THOMAS "STONEMALL"

JACKSON

CONFEDERATE GENERAL

by Robin S. Doak

Content Adviser: Babs Melton,
Director, Stonewall Jackson Museum,
Strasburg, Virginia

Reading Adviser: Rosemary G. Palmer, Ph.D.,
Department of Literacy, College of Education,
Boise State University

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On a hot July day in the summer of 1861, the battle near Manassas Junction, Virginia, was not going well for the Southern troops. Although Confederates outnumbered Union forces, they were tired and untrained and were being beaten on their own land. Union supporters expected that the battle would be the first and last of the Civil War. Many had traveled 30 miles (48 kilometers) from Washington, D.C., to witness the skirmish. Men dressed in fine suits and women in fancy dresses lined up on a hill near Bull Run to watch the fighting.

Despite the odds against him, Confederate General Thomas Jackson refused to give up. He ordered his men to form and hold a long line in front of the enemy troops. The men obeyed, standing
bravely and waiting for the Northern attack to come. The sight was an inspiration to other Southern soldiers. A general from South Carolina pointed to Jackson and shouted, “Look! There is Jackson standing like a stone wall! Rally behind the Virginians!” By the end of that day, Union troops were driven from the battlefield in defeat in the First Battle of Bull Run. And the legend known as “Stonewall” Jackson was born and became an important symbol for the Confederate cause.

Tension between the North and South built quickly after Abraham Lincoln was elected president. States in the South began to secede, or withdraw, from the Union. In December 1860, South Carolina became the first state to leave. On February 4, 1861, South Carolina and six other states formed a new independent nation called the Confederate States of America. Jefferson Davis of Mississippi was elected its first president.

The spring of 1861 marked the start of the darkest days in U.S. history. In April, the battle over
slavery and states’ rights had ripped America in two, separating North from South. For years, many people in the North had wanted to end slavery in the United States. They were called abolitionists. People
in the South had worked just as hard to preserve their rights and way of life, which included owning slaves.

When the country split in two, Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson was one of many Virginians who remained loyal to his state and the South. Jackson fought not to preserve slavery, but to preserve Virginia’s rights to self-government. In June 1862, he wrote to his wife Anna, “How I do wish for peace, but only upon the condition of our national independence.”

Jackson became known as one of the greatest leaders and most skillful commanders of the Civil War. He defeated Union troops much larger than his own and turned certain defeats into victories. General Robert E. Lee, commander of the Confederate Army, relied heavily on Jackson, calling him his best general and his right arm.

Jackson was one of the first military heroes of the war. Many of his men believed that he was unbeatable. Just the sight of the general on horse-