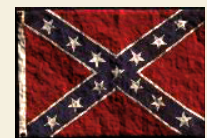
Anne Hill Carter

LEE (1779-1829), great-granddaughter of Robert Carter III, a founding father and one of America's earliest men of wealth. Married to "Light-Horse Harry" Lee III, Anne was Robert E. Lee's mother. Robert was eleven years old when his father, plagued by ill-health and financial speculation, left the United States and never returned to their Virginia home. By necessity, Robert became his mother's helpmate. Most of the traits that we admire in Robert E. Lee (his deep religious belief, his sense of duty) were imparted to him by his well-bred, fervently devout mother.



Eleanor Agnes LEE

(1841-1873), third of R. E. Lee and Mary Anna Custis Lee's four daughters; religious (Episcopalian), Agnes was a charming and attractive young woman. She held a romantic attachment for her mother's cousin, Orton A. Williams. (Her father thought him too unsettled to marry.) On learning of the death of Williams by hanging in 1862 at the hands of Union forces on charges of espionage, Agnes fell into a long illness. After the war she cared for and travelled with her father. She never married and died of typhoid fever at the age 32.



George W. Custis

LEE (1832-1913), eldest son of R. E. Lee and Mary Anna Custis Lee; Major General, CSA; aide-de-camp to Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederacy. Custis commanded the Confederate defense of Richmond against Ulysses S. Grant's Army of the Potomac. He was captured at Sayler's Creek, three days before his father's surrendered at Appomattox Court

Characters Mentioned Continued

House. After the war, Custis succeeded his father as president of Washington and Lee University. He waged a prolonged legal battle to win back the title of the family home at Arlington, Virginia, which he sold back to the U.S. Government for \$150,000 (\$3.37 million in 2010 dollars). It is, today, Arlington National Cemetery.



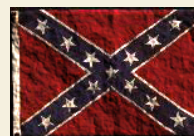
Henry LEE III

(1756-1818), early American patriot; cavalry officer in the Continental Army; ninth governor of Virginia (1791-1794); father of Robert E. Lee. His feats of horsemanship in the Revolutionary War earned him the nickname, "Light-Horse Harry." Ruined by the financial Panic of 1796-1797, he served one year in debtor's prison when Robert, was two years old. He received grave injuries when attacked by a political mob in 1812. He sailed to the West Indies in an effort to recuperate. He died at Dungeness, Cumberland Island, Georgia.



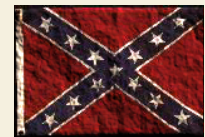
Mary Custis LEE

(1831-1918), eldest daughter of R. E. Lee and Mary Anna Custis Lee; a bright, willful, intelligent, and cultivated young woman. Mary tended to stand apart from the family. Outspoken and direct, her sisters considered her bossy and self-absorbed. She had a wide circle of friends. Although beaux courted her in the flower garden of the family home at Arlington, she never married. European travel became a virtual occupation for her.



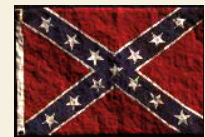
Mary Anna Custis LEE

(1808-1873), the only surviving child of George Washington Parke Custis, (George Washington's step-grandson and adopted son) and Mary Lee Fitzhugh Custis. She was the third cousin and only wife of Robert E. Lee; mother of their seven children. Known as a gracious hostess, Mary painted landscapes and tended a rose garden of eleven varieties. Deeply religious (Episcopalian), she taught her female slaves to read and write and was an advocate of gradual emancipation. Trapped behind Federal lines in 1862, Union commander, George B. McClellan allowed her safe passage to her home in Richmond, Virginia.



Mildred Childe

LEE (1845-1905), youngest daughter of R. E. Lee and Mary Anna Custis Lee. She was a bit spoiled and willful. Her father once complained that she always wanted something. A bright spirit and a lively, cheerful person, "Milly" had brown hair and rather plain features. She was very close to her father after the war, and quite lonely when he died. She never married although she longed for companionship. She traveled widely in the 1870s and 1880s.



Robert E. LEE, Jr.

(1843-1914), youngest of R. E. Lee and Mary Anna Custis Lee's three sons; a Private (Artillery), CSA; promoted to the rank of Captain at the Battle of Sharpsburg; served as an aide to his older brother, Major General Custis Lee. Rob became a planter after the war; also a writer. He published *Recollections and Letters of Robert E. Lee* in 1904.

Characters Mentioned Continued



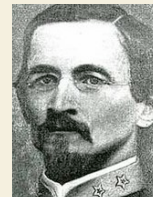
William H. F.

(Rooney) LEE (1837-1891), second son of of R. E. Lee and Mary Anna Custis Lee; Major General (Cavalry), CSA; he commanded the 3rd Brigade of J.E.B. Stuart's Cavalry Division at Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville. Wounded and captured by Union forces, he was returned in exchange of prisoners of war. He rose to second in command of the Confederate cavalry. He became a planter after the war and was elected to the Virginia State Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives.



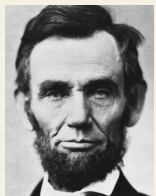
John LETCHER (1813-1884),

Governor of the Confederate State of Virginia; prominent in efforts to prevent the Civil War. In 1864, his home in Lexington, Virginia was burned by Union troops. After the war Letcher returned to the practice of law in Lexington. He served in the Virginia House of Delegates, 1875-1877.



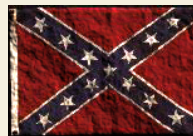
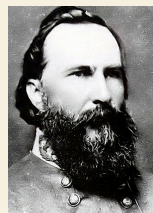
Charles A.

MARSHALL (1830-1902), Lieutenant Colonel, CSA; aide-de-camp, assistant adjutant general, and military secretary to Robert E. Lee; the only Confederate officer to accompany Lee at the surrender at Appomattox Court House. Marshall was Lee's bodyguard on the field of battle. He drafted Lee's farewell speech to his troops, which the commander used with few changes. After the war Marshall returned to the practice of law in Baltimore, Maryland.



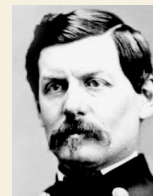
A b r a h a m

LINCOLN (1809-1865), 16th President of the United States, serving from March 1861 until his assassination in April 1865. Lincoln led the United States through its greatest constitutional, military, and moral crisis – the American Civil War. He preserved the Union, abolished slavery, strengthened the national government and modernized the economy. He was the Commander in Chief of all Union military forces.



James (Old Pete)

LONGSTREET (1821-1904), Major General, CSA, Lee's principal subordinate; arguably the best infantry corps commander on either side of the conflict. He questioned Lee's decision to risk "Pickett's Charge" at Gettysburg, but Lee was inflexible. A businessman after the war, Longstreet embraced the Republican Party's campaign of Reconstruction in the South, instantly becoming the scapegoat of southern revisionist scorn. His skill, reputation and importance have been more objectively understood by later generations of scholars.



George B.

MCCLELLAN (1826-1885), Major General, USA; organized the Army of the Potomac; served briefly as General in Chief of the U.S. Army. McClellan was meticulous in planning and preparations – characteristics that hampered his ability to challenge aggressive opponents in the fast-moving field of battle. President Lincoln removed him from command after his failure to pursue Robert E. Lee at the Battle of Antietam. The best-liked of

Characters Mentioned Continued

all Union commanders by his troops, McClellan resigned from the U.S. Army to become the Democratic presidential nominee in 1864. His Republican opponent, Abraham Lincoln, won reelection.



George G. MEADE

(1815-1872), Major General, USA. Abraham Lincoln's second choice (after Hooker) to command the Army of the Potomac at Gettysburg. He made excellent use of capable subordinates to finally win the engagement, compelling Lee's Confederate forces to retreat back into Virginia. After the war, Meade was appointed commissioner of Fairmount Park in Philadelphia. He received an honorary doctorate in law from Harvard University. His scientific achievements were recognized by the American Philosophical Society and the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences. He died of pneumonia and complication of his war wounds.

remembered for his participation in the bloody assault at Gettysburg that bears his name, "Pickett's Charge." Over 50% of the men sent across the fields were killed or wounded. To his dying day, Pickett lamented the great loss of his troops at Gettysburg. When asked why Pickett's Charge failed, he often replied, "I've always thought the Yankees had something to do with it."



John POPE

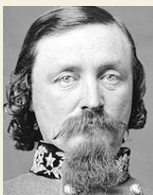
(1822-1892), Major General, USA; appointed by Lincoln to command the Union Army of Virginia. Pope's self-assurance worked against him. He managed to alienate his own troops. His aggressiveness exceeded his strategic abilities, which Robert E. Lee detected and used against him at the Second Battle of Bull Run. After the war Pope was assigned to the Apache Wars of the American Southwest. He died in the Old Soldier's Home near Sandusky, Ohio.

General. When hostilities broke out in 1861, Reagan invited the bureau heads of the U.S. Post Office in Washington, DC to come south and work for him. Nearly all of them did so. In effect, Reagan stole the U.S. Post Office. He was the only member of the Confederate Presidential Cabinet to oppose Lee's offensive into Pennsylvania. After the war he was imprisoned at Fort Warren (Boston), where he spent twenty-two weeks in solitary confinement. He later became Chairman of the Railroad Commission of the State of Texas.



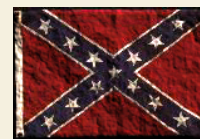
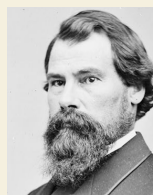
John F. REYNOLDS

(1820-1863), Major General, USA, one of the Union Army's most respected senior commanders. He played a key role in bringing the Army of the Potomac into the Battle of Gettysburg. As he was overseeing the placement of the 2nd Wisconsin Infantry Brigade on the first day of Gettysburg, he yelled, "Forward men! For God's sake forward!" At that moment he fell from his horse, shot through the upper neck. He died almost instantly.



George E. PICKETT

(1825-1875), Major General, CSA, best



John Henninger REAGAN

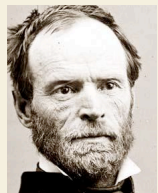
(1818-1905), Confederate Postmaster

Characters Mentioned Continued



Winfield SCOTT

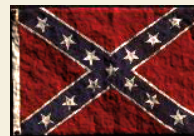
(1786-1866), Lieutenant General, USA; nicknamed "Old Fuss 'n Feathers," Scott served on active duty as a general officer longer than any other man in American history. Historians rate him the best American commander of his time. When the Civil War broke out, Scott was 74 years old and in poor health. He offered command of the entire U.S. Army to then-Colonel Robert E. Lee.



William T. SHERMAN

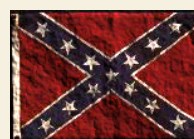
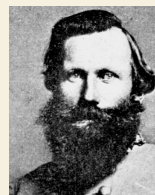
(1820-1891), Major General, USA. Sherman received praise for his command of military strategy, and criticism for the harshness of his "scorched earth" policies. His famous "March to the Sea" across Georgia and South Carolina was characterized by the Union Army's widespread destruction of civilian supplies and infrastructure. Sherman served as Commander in Chief of the U.S. Army after the war. He later retired to New York City where he enjoyed

theater, amateur painting, and public speaking. He died at the age of 71.



Gustavas W.

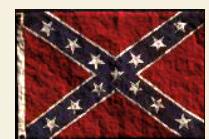
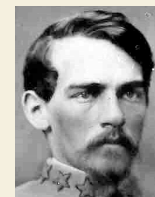
SMITH (1821-1896), Major General, CSA; wing and then division commander, Army of Northern Virginia. When Joseph E. Johnston was wounded by an aerial burst grapeshot at the Battle of Seven Pines, Smith briefly replaced him as Commander of the Confederate Army. However, Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederacy, quickly brushed Smith aside in favor of Robert E. Lee for the job. Smith became an iron manufacturer in Tennessee after the war, and then Insurance Commissioner of Kentucky. He moved to New York City in 1876 to write several books on insurance, the Civil War, and the Mexican-American War.



J. E. B. (Jeb)

STUART (1833-1864), Major General (Cavalry), CSA; known for mastery of reconnaissance and use of cavalry in support of offensive operations. He

cultivated a cavalier image (red-lined gray cape, yellow sash, hat cocked to the side with an ostrich plume, red flower in his lapel, often sporting cologne), but his serious work made him the trusted eyes and ears of Robert E. Lee in battle, and he inspired Southern morale. He was killed at the Battle of Yellow Tavern, leading a Confederate cavalry charge, firing his pistol from horseback. He was 31 years old.



Walter H.

TAYLOR (1838-1916), 26-year old Lieutenant Colonel, CSA, chief aide-de-camp to Robert E. Lee throughout the war. He wrote dispatches and orders for Lee, performed reconnaissance, and often carried messages to corps and division commanders in combat. At the fall of Petersburg, Lee allowed Taylor to find and marry his fiancé in the town before Union forces overwhelmed the place. After the war, Taylor resumed banking interests, worked as an attorney, and helped develop southern railway systems. He was elected to the Virginia General Assembly where he served as State Senator from 1869 until 1873.

Characters Mentioned

Continued



TRAVELER (1857-1871), Robert E. Lee's favorite horse. An American Saddlebred descended from stock of the Revolutionary War, Traveler was a sturdy animal: 16 hands high at the shoulders (64 inches), 1,100 pounds, iron gray in color with black points, a long mane, and a flowing tail. The breed is known for their sense of presence, style, and spirited yet gentle temperament. During Lee's funeral procession in 1870, Traveler was led behind the casket, his saddle and bridle draped with black crepe. In 1871 he stepped on a nail and developed tetanus. As there was no cure, he was destroyed to relieve his suffering.

Special Terms

Adjutant-General

The chief administrative officer of a major military unit, frequently a lawyer. Adjutants assist a commanding officer with paper work and matters of personnel. It is an office, not a rank. Adjutants have broad, inclusive ("general") responsibility.

Aide-de-Camp

The secretary and personal assistant of a high-ranking military commander or head of state. Aides often serve as the commander's bodyguard in battle.

Hardtack

A thick, dry, three-inch square cracker made of flour, water and sometimes fat; the most important ration of the Civil War soldier's diet of salt pork, hardtack and coffee. The three items were often combined in one pot. Soldiers joked that the holes in the cracker allowed them to be stitched together to make a bulletproof vest.

Nausea Bacon

Sarcastic corruption of "Nassau Bacon," a slang term for meat obtained for Confederate troops by blockade runners from the Caribbean toward the end of the war. Of dubious origin (species), rancid and dry, it often smelled bad when boiled.

Historical Perspective

1640 John Punch, an indentured servant in Colonial Virginia, is punished for trying to escape by being declared a slave for life -- the first documented case of slavery in the United States.

1705 Virginia lawmakers say that slaves are real estate, and allow owners to bequeath slaves. The same law allows masters to kill runaways.

1776 Declaration of Independence asserts that as "Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do."

1793 The United States' Fugitive Slave Act outlaws any efforts to hinder capture of runaway slaves. Eli Whitney invents the cotton gin, boosting the profit potential of cotton and sparking the South's reliance on the crop.

1807 Robert E. Lee is born in Virginia.

1808 United States outlaws the import of African slaves, though smuggling continues.

1820 Missouri Compromise admits Missouri to the Union as a slave state, Maine as a free state. Slavery is outlawed in any new territories north of latitude 36°30'.

1829 Robert E. Lee graduates from West Point, second in his class.

1831 Lee meets and married Mary Custis, the great-granddaughter of Martha Washington. Together, Robert and Mary will have seven children.

1834-8 England abolishes slavery in its colonies.

1850 California enters the Union as a free state.

1852 Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is published.

1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act sets aside the Missouri Compromise and permits these two new territories to choose whether or not to allow slavery. Violence erupts.

1857 The U.S. Supreme Court, in the *Dred Scott* decision, rules that a slave is not a citizen. In India, native soldiers unsuccessfully rebel and Great Britain assumes full control of the country. The U.S. is in financial crisis and President James Buchanan withdraws the use of all bills over \$20.

1858 U.S. presidential candidate Abraham Lincoln makes a strong antislavery speech: "This Government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free." The first trans-Atlantic telegraph cable is completed.

1859 John Brown raids Harpers Ferry, is captured by soldiers under Lee's command and hanged. Work begins on Suez Canal. Belgian engineer Lenoir builds the first practical internal-combustion engine. Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* is published.

1860 Slavery splits the Democratic Party into Northern and Southern factions. Lincoln becomes the first Republican to win the United States Presidency. South Carolina secedes from the Union.

1861 The South secedes, stressing states' rights. Jefferson Davis is named President of the Confederate States. Lee accepts general position in the Confederate Army. Civil War begins, eventually claiming 623,000 lives. Serfs are emancipated in Russia. Pasteur's theory of germs launches pasteurization of milk.

1863 Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation says that all slaves in Rebel territory are free. The proclamation does not free slaves in Union states. The Battle of Gettysburg is waged.

1864 Lincoln is re-elected. General Sherman's "March to the Sea" leaves a trail of devastation across Georgia to decisively break the Confederacy's capacity for war.

1865 The 13th Amendment to the Constitution outlaws slavery. Gen. Lee surrenders to Grant at Appomattox; the Civil War ends. Lincoln is assassinated by John Wilkes Booth, who is captured and killed. Andrew Johnson becomes President. Reconstruction laws place the Southern states under military rule. Lee accepts presidency of Washington College in Lexington, Virginia. Joseph Lister begins antiseptic surgery. Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is published.

1870 Robert E. Lee suffers a stroke and dies.

Themes, Motifs and Symbols

THEMES Themes are the fundamental and often universal ideas explored in a literary work.

LOYALTY AND BETRAYAL

The theme of patriot and traitor/loyalty and betrayal is central to Robert E. Lee – Shades of Gray. From rise to curtain, Robert demands that Posterity examine its definitions of those words. Slavery and state supremacy versus federal supremacy were hundred-year-old issues the country's Founding Fathers had clashed on and, for the sake of forming any common country at all, had purposely left unresolved. By 1860, civil war on these issues was certain. Faced with a terrible choice, Robert chose to defend his homeland of Virginia and wage war against his West Point classmates.

From the larger picture of Union against Confederacy, to obedience on the battlefield of Gettysburg, loyalty was demanded in action – not words. Robert's side lost – mismanagement, laziness, lack of resources and military training ("...our level of marksmanship is somewhere between bad and abysmal") – in this play, Robert names them all. Because his side lost, was his side totally wrong? On every issue?

PATIENT PROGRESS VS. WAR

"Do you know that in other parts of this world things are actually being built?" As the play nears its end, warrior Robert E. Lee makes a case for non-violent, patient change over time. While civil war preparations consumed Americans, other parts of the globe were hard at work advancing technology, art, literature, health and human knowledge. In Egypt, the Suez Canal was under construction, eventually linking the Mediterranean and the Red Sea and eliminating the need for trade ships to round Africa. Belgian engineer Lenoir was inventing the first practical internal-combustion engine, hinting at the dawn of the automobile. Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* offered the concept of biological evolution. Pasteur's theory of germs enabled the preservation of milk. By the time America emerged from active warfare, in Great Britain Joseph Lister had pioneered life-saving antiseptic surgery and Lewis Carroll had published his masterpiece, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

The perception of a luxury of time may well not have been shared by those in slavery. Robert, examining his own personal Civil War costs ("All three of my beautiful sons are now missing"), sees nothing but profound sorrow for a society pushed by outsiders to fundamentally change its social and economic structure at a pace that resulted in explosive violence and utter devastation.

COMPROMISE AND AMBIGUITY

Shades of Gray – the play's title calls to mind visions of Confederate military coats, as well as the metaphor for life's ambiguities. Confederate unions were not perfectly gray – they were various shades of the color because un-dyed wool had that hue naturally and dyes were hard to come by. Philosophically, Robert believes he stands somewhere in the middle of right and wrong, and hoping that Posterity will see the impossibility of perfection in real situations. Of Joseph Hooker, Robert says, "He has an answer for everything and he rigidly believes in the perfection of his own ideas. In my life's experience no plan, whether it be for a grand military maneuver or a little girl's birthday party, is ever perfect." Knowing events compromised his loyalties and made a myth of good or bad/black or white actions, Robert asks for neither hatred nor forgiveness, but only the chance to be understood: "What are you shopping for really, a comforting novel of good versus evil, with all of those annoying details brushed away? You can't judge me, not yet you don't know me. Before you decide if my name will be written into the book of patriots or of traitors you must first understand me don't you think? Now that sounds fair doesn't it?"

Themes, Motifs and Symbols

MOTIFS Motifs are recurring structures, contrasts or literary devices that can help to develop and inform the text's major themes, and often universal ideas explored in a literary work.

Manipulation of Time

Events don't march completely in order in *Robert E. Lee – Shades of Gray*. Each act begins and ends with Robert standing in the parlor on April 9, 1865, waiting to admit wartime defeat. In between, though, Robert describes events leading to war, then falls into flashbacks, re-living the crucial talks and battlefield orders that at first led to victory and at last to defeat: "What do you think, General Jackson? Oh, I'm sorry, did I wake you again? Forgive me, now where was I? Oh yes, running away." The flashbacks break up the straight storytelling. They let us spy directly on heated conversations, and feel the fear and anger in dangerous moments. Meanwhile, the April 9 "bookends" keep us grounded, understanding that all the death led to this day of surrender.

Irony

Throughout the play, Robert insists that the Civil War was not fought over slavery. Instead, he repeats that the war was fought over the supremacy of state power over federal: "We are fighting for States' rights, individuality and freedom to govern ourselves." Dugan keeps Robert focused on that cause, and never lets him dwell on what opinions the slaves might hold. Yet the issue of slavery creates inescapable irony – that a segment of the human population was not at all

free to participate in the government Robert fought so hard to secure. The contrasts within the word "freedom" vibrate as an unspoken electrical current.

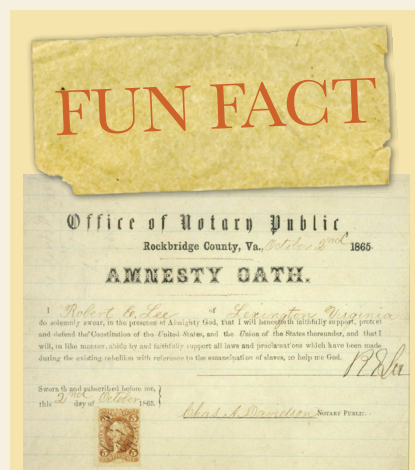
Letters Home

Robert E. Lee, warrior, stands before us through much of the play. His striking ability to organize troops and analyze weakness in his enemies made him a legend in the South and branded him a traitor in the North. He presents his political philosophies and rails against incompetence ("...there was no attack at sunrise"), all while recounting bloody battles blow-by-blow. However, Robert insists at the outset that we learn the small details of his life before judging his full character. Those details come through in a series of letters to his wife and children – the fondness he has for his family and the commonplace events of home. "I must stop and go to work. Give a great deal of love to your mother and kiss your sister for me...Tell them not to stay up late talking too much." The Southern war hero steps down and the everyday father emerges to make Robert a human we can recognize.

Comedy in Tragedy

"Jackson looked me straight in the ear and said, 'Tell me what to do and I'll do it.'" Dugan frequently offsets grim war scenes with humor – sometimes

clever wordplay, sometimes physical comedy: Writing to his daughter Agnes while suffering from a head cold, Roberts warms himself by donning a tea cozy as a hat. The device of comic relief gives us as the audience the chance to relax for a moment and recognize the humanity of all players in the Civil War, before we gird ourselves for the disaster we know is coming.



The Amnesty Oath of Robert E. Lee

Lee signed his Amnesty Oath on October 2, 1865, but was not restored to full citizenship in his lifetime. It wasn't until August 5th 1975, that then President Gerald Ford acknowledged the discovery of Lee's Oath of Allegiance in the National Archive and pardoned Lee reinstating his American Citizenship.

Themes, Motifs and Symbols

SYMBOLS Symbols are objects, character, music, figures or colors used to represent abstract ideas or concepts.

The opening and closing song, "Love Me Tender"

The 1956 song today's audiences know as "Love Me Tender" actually put new words to the old music of a popular Civil War-era tune, "Aura Lee," published in 1861. "Aura Lee" was a sentimental ballad about a maiden. It was composed by George R. Poulton, with lyrics by W. W. Fosdick and was well-known by soldiers of both Confederate and Union armies. In 1865, graduating cadets of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York adopted it as their class song, with new lyrics by George T. Olmstead and L.W. Becklaw. Renamed "Army Blue," new lyrics referred to the graduating cadets, as they prepared to trade their gray cadet uniforms for the army blue of a 2nd lieutenant. The tune again reached massive popularity as "Love Me Tender," sung by Elvis Presley, with new lyrics principally by Ken Darby. In *Shades of Gray*, the tune links us all in time. It first sets the stage, transporting us back to the start of the Civil War, bridging to the end of the war and the victorious Blue army, and sweeping us back to present day.

The Virginia Flag

The Virginia State Flag stands prominent in the parlor. It serves as a reminder that General Lee's primary goal was to defend his home state, and the political concept that individual states' rights to conduct business and determine their own future was more important than federal government.

The Audience

The playgoers themselves represent "Posterity" – all future generations of people that will look back and judge the issues, the warriors and the victims of the Civil War. Lee addresses Posterity directly, asking to be seen as more than a losing general who fought to defend slavery.

Mantel Clock and Boots

The play begins and ends with the sound of a ticking mantel clock, and approaching boots on the outside porch. At the opening, Lee has come in full Confederate Dress Uniform – itself a symbol of the defeated past. The closing jingle of spurred boots are those of the unseen Union General Ulysses S. Grant, as Grant approaches to accept Lee's surrender – the spurs perhaps goading Lee and the South to accept that the future has arrived.

POINT OF VIEW

One Man, One Story

The play is presented by one person, Robert E. Lee. From the start of the play, Robert makes it clear that he wants to tell his side of the Civil War story, and that once "Posterity" understands why he did what he did, future history books won't mark him as purely a villain and traitor. The single point of view sweeps us inside Robert's mind. This writing device quickly makes us feel for the man. We hear his worry for his "boys" – his soldiers who are reduced to eating rodents and might be hanged for treason. We laugh over his sense of humor, and feel his agony when one of his daughters dies: "We don't even have a photograph of her!" We feel betrayed when he is betrayed by lazy or fearful commanders at Gettysburg. The single point of view creates a powerful emotional pull and prevents us from disbelieving him or even thinking to argue his decisions. It is left to us as playgoers to question afterward if what Robert says is true, and then draw our own conclusions about his legacy in American history.

Discussion Topics

STATES' RIGHTS: The Constitutional right of U.S. states to govern themselves still exists today – and still sparks controversy. What current issues do you recognize as heated differences between states' laws?

MODERN SLAVERY: Legal slavery has long been abolished in the United States. However, illegal slavery still exists. Why? What example from the news can you name?

MONEY AND CONFLICT: Eli Whitney invented the cotton gin in 1793, reducing the time it took to separate seeds from the cotton. Cotton became potentially profitable as a crop – if you had cheap labor. The South followed the new profits, planting cotton and depending on slavery. What industries can you name today that depend on low-paid labor?

THE POWER OF RUMOR: In the play, Robert says, “After dropping off the pilgrims at Plymouth Rock, the Mayflower’s next voyage was to retrieve slaves from Africa for America.” Hard evidence does not support this claim. After its 1620 voyage to the New World, the Pilgrims’ battered Mayflower and her captain Christopher Jones went back into the French wine trade before the boat was scrapped in 1624. However, the slave ship rumor was popular during the Civil War. Why?

REBEL YELL: The Confederate soldiers' famous battle cry was used to



terrify their enemies and release their own fear. Can you give examples of “battle cries” in today’s culture? Why do they still exist?

PATIENCE VS. WAR: In the play, Robert remarks, “Please tell me that we’ve out-grown our impatience and have found the courage to endure the tedium of gradual progress.” Do you believe a gradual end of slavery might have been better than war, and if so, how could it have been brought about?

BIBLE AS COMMON LANGUAGE: Answering a question from the Confederate Postmaster General, Robert answers, “Is it is a risky plan? Yes - but no more risky than declaring war on a giant, but just remember as Goliath closed in for his attack David ran directly at his enemy. He took the initiative and dropped that giant face down in the desert sand.” Robert assumes the Postmaster General will know the Biblical David and Goliath story. Why? Do you and your friends all know it? If not, what has

changed between the Civil War era and today?

CONTROVERSIAL ELECTIONS:

The Presidential election of 1860 was one of the most unusual in American history. The slavery issue had split the Democrat Party into two competing factions. Four candidates ran for the office. Abraham Lincoln's name did not even appear on the ballot in most Southern states. He won in the Electoral College – the first Republican ever to do so - solidly carrying the free states of the Northeast and Northwest, though with almost no support from the South. What recent controversial elections can you name? Has there been a recent election where a major political party suffered a split?

WEAPONRY: In the play, Robert says to President Davis, “I have calculated that 900 pounds of lead are discharged for each of the enemy killed. At two ounces per bullet that amounts to 899 pounds, 14 ounces of waste.” Accuracy and waste – both of life and materiel – continue to be issues in modern warfare. What advances in weaponry claim to help resolve both issues?

DEFENSE STRATEGY: Robert, speaking to President Davis, says, “By defending everything you defend nothing.” What does he mean?



1. Mary Custis was 22 when she married Robert E. Lee. She was smart and interested in politics. She edited and published her father's memoirs of life with George Washington, and taught her slaves to read. Together, she and Robert had seven children. Mary also had severe arthritis – every movement caused tremendous pain. By the time the Civil War began she was crippled, moving by crutches or wheelchair. Meanwhile, the Union Army was advancing. From his station in Richmond, Robert wrote to her over and over, saying she and their slaves must flee her childhood home. Mary stalled.

Ask the students to imagine Mary at the moment she at last decides the household must flee. Read these sentences aloud: “If you had to suddenly leave your home forever, what emotions would you be feeling? What would you be most worried about? What possessions are most precious to you? If you could take only a few, what would they be? Why?”

Next, give students 10 minutes to sketch or write a diary entry of the moment Mary's decisions are made.

When students are finished, ask them to re-imagine themselves as one of the Lees' slaves. Mary physically needs their help to flee. Ask them to list what they as slaves might be thinking. For example, would they help her or run independently? Do they see Mary as an enemy or a friend? Or something in between? Wrap up with a discussion: Did writing the lists change (or not change) the way they see relationships during times of attack?

2. The play is full of nicknames: “Stonewall” Jackson, “Fighting” Joe Hooker,” Unconditional Surrender” Grant. If the students could choose their own nickname, what would they choose? Why? Give the students 15 minutes to write a description of their nickname and then share with the class.

3. At the very end of the play, Robert says, “History books are printed in black and white while life is lived in shades of gray.” Ask students to write an interpretation of what he means, based on experiences from their own lives. Students can choose to write a short story, poem or essay.

A Special Note from the Playwright



Tom Dugan, Playwright

I believe the value of history comes from what we can learn from it. The oversimplification of the American Civil War can rob us of history's rich educational value. Our nation's bloodiest conflict deserves more than to be reduced to a list of names, dates, and stories of good guys vs. bad. To me, life is a series of choices, which is what inspired me to write Robert E. Lee - Shades of Gray. I wanted to present the human being I thought Robert E. Lee seemed to be - an amazingly disciplined man living in extraordinary times and making very difficult choices. Having said that, I did not set out to write a history lesson. Although all of my research has been approved by historians at the Virginia Historical Society, The Museum of the Confederacy and others, Robert E. Lee - Shades of Gray is a play meant to entertain - but if you're not careful you might learn something as well!

-Tom

TOM DUGAN BIO

Tom Dugan writes and stars in *Robert E. Lee - Shades of Gray* and *Nazi Hunter - Simon Wiesenthal* and writes and directs *Frederick Douglass - In the Shadow of Slavery*. A veteran actor, Mr. Dugan has been professionally acting in Los Angeles for over 25 years and is the 2011 Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle Award-Winner for Best Solo Performance.

His television and film credits include "Bones," "Friends," "Curb Your Enthusiasm," "Even Stevens," "The Practice," "Chicago Hope," "Just Shoot Me," "Kindergarten Cop" and "Dave." Mr. Dugan's regional theatre work includes leading roles in *The Man Who Came to Dinner*, *Misery*, *Amadues* and *The Voice of the Prairie*. He has also starred in national tours of *Oscar to Oscar* and *On Golden Pond* with Jack Klugman, along with national tours of his own plays.

Mr. Dugan has won numerous additional awards including three nominations for the 2011 Los Angeles Ovation Awards, the 2003 Inland Theater League Best Actor Award.

Request a Classroom Visit

We strongly believe in supporting education and happy to make a special trip to speak to students in your classroom.

For more information,
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