



## MAKING SENSE OF THE CIVIL WAR

*A Reading and Discussion Program for Libraries  
to commemorate the anniversaries of the Civil War and Emancipation*



“Making Sense of the American Civil War” was created and funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities as part of its *We the People* initiative, which promotes scholarship, teaching, and learning about American history and culture.

**The following books will be read and discussed in this program:**

- *March* by Geraldine Brooks [2005]
- *Crossroads of Freedom: Antietam* by James McPherson
- *America's War: Talking About the Civil War and Emancipation on their 150th Anniversaries*, a new anthology edited by Edward L. Ayers and published by NEH and ALA

### **OVERVIEW:**

The program is designed as a series of five conversations exploring different facets of the Civil War experience, informed by reading the words written or spoken by powerful voices from the past and present, as listed below:

### **Session One: Imagining War**

1. *March* by Geraldine Brooks [2005]
2. Selections from *America's War* anthology:
  - Louisa May Alcott, excerpt from *Journal kept at the Hospital, Georgetown, D.C.* [1862]

## Session Two: Choosing Sides

Selections from *America's War* anthology:

- Frederick Douglass, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" [1852]
- Henry David Thoreau, excerpt from "A Plea for Captain John Brown" (excerpt) [1859]
- Abraham Lincoln, First Inaugural Address [March 4, 1861]
- Alexander H. Stephens, "Cornerstone" speech [March 21, 1861]
- Robert Montague, Secessionist speech at Virginia secession convention [April 1-2, 1861]
- Chapman Stuart, Unionist speech at Virginia secession convention [April 5, 1861]
- Elizabeth Brown Pryor, excerpt from *Reading the Man: A Portrait of Robert E. Lee Through his Private Letters* [2007]
- Mark Twain, "The Private History of a Campaign That Failed" [1885]
- Sarah Morgan, excerpt from *The Diary of Sarah Morgan* [May 1862]

## Session Three: Making Sense of War

Selections from *America's War* anthology:

- Ambrose Bierce, "What I Saw of Shiloh" [1881]
- Ulysses Grant, excerpt from the *Memoirs* [1885]
- Shelby Foote, excerpt from *Shiloh* [1952]
- Bobbie Ann Mason, "Shiloh" [1982]
- General Braxton Bragg, speech to the Army of the Mississippi [May 3, 1862]

## Session Four: The Shape of War

1. *Crossroads of Freedom: Antietam* by James M. McPherson

2. Selections from *America's War* anthology:

- Gary W. Gallagher, excerpt from "The Net Result of the Campaign was in Our Favor—Confederate Reaction to the Maryland Campaign" [1999]
- Drew Gilpin Faust, "The Work of Death," preface to *This Republic of Suffering* [2009]

## Session Five: War and Freedom

Selections from *America's War* anthology:

- Abraham Lincoln, address on colonization [1862]
- John M. Washington, “Memorys [sic] of the Past” [1873]
- Frederick Douglass, “Men of Color, To Arms!” [March 1863]
- Abraham Lincoln, “Emancipation Proclamation” [January 1863]
- Abraham Lincoln, “Gettysburg Address” [November 1863]
- Abraham Lincoln, letters to James C. Conkling and Albert G. Hodges [1864]
- James S. Brisbin, report on U.S. Colored Cavalry in Virginia [October 2, 1864]
- Colored Citizens of Nashville, Tennessee, Petition to the Union Convention of Tennessee Assembled at the Capitol in Nashville [January 9, 1865]
- Abraham Lincoln, Second Inaugural Address [1865]
- Margaret Walker, excerpt from *Jubilee* (excerpt) [1966]
- Leon Litwack, excerpt from *Been in the Storm So Long* [1979]

