



STUDY GUIDE

THE AMAZING LIFE OF ULYSSES S. GRANT

KEY TERMS: leader
hero

ambition
politician

victories
savior

NOTE-TAKING COLUMN: Complete this section <u>during</u> the video. Include definitions and key terms.	CUE COLUMN: Complete this section <u>after</u> the video.
<p data-bbox="107 548 889 617">During which war did Ulysses S. Grant prove himself as ‘an officer of unusual ability?’</p> <p data-bbox="107 1079 824 1110">Which battle made General Grant ‘a true Union hero?’</p> <p data-bbox="107 1541 818 1572">What federal department did President Grant create?</p>	<p data-bbox="954 548 1442 617">What made Grant such a successful leader?</p> <p data-bbox="954 1268 1497 1299">What is so amazing about Grant’s story?</p>

DISCUSSION & REVIEW QUESTIONS:

- Towards the beginning of the video, Mr. Adelman says of Ulysses S. Grant that, "...during the Mexican-American war (1846-1848), Grant proved himself to be an officer of unusual ability. He was cool under fire, daring, but rarely reckless. Even more important: the men under his command trusted him." Why do you think that these particular characteristics helped Grant to be a great officer? Why do you think that having the men he commanded trust him was so important? Explain.
- After describing Grant's drinking problem and resignation from the military, Mr. Adelman shares with us that for Grant, "It was downhill from there, one business venture failing after another. By 1860, thoroughly humiliated with no money and no prospects, he was back working for his father in the small town of Galena, Illinois." Why do you think that Grant could not find success in the private sector at that time? Do you think that the same abilities that helped him be so successful in the military should have easily and necessarily translated to success in private industry? Why or why not?
- Mr. Adelman goes on to explain about General Grant that, "Any advantage the Union had in technology or manpower he employed to the fullest. Like Napoleon, Grant was a superb reader of maps. He could identify the enemy's vulnerabilities and exploit them as he did in his brilliant 1863 Campaign for Vicksburg, a campaign that is still studied at war colleges." Do you think that General Grant learned these abilities, was born with these abilities, or both? Explain. What do you think war colleges study about the Vicksburg campaign, and why? Why do you think that other Union generals did not utilize the same or similar abilities that General Grant did to the extent that General Grant did? Explain.
- Later in the video, Mr. Adelman points out that President Grant, "During his tenure... fought to secure the passage of the 15th Amendment, which guaranteed all American citizens the right to vote, regardless of 'race, color, or previous condition of servitude.' He created the Department of Justice, broke up the Ku Klux Klan, and advocated for the rights of Indians. He presided over the completion of the transcontinental railroad and a rapidly expanding industrial economy." Do you think that President Lincoln had a significant influence in shaping President Grant's views on social and economic issues? Why or why not? What do you think motivated President Grant to serve our country so well? Explain.
- At the conclusion of the video, Mr. Adelman notes that, "Of Grant's amazing life, Frederick Douglass wrote a fitting epithet, 'In him, the negro found a protector, the Indian a friend, a vanquished foe a brother, an imperiled nation a savior.'" What's so remarkable about who wrote the epithet and about what it says? Explain. Do you consider President Grant's life story to be amazing? If so, why- what makes it so amazing? If not, why not- what would he have had to do in order to make his story 'amazing' for you?

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

CASE STUDY: Ku Klux Klan Act

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the articles “Grant Takes on the Klan,” then answer the questions that follow.

- What had President Grant’s instinct always been to do? What did Grant’s efforts to set things right in the south require? What did President Grant insist that the South recognize? Why did Grant loathe the Klan? What did President Grant ask congress for in 1871, and what was his reasoning? What position did Southern Democrats take on the issue of blacks being equal citizens and being treated equally under the law? What was the ‘An Act to Enforce the Provisions of the Fourteenth Amendment,’ and what did it do? What did President Grant do when Southerners ignored the act? What happened to the KKK once President Grant enacted his new powers? What happened when President Grant died?
- Do you think the fact that President Grant’s in-laws were slave owners had anything to do with his conviction to champion civil rights? Why or why not? Why do you think that President Grant’s actions towards changing the mindset of the South was so important to preserving the Union and to navigating such a precarious time in U.S. history? Explain. Do you think that President Grant deserves credit for being a great president? Why or why not?
- What is so ‘American’ about President Grant’s story? What are some important lessons that we can learn and apply to modern times from President Grant’s story? Explain.



QUIZ

THE AMAZING LIFE OF ULYSSES S. GRANT

1. Why was the Union victory inevitable?

- a. The North had more money.
- b. The North had more population.
- c. The North had more industry.
- d. All of the above.

2. What was Ulysses S. Grant doing at the start of the Civil War?

- a. Leading a small group of soliders for the Confederate Army.
- b. Leading a small group of soldiers for the Union Army.
- c. Selling hats to farmers' wives in a small town in Illinois.
- d. He was the Vice President of the United States.

3. What skill did Grant have that gave him the ability to identify the enemy's vulnerabilities and exploit them?

- a. Map reading
- b. Morse code
- c. Expert horsemanship
- d. Mathematics

4. What battle made Grant a true Union hero?

- a. The Battle of the Yorktown
- b. The Battle of the Bulge
- c. The Battle of Gettysburg
- d. The Battle of Shiloh

5. Ulysses S. Grant was a descendent of a long line of military leaders.

- a. True
- b. False



QUIZ - ANSWER KEY

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Grant Takes on the Klan

By H. W. Brands

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Ulysses Grant hadn't expected the presidency to be easy, but he didn't think it would be this hard. He thought the hard work of forging peace with the South had been finished at Appomattox—that the generous terms he accorded General Robert E. Lee would start the nation's healing process. But things hadn't turned out that way. His great fear, during the final weeks of the war, had been that the Confederates would take to the hills and wage an unending guerrilla battle for their cause. It hadn't happened then, to his considerable relief. But it was happening now.

Letters Grant received from the South soon after he took office in 1869 made the urgency of the situation clear. Robert Burns of Lexington, Ky., expressed doubt that the war was really over: "I write you to know if there is a law in this free land of ours that will protect and guarantee safety against the Rebel prowlers that infest every nook and corner, better known as K.K.K's, who are armed and ready to take the life of any one if they do not endorse treason and rebellion." Robert Scott, the Republican governor of South Carolina, declared the situation there beyond control. "The outrages in Spartanburg and Union Counties in this state have become so numerous, and such a reign of terror exists, that but few Republicans dare sleep in their houses at night. A number of people have been whipped and murdered." Mrs. S.E. Lane of Chesterfield District, S.C., echoed Scott's concerns: "Sir, we are in terror from Ku-Klux threats and outrages. There is neither law or justice in our midst. Our nearest neighbor, a prominent Republican, now lies dead, murdered by a disguised Ruffian Band, which attacked his house at midnight a few nights since. His wife also was murdered. She was buried yesterday, and a daughter is lying dangerously ill from a shot wound."

Grant knew he must act. He also knew that he would be castigated no matter what he did. The Democrats would delight in any excuse to attack him. Many of his fellow Republicans were losing the conviction that had carried the Union to victory, and they wanted to wash their hands of the responsibility for ensuring former slaves enjoyed the rights promised them under the recently ratified 14th Amendment to the Constitution. Grant remembered the lonely moments before great battles, when everything rested on him. He recalled his mistakes—the surprise at Shiloh, the final charge at Cold Harbor—and knew that his judgment wasn't perfect. But his instinct had always been to fight. And he prepared to fight now.

Historians have long underrated Grant's performance as president. His administration was marred by scandals involving corrupt appointees and by an unstable economy that crashed in the Panic of 1873. Yet he deserves credit—and indeed respect—for the bold action he took at a perilous juncture in postwar Reconstruction to expand federal guarantees of racial equality and to protect freed slaves and their supporters from the terrorism of the Ku Klux Klan. Grant's efforts to set things right in the South required moral resolve and considerable courage. It would be nearly a century before any other president demonstrated a similar commitment to civil rights.

Grant inherited an ugly mess from his immediate predecessor in the White House. Andrew Johnson, a Tennessee Democrat, had been added to Abraham Lincoln's Republican reelection ticket in 1864, when Lincoln was desperate to keep war-weary Democrats from voting for George McClellan and a negotiated settlement with the South. When Johnson took office following Lincoln's assassination, he publicly promised stern treatment of former Rebels but instead quietly curried the favor of his fellow Southern Democrats. He granted amnesty liberally, and soon the same people who had dominated Southern politics before the war did so again.

Grant was general of the Army of the United States during Johnson's administration—and, not incidentally, the most popular man in the country. He wanted to be loyal to his commander in chief and supported the pardons of Southern leaders and the readmission of Confederate states to the Union. He even suffered through a blatant ploy to co-opt his popularity, reluctantly accompanying Johnson on a speaking tour aimed at bolstering public support for the president's Reconstruction policies. But his sympathies were with the Republicans, who were appalled to see Southern lawmakers writing new "black codes" that reproduced slavery in all but name. Grant, with help from Congress, thwarted Johnson's attempt to dump Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, a controversy that would prompt the Republicans' Radical wing to wrest control of Reconstruction from the president, block the readmission of Southern states to the Union, impose military rule in the former Confederacy and impeach Johnson.

"Let us have peace," Grant said on accepting the Republican nomination for president in 1868. And he emphasized peace once in office. But not peace at any price: He insisted that the South recognize the old ways were dead. Former slaves must be accepted as citizens and accorded the rights of citizens. Anything less would dishonor the memory of those many thousands who had died in the cause of Union and freedom.

Many in the South, however, held firm to the opposite viewpoint. They were virulently opposed to the idea of equal rights for blacks. The Ku Klux Klan was born in Tennessee in 1866 as a fraternal organization of Confederate veterans, but it quickly evolved from men telling war stories to men making terroristic night rides, as its members sought to enforce white supremacy and prevent the freedmen and their white Republican allies from voting or otherwise participating in the democratic process. Grant loathed the Klan for its murderous tactics and its revival of the secessionist spirit. The Klansmen seemed bent on provoking a new civil war. Yet they were nearly impossible to prosecute under existing laws. They terrorized the few state officials who might have brought charges against them, and federal law didn't cover most local outbreaks of violence.

The only answer, Grant judged, was new federal authority. In 1871 he asked Congress to write a law allowing him to deal with the Klansmen. "A condition of affairs now exists in some of the States of the Union rendering life and property insecure and the carrying of the mails and the collection of the revenue dangerous," he told the legislators. The reference to the mails and revenue was shrewd: Being patently within the purview of the federal government, they provided constitutional cover for action. Grant noted that "the power to correct these evils is beyond the control of the State authorities," but it wasn't clear, he added, that the president had power, within the limits of existing laws, to deal with emergencies like this.

So he made a pitch for extraordinary powers, embodied in a bill that would allow him to suspend habeas corpus in sections of the South. "I urgently recommend such legislation as in the judgment of Congress shall effectually secure life, liberty, and property and the enforcement of law in all parts of the United States," he said.

Grant's request sparked outrage from Democrats, who called it the most repugnant form of partisanship. "Many of you would rather see the President dictator today than to see the Democratic party come into power," bellowed James Beck, a Democratic congressman from Kentucky. Beck noted that some Republicans were grumbling, for reasons of their own. "I do not know that General Grant is as bad a man as some of his leading party friends say he is," Beck twitted. "They know him better than I. But if he was the best man on earth, if he was General Washington himself, the power this bill proposes to give should not be conferred on him." Fernando Wood of New York reiterated the dictatorial theme. "In no portion of our history has any such power been delegated," Wood said. "In no free government anywhere in the world has any such power been delegated by the people. Nor is there any despot for the past century who would attempt to exercise it."

Some Republicans stood by Grant. John Hawley of Illinois, a state that claimed Grant as a favorite son, called the charges of dictatorship ludicrous. "Sir, why shall we say this great chieftain, who marched at the head of more than a million men, will seek for a pretext to call out the militia in one or two or more states in order to subvert the liberties of the American people, when we know there was a day when he stood at

the head of an army composed of a million veteran soldiers, and yet at the behest of the civil power this great army melted away like the dew before the morning sun?"

Still, other Republicans were uneasy. "I do not think that Congress ought to take the initiative in thrusting upon the Executive more tools when there is no evidence from him that he needs them," James Garfield of Ohio wrote to Jacob Cox, Grant's former interior secretary. Garfield was unmoved by the tales of violence against Southern blacks and Republicans, which he considered exaggerated. And he feared that the extraordinary powers requested by Grant would indeed make him an autocrat or something close, saying: "It seems to me that this will virtually empower the President to abolish state governments." Garfield also thought the move would ruin the Republican Party.

Yet Grant held his party together sufficiently to get his bill, and in April 1871 Congress approved what was formally named "An Act to Enforce the Provisions of the Fourteenth Amendment" but informally dubbed the Ku Klux Klan Act. The measure allowed persons deprived of their rights under the Constitution to bring suit in federal courts (rather than state courts). It defined conspiracy to deprive citizens of the equal protection of the laws or prevent citizens from voting, and it permitted the prosecution of such conspiracies in federal courts. It also declared that when the denial of rights was so organized and egregious that it overawed state authorities, or when state authorities connived in the denial, such combinations "shall be deemed a rebellion against the government of the United States." The president was then authorized "to suspend the privileges of the writ of habeas corpus, to the end that such rebellion may be overthrown."

The law gave Grant the power he sought, but it was up to him to use it. "It is my earnest wish that peace and cheerful obedience to law may prevail throughout the land and that all traces of our late unhappy civil strife may be speedily removed," the president proclaimed after its passage. Yet neither Grant's words nor the legislation did anything to sway Southern racists.

Within days came more pleas from Southern blacks and Republicans for presidential protection. "There is a Ku Klux organization in this county, who have recently closed a colored school and are now taking steps to close others," the editor of a paper called *Equal Rights* wrote from Pontotoc, Miss. "I am threatened with personal violence." The town was an outpost of loyalty to the Union, but Republicans there were at grave danger from Democrats evidently determined to avenge the defeat of the rebellion. "All the hopes of the loyal people are fixed on you," the editor wrote. Two weeks later, another desperate message arrived from Pontotoc. "The Ku Klux attacked us Friday night," two survivors of an assault telegraphed. "They threaten to return and burn the town. Can we have troops?"

Grant shifted some troops from Kentucky to Mississippi, but he focused his attention on South Carolina. The Palmetto State had special significance, since it had been the first to secede and the first to fire on Union forces. It was also the epicenter of Klan activity in the early 1870s. Grant sent Amos Akerman, the attorney general, to South Carolina to document the depredations there; upon receiving Akerman's report, he ordered those responsible to disperse, retire to their homes and surrender "all arms, ammunition, uniforms, disguises and other means and implements" used in the unlawful violence. He gave them five days.

The Klansmen ignored him, as Grant expected they would. So in October 1871, he cracked down. Employing his special powers, he suspended habeas corpus in nine counties of South Carolina most seriously affected by Klan violence and sent in federal marshals and federal troops. The purpose of the habeas suspension was to let the marshals and troops round up suspected terrorists without concern about producing legal justification before a judge. Several hundred marauders were quickly arrested while other suspects fled the counties and the state to avoid detention. The assault disrupted Klan networks and instilled the fear of federal power in many South Carolinians who had supplied tacit support to the organization. The sweep stopped the civil unrest and demonstrated the resolve of the federal government to defend the rights of the freedmen.

The trials, months later, proved anticlimactic. Akerman accepted plea bargains from many defendants in exchange for information that further undermined the Klan. Mostly moderate sentences were handed down—sometimes by black-majority juries. But the Klan had been crippled. Political violence in South Carolina and across the South declined dramatically, and soon the KKK virtually disappeared from Southern life, not to be seen again until the 20th century, when it would rear up in the South and other parts of the country. “The law on the side of freedom is of great advantage only where there is power to make that law respected,” observed Frederick Douglass, the former slave and abolitionist. Grant had acquired and exercised the necessary power, and had compelled rebel resisters to respect the law.

Yet in doing so he won few friends. The Democrats assailed him more vehemently than ever, and a whole wing of Republicans who wanted to let the freedmen fend for themselves abandoned Grant for a new party, the Liberal Republicans, ahead of the 1872 election.

Grant never repented, even as he appreciated that his bold stroke couldn’t be repeated. The Klan had been crushed, but the majority of Southern whites remained unreconciled to black equality, and their views couldn’t be ignored indefinitely without irreparable damage to democracy. Grant couldn’t hold the line for equality by himself.

During the following years and decades, the line gradually gave way. In one state after another, the white majorities reclaimed political control and, by less violent means than the Klan had employed, disenfranchised the freedmen. Not until Lyndon Johnson occupied the White House in the 1960s would another U.S. president push for black equality.

Those for whom Grant fought didn’t forget him. When Grant died, African-American churches across the country prayed for his soul. A group of black Union veterans wished him Godspeed on his final journey. “In General Grant’s death,” they resolved, “the colored people of this and all other countries, and the oppressed everywhere, irrespective of complexion, have lost a preeminently true and faithful defender.”

H.W. Brands’ current book is The Man Who Saved the Union: Ulysses Grant in War and Peace.

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