

EXTRA CREDIT ASSIGNMENT

This is an extra credit assignment and is not required. If you choose to do this extra credit work, it will replace your poorest essay or Identification section, whichever will give you the most points. The assignments are due on Thursday, 22 April at class time. No late papers will be accepted.

This assignment consists of reading the two articles listed below and writing a 3–4 page typed essay.

Recently there has been a great deal of controversy over the origins of the American Civil War. This year the Governor of Virginia caused a storm of controversy when he issued a Confederate History Month Proclamation without any mention of slavery. When asked about slavery wasn't mentioned he said in *The Washington Post*: "There were any number of aspects to that conflict between the states. Obviously, it involved slavery. It involved other issues. But I focused on the ones I thought were most significant for Virginia." He later apologized and added a paragraph about slavery to the proclamation. Mississippi Governor Haley Barbour waded into the controversy on CNN when he defended Virginia's original proclamation, the one without a reference to slavery saying, "It's sort of feeling that it's a nit, that it is not significant, it's trying to make a big deal out of something that doesn't amount to diddly." I have included the text of the Virginia Proclamation on the next page. The fourth paragraph on slavery was added later.

Read both articles and write a 3–4 page typed essay on the following question:

Are these governors correct? Have historians overemphasized the importance of slavery as a cause of the American Civil War, or are they part of a broader revisionist movement to intentionally minimize the importance of slavery and give the impression the Civil War was primarily about state's rights and political issues?

You **must** show evidence that you read all three articles to receive credit. The readings are contained in one Adobe Acrobat files named "ExtraCreditReadings.pdf."

The readings come from, "Have Historians Overemphasized the Slavery Issue as a Cause of the Civil War?" in Larry Madaras & James M. SoRelle, eds. *Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Controversial Issues in American History*, Volume 1. 8th Edition. McGraw Hill, 2000, pp. 286–305.

Sibley, Joel H., from *The Partisan Imperative: The Dynamics of American Politics Before the Civil War* (Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 288–295.

Holt, Michael F., from *The Political Crisis of the 1850s* (John Wiley & Sons, 1978), pp. 296–303.

Virginia's Confederate History Month Proclamation, 2010

WHEREAS, April is the month in which the people of Virginia joined the Confederate States of America in a four year war between the states for independence that concluded at Appomattox Courthouse; and

WHEREAS, Virginia has long recognized her Confederate history, the numerous civil war battlefields that mark every region of the state, the leaders and individuals in the Army, Navy and at home who fought for their homes and communities and Commonwealth in a time very different than ours today; and

WHEREAS, it is important for all Virginians to reflect upon our Commonwealth's shared history, to understand the sacrifices of the Confederate leaders, soldiers and citizens during the period of the Civil War, and to recognize how our history has led to our present; and

WHEREAS, it is important for all Virginians to understand that the institution of slavery led to this war and was an evil and inhumane practice that deprived people of their God-given inalienable rights and all Virginians are thankful for its permanent eradication from our borders, and the study of this time period should reflect upon and learn from this painful part of our history; and

WHEREAS, Confederate historical sites such as the White House of the Confederacy are open for people to visit in Richmond today; and

WHEREAS, all Virginians can appreciate the fact that when ultimately overwhelmed by the insurmountable numbers and resources of the Union Army, the surviving, imprisoned and injured Confederate soldiers gave their word and allegiance to the United States of America, and returned to their homes and families to rebuild their communities in peace, following the instruction of General Robert E. Lee of Virginia, who wrote that, "...all should unite in honest efforts to obliterate the effects of war and to restore the blessings of peace."; and

WHEREAS, this defining chapter in Virginia's history should not be forgotten, but instead should be studied, understood and remembered by all Virginians, both in the context of the time in which it took place, but also in the context of the time in which we live, and this study and remembrance takes on particular importance as the Commonwealth prepares to welcome the nation and the world to visit Virginia for the Sesquicentennial Anniversary of the Civil War, a four-year period in which the exploration of our history can benefit all;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Robert McDonnell, do hereby recognize April 2010 as **CONFEDERATE HISTORY MONTH** in our **COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA**, and I call this observance to the attention of all our citizens.