

## DVD LESSON PLAN: *Gettysburg*

**DVD Title:** *Gettysburg*

**Content:** Screenplay written and film directed by Ronald F. Maxwell, and starring Martin Sheen, Jeff Daniels, Stephen Lang, and others, this feature film chronicles the three day battle of Gettysburg in July, 1863. The film is based on Michael Shaara's Pulitzer Prize winning book, *The Killer Angels*.

### **Special features of this DVD:**

Interactive menus

Cast/director filmographies

Scene Access

Language and subtitles—English and French

Documentary features: “The Making of Gettysburg”, narrated by Martin Sheen, “The Battle of Gettysburg”, narrated by Leslie Nielsen.

Battlefield Maps

Commentary by Director/Screenwriter Ron Maxwell, Cinematographer Kees Van Ostrum, Pulitzer Prize winning author James McPherson, and military historian Craig Symonds.

**Suggested Grade Level:** Grades 7 and up

**Time:** Approximately one class period (50-60 minutes) per lesson. Should you choose to show the entire movie, total running time is 254 minutes.

### **Outcomes:**

Students will:

- understand the role of various military figures in the battle
- speculate on the significance of the battle
- identify various segments of the battle and how they fit together

### **Prior Knowledge Required:**

Students should have some knowledge of the causes and geography of the Civil War, as well as the military and political figures of the Civil War era.

### **Lesson format/strategies:**

1. Opening question for discussion—“Why does Gettysburg hold such a hallowed place in American history and culture?”
2. Review the major events and battles leading to the battle of Gettysburg. (NOTE: The prologue of the film, “Gettysburg” (Chapter 2, 4:13) works well here.)

### 3. Using the DVD:

Each lesson is keyed to a particular point in the DVD. Since the film uses both sides of the DVD disc, corresponding points in the film are noted as “A” or “B”. Chapter numbers and time cues are also noted.

#### **Lessons:**

It is apparent that the film not only divides the battle into three days (July 1, 2, and 3, 1863), but it also divides the battle into three pivotal events, Buford’s stand at Seminary Ridge on Day 1, Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain’s defense of his position on Little Round Top on Day 2, and finally, Pickett’s Charge on Day 3. While the film includes some introductory material to each phase of the battle in the chapters immediately preceding the ones selected for the lessons, the parts of the film marked here are sufficient for students to effectively complete each of the Scene Analysis Sheets.

#### **Lesson #1**

#### **Buford’s Stand at Seminary Ridge**

**Preparation for lesson:** The teacher should cue the DVD player for side “A”, at the 31:40 time point in the film (Chapter 9). The segment ends at the end of Chapter 15, at the 1:01:43 point. The teacher might wish to discuss this segment of the battle briefly before starting the film.

Next, the teacher should distribute the Scene Analysis Sheet for **Buford’s Stand**. Students can complete the questions while viewing the segment. However, the teacher may wish to have the students view the segment first without the sheet, and then replay it while the students complete the sheet. (If the teacher elects to complete the lesson in this manner, then additional time must be allotted to complete the lesson.)

After the sheets are completed and returned to the teacher, the teacher can evaluate student answers by their own grading method.

## SCENE ANALYSIS SHEET

**Buford's Stand at Seminary Ridge**

Directions: As this segment of *Gettysburg* plays, answer the following questions.

1. Actor Sam Elliott plays General John Buford. Describe some characteristics Elliott attempts to portray in Buford. How do you think Elliott tries to make Buford look more “human”?
2. Frequently during the segment, reference is made to the area around Seminary Ridge as being “such lovely ground” for a battle. What characteristics, in your view, make the area around Seminary Ridge “lovely ground”?
3. Buford mentions frequently about the significance of the “high ground”. Why is the “high ground” so important?
4. Describe the difference in numbers between Buford's forces and the Confederate troops. Why would Buford deploy his force against a force such as that approaching Seminary Ridge?
5. How do Confederate Generals Lee and Longstreet assess Union General George Meade as a commander and his strategy?
6. How do the Union officers look at or describe the Confederate soldiers and officers? Compare/contrast this view with how Lee and Longstreet viewed the Union forces.
7. What role, in your own estimation, did Buford's forces play in the overall battle at Gettysburg?

## Lesson #2

### Chamberlain and the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine at Little Round Top

**Preparation for Lesson:** The teacher should cue the DVD player to Chapter 27 of Side “A” of the film (at the 1:46:50 mark). The segment ends at the end of the “A” side of the film (at the end of Chapter 35, 2:21:45 point). The teacher may wish to briefly discuss this part of the battle before beginning the film.

Next, the teacher should distribute the Scene Analysis Sheet for **Chamberlain and the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine**. Students can complete the questions while viewing the segment. However, the teacher may wish to have the students view the segment first without the sheet, and then replay it while the students complete the sheet. (If the teacher elects to complete the lesson in this manner, then additional time must be allotted to complete the lesson.)

After the sheets are completed and returned to the teacher, the teacher can evaluate student answers by their own grading method.

## SCENE ANALYSIS SHEET

**Chamberlain and the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine at Little Round Top**

Directions: As this segment of *Gettysburg* plays, answer the following questions.

1. What objections does Confederate General Hood make regarding attacking Little Round Top? What alternative does Hood suggest to Lee's order?
2. How does the film suggest that it was vital that Colonel Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain and the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine hold the position, and in Colonel (Strong) Vincent's words, "defend this place to the last"?
3. In your view, how does Colonel Chamberlain interact with the men (officers and enlisted men) of the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine in the period immediately before the attack on Little Round Top?
4. As another Confederate regiment arrives at Little Round Top, how does Chamberlain decide to re-deploy his forces?
5. What could be a possible reason for the Confederates continually trying to advance up Little Round Top?
6. As the Confederates make one more charge up Little Round Top, what order does Chamberlain give to repel the advance? What advantages does Chamberlain see in this type of response?
7. What was the result of this tactic? How successful was it?
8. How do Chamberlain's men and subordinate officers respond to him after the action at Little Round Top? How do officers from other regiments who observed Chamberlain respond to Chamberlain after the attack?

### Lesson #3

#### Pickett's Charge

**Preparation for Lesson:** The teacher should cue the DVD player to Side “B”, Chapter 18 (at the 1:02:48 point) of the film. The segment will run through Chapter 28 (at the 1:38:00 point.) The teacher may wish to briefly discuss this part of the battle prior to showing this segment of the film.

Next, the teacher should distribute the Scene Analysis Sheet for **Pickett's Charge**. Students can complete the questions while viewing the segment. However, the teacher may wish to have the students view the segment first without the sheet, and then replay it while the students complete the sheet. (If the teacher elects to complete the lesson in this manner, then additional time must be allotted to complete the lesson.)

After the sheets are completed and returned to the teacher, the teacher can evaluate student answers by their own grading method.

## SCENE ANALYSIS SHEET

**Pickett's Charge**

Directions: As this segment of *Gettysburg* plays, answer the following questions.

1. In your own words, describe the mood of General Longstreet as he orders General Pickett to begin the attack.
2. Note as the charge commences number of instances that one of the Confederate states is mentioned by the officers. Why was it important for General Pickett and General Armistead to mention this?
3. As the scene progresses, note the facial expressions and demeanor of the Confederate soldiers as their cross the field. Describe their emotions as they advance.
4. During the charge, Pickett exclaims, "I can't see what's happening to my boys!" What does this statement say about Pickett as a leader and a commander?
5. After the charge, when General Armistead learns that Union General Hancock has also been wounded, he cries, "not both of us... not ALL of us..." What does this statement say about the feelings of Northern and Southern soldiers and commanding officers had for each other before the war?
6. General Lee tells Pickett that he "must look toward his division". Pickett replies, "General Lee... I have no division..." How does this statement sum up not only Pickett's Charge, but perhaps the entire battle?
7. At the end of the charge, General Lee mutters several times, "It's my fault... it's all my fault..." Evaluate Lee's decision to send Pickett's men on this sort of charge. Should Lee have been reprimanded or possibly removed from command for his decision? Explain your answer.

### Extension Activities

The teacher may elect to add either (or both) of these supplementary activities to the supplied lessons. The lessons should take approximately one class period each to complete, however, if the teacher wishes to add one or more of the video segments with the extension lesson, a longer time period will be needed.

1. Using the three video segments included in the above lessons, write a critical essay on the commanding abilities of any three of the following military leaders included in the film segments:

Robert E. Lee  
James Longstreet  
Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain  
George Pickett  
John Buford

2. A more complete lesson regarding Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain and Little Round Top can be found at:  
<http://www.vcsc.k12.in.us/staff/mhutchison/ice2000/chamberlain.htm>. The lesson includes background information, links to other information about Chamberlain and the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine, and a question sheet for students, including answers. Teachers may wish to revise the questions or reword them as necessary.