

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

A P R E S I D E N T ' S V I S I O N

PRIMARY SOURCE WORKSHEET

EXCERPT FROM THE DIARY OF UNION SOLDIER SAMUEL CORMANY, 1863.

From *Valley of the Shadow: Two Communities in the American Civil War*, Virginia Center for Digital History, University of Virginia (<http://valley.lib.virginia.edu/papers/FD1007>).

Samuel Cormany enlisted in the Union Army not long after moving to Chambersburg from Canada with his wife, Rachael. His diary provides a graphic account of a soldier’s participation in the battle of Gettysburg. Cormany survived the war, and afterwards he and his wife moved to Missouri to live on a farm.

July 5, 1863

Sunday. Rained awfully during the night. I got very wet—

Early we took up the march for Chambersburg—Crossing the battlefield—Cemetery Hill—The Great Wheat Field Farm, Seminary ridge—and other places where dead men, horses, smashed artillery, were strewn in utter confusion, the Blue and The Grey mixed—Their bodies so bloated—distorted—discolored on account of decomposition having set in—that they were utterly unrecognizable, save by clothing, or things in their pockets—The scene simply beggars description—Reaching the west side of the Field of Carnage— we virtually charged most of the way for 10 miles—to Cashtown— Frequently in sight of the Rebel rear guard—taking in prisoners—in bunches—We captured some 1,500 wounded men, and 300 stragglers—we went as far as Goodyears Springs, where we rested for the night. (I had to guard a Reb all night.)

QUESTIONS

Answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper.

1. The Union army won the Battle of Gettysburg on July 3, 1863, two days before Cormany wrote this diary entry. What words does Cormany use to describe the battlefield at Gettysburg? What does he emphasize?
2. General Lee divided his Confederate forces for retreat with one column heading toward Cashtown. What evidence suggests that Cormany and his regiment were going after the Confederate troops?

ACTIVITIES

Use your textbook and other print and online resources to complete the following activities.

1. Compare this soldier’s description and the poster images of dead soldiers at Gettysburg to Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address. What do you think of the address after learning more about the nature of this horrible battle?
2. Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address asserted a noble ideal that explained why men sacrificed their lives. This ideal has influenced many Americans’ view of the Civil War. Use the electronic archive *The Valley of the Shadow* (<http://valley.vcdh.virginia.edu/>) to find out how soldiers justified their participation in the fighting. For each document you review in *The Valley of the Shadow*, record the year and identify whether the voice is from the Union or Confederacy.

For related educational resources, visit www.presidentsvision.org

