



April 1865

The Month That Saved America

premiere: **April 21, 9pm ET**
classroom: **May 26-27**



This two-hour documentary is based on the best-selling book by historian Jay Winik. It covers the last few weeks of the Civil War, from President Abraham Lincoln's second inauguration, to the surrender at Appomatox, the assassination of Lincoln, and the final laying down of arms by the Confederacy.

national standards

April 1865 fulfills the following National Standards for History for grades 5–12: Chronological Thinking, Historical Comprehension, Historical Analysis and Interpretation, Historical Research Capabilities, Historical Issues-Analysis and Decision Making for United States History Era 5.

activities

pre-viewing activities

Survey textbook, students should be familiar with the chapter on the Civil War, in their text books. The Civil War Preservation Trust has compiled an extensive curriculum for teaching the Civil War for grades 5–12. Visit www.civilwar.org

- 1. Creating a Timeline.** As homework or as an in-class assignment, students may create a timeline beginning with the nomination of Lincoln as a Republican candidate and ending with the election of President Grant. The timeline should include at least fifteen events, especially Lincoln's election, the firing on Fort Sumter, important Civil War battles, Appomatox, Lincoln's assassination, and the capture of Jefferson Davis.
- 2. Geography Review.** Students should be able to locate on a map the following places: the Mason-Dixon line; the Potomac River; Washington, D.C.; Charleston, S.C.; Durham, N.C.; Appomatox; and Richmond, Va.
- 3. Identifying Historical Figures. Who were the following people?** Robert E. Lee, Ulysses S. Grant, Jefferson Davis, John Wilkes Booth, Joseph Johnston, Phillip Sheridan, William T. Sherman, Frederick Douglass, John S. Mosby, Henry Stanton, Andrew Johnson.

viewing activities

You may assign viewing this documentary as homework, or you may show the tape in class. If you choose to show it during class time, review the recommendations at the back of this issue of *The Idea Book*.

curriculum links

Because of its thesis—that the terms of peace are as determinative historically as the terms of war—this documentary will be very useful in government, political science, and current events courses. Its application in a U.S. history course is clear. *April 1865* is recommended for grades 8–12 and for college level courses. (*Editor's note:* If I were to show my history students one documentary this year, I would choose this one.—L.O'C.)

post-viewing activities

- 1. Using a Primary Source.** Describe Lincoln's second inaugural address. Why might some people be surprised by his words? Paraphrase the last paragraph to clarify its meaning for your classmates. You can read the address online at www.historychannel.com/classroom
- 2. Power Words.** List five adjectives that describe Lee's troops at the end of the war.
- 3. Compare and Contrast.** Robert E. Lee and Jefferson Davis disagreed about the surrender. On a wallboard, list their differences and the probable results of their opposing views.
- 4. Map Activity.** What was John Wilkes Booth's original plan? Why did he change it? What was the result? Create a map showing Booth's route from Lincoln's assassination to Booth's death.
- 5. Biography.** Research and write a one-page biography of a historic character featured in *April 1865*.
- 6. Research Presentation.** Create a presentation on one of the following subjects: the fall of Richmond, Lee's surrender at Appomatox, Mosby's Raiders, the racial integration of the Confederate Army, Jefferson Davis's presidency, the assassination of Lincoln. You may also choose your own topic. You should use more than three sources, of which one should be a primary source.
- 7. Classroom Discussion.** The last scene of the documentary, which takes place in a church after the war, is highly symbolic. Explain the scene, the people involved, and why it has a special meaning in American history.

vocabulary

Students should identify the following terms. Visit www.merriamwebster.com for definitions.

benevolent
Confederate
Dixie
egregious
guerilla warfare
inauguration
malice
retribution
segregation
strategy
trench warfare
Union
Yankee



websites

One great aspect to studying the Civil War today is the rich resources available on the Internet. The History Channel is a proud partner of the Civil War Preservation Trust, which is dedicated to Civil War battlefield preservation and Civil War education. Visit their Web site for outstanding curriculum support at www.civilwar.org

Other sites that are particularly recommended: <http://search.biography.com>
www.iath.virginia.edu/vshadow2/
www.bartleby.com/124/pres32.html

The History Channel's Civil War Journal series encompasses an enormous variety of Civil War-era topics. A short list of videos that are recommended for schools, along with the study guides, can be found at www.historychannel.com/classroom

