Nathan Bedford Forrest

Essential Question: What role did Nathan Bedford Forrest play in the Civil War?

       Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest proved such a menace to Federal forces throughout the Civil War that Union General William T. Sherman stated that it would be wise to "follow Forrest to the death, if it cost 10,000 lives and breaks the Treasury."[1] While Sherman referred to Forrest as "the very devil," another word that is consistently used to describe the military career of Nathan Bedford Forrest is "genius." One historian has written, "Military observers at the time and later concluded that Forrest was a natural military genius."[2] Even Sherman, sworn enemy of Forrest, admitted that the Confederate General possessed a "genius for strategy that was original and to me, incomprehensible."[3] During the war, Forrest was renowned for his daring and his courage. He had twenty-nine horses shot out from under him and was himself wounded several times. Nevertheless, he won successes against Union armies, usually larger than his own, in battle after battle.

       Forrest was born the eldest of eleven children to a blacksmith named William Forrest and Mariam Beck in Marshall County, Tennessee on July 13, 1821. After the death of his father and up to his mother's remarriage, Forrest supported the family himself. Afterward, he went to Texas, returned to Tennessee, and married Mary Montgomery in 1845. In 1857, Forrest made a fortune in Memphis selling land and slaves. He was running a profitable plantation when the war broke out in 1861.[4]

       When Tennessee voted to leave the Union that June, Forrest sided with his home state. A skilled horseman, Forrest enlisted as a private in a cavalry regiment. As he was well-known in Memphis, a handful of his friends petitioned Tennessee Governor Isham Harris to commission Forrest as an officer. Forrest was quickly made a colonel and permitted to form his own cavalry regiment.

       Forrest quickly developed a fast-paced, aggressive style of fighting battles that would become his trademark. He aimed to keep Union forces in one place with a frontal assault and then rapidly attack both sides at once. Forrest himself led the charges and engaged in hand-to-hand combat on several occasions. When Union forces under Ulysses S. Grant besieged Fort Donelson on the Cumberland River, Forrest grew impatient with his commanding officers who

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[1] *O.R.*, Ser. I, Vol. 39, pt. II, p. 121.

[2] Rodney P. Carlisle, "Forrest, Nathan Bedford," from *American National Biography*, Vol. 8 (New York: Oxford University Press), 1999, 264.

[3] *Ibid.*, 263.

[4] *Ibid.*, 262.

had decided to surrender. Disgusted with their admission of defeat, Forrest led his regiment on a late-night breakout through enemy lines. Days later, when Nashville surrendered, Forrest secured the Confederate rear guard as the army retreated into Mississippi.[5]

Forrest played an important role in the Battle of Shiloh. He led a number of cavalry charges to slow down the advancing Union troops on the second day of battle. Following Shiloh, Forrest remained in west Tennessee to attack Grant's supply lines. After the Battle of Chickamauga, Forrest urged Bragg to attack the Union before they could reach Chattanooga. His advice was ignored and Forrest obtained an independent command in west Tennessee.[6]

The most controversial events of Forrest's military career occurred on April 1864 when Forrest attacked Fort Pillow outside of Memphis.   The fort was garrisoned by African American soldiers and Tennessee unionists.   Approximately half of the 600 men in the fort were killed. Many of these men were killed as they attempted to surrender. 67% of the dead were members of the U.S. Colored Troops[7]. Whether Forrest ordered the killings or lost control of his men remains unclear. The Fort Pillow Massacre was widely publicized in the North.

Forrest took part in a number of other major battles including the Battle of Franklin on November 30, 1864. Following the Confederate defeat at Nashville, Forrest once again slowed down the Union advance so that the Confederates could retreat. Forrest ultimately surrendered in May of 1865.[8] Following the war, Forrest once again gained fame as the first Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan. Forrest traveled throughout the South promoting the Klan along with his railroad ventures. Forrest returned to Memphis where he died on October 29, 1877.

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[5] Derek W. Frisby, "Forrest, Nathan Bedford," *Encyclopedia of the American Civil War*, Vol. 2, ed. David S. Heidler and Jeanne T. Heidler (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2000), 720.
[6] "Nathan Bedford Forrest." *Tennessee Encyclopedia and History and Culture* 1st edition. 1998. Print, 321.
[7] Ibid, 321.
[8] Ibid, 321.

William G. "Parson" Brownlow

Essential Question: What role did William Brownlow play in the Civil War?

        William Gannaway "Parson" Brownlow (1805-1877) was an influential East Tennessee minister, journalist, and governor. On the eve of the Civil War, his newspaper, popularly known as Brownlow's *Whig*, reached nearly eleven thousand subscribers across the nation. The Parson was a prominent spokesperson for the Whig Party and a staunch defender of the Union during the United States Civil War.

        Born the son of poor farmers in 1805, William Brownlow was orphaned at the age of 11. In 1825, having tried his hand at farming and carpentry, he had a religious experience at a camp meeting and entered into a career as a circuit riding minister in the Holston Conference. After 10 years riding through the mountains preaching to all who would listen, Parson Brownlow married Eliza O'Brien and settled down to work for her father in the family iron mill at Elizabethton. Soon the former preacher, who had proved to be a forceful speaker and writer, was approached by members of the local Whig Party to edit their failing newspaper, the *Republican and Manufacturer's Record*. Parson Brownlow accepted the offer. Parson Brownlow became, because of his wit, venom, and violent writing style, one the most noted or notorious journalists in American history. The *Republican and Manufacturer's Record*, after name changes and moves to Jonesboro and Knoxville became known as Brownlow's *Whig*, the most famous newspaper in Tennessee.

        With the coming of secession, Brownlow found himself a major force in the attempt to preserve the Union. In East Tennessee, 69% of voters opposed secession in the statewide referendum of June 1861 even as 86% of voters elsewhere supported secession. Brownlow was a spokesman and leader for the strongly pro-Union inhabitants of East Tennessee.

        Brownlow and many of his supporters were pro-slavery (he himself owned slaves used as servants at various times), but were willing to consider abolishing slavery if necessary to save the Union. With the *Whig* as his platform, Brownlow put all his effort into attacking secession and the people who supported it with his usual exaggerated insults. Despite his efforts, Tennessee joined the Confederacy in July, 1861. Losing the immediate argument with the secessionists did not silence him; Brownlow continued to use his paper to denounce the Confederacy and its leaders without restraint. At last, exasperated by his abuse and facing a rebellion in East Tennessee generated by Brownlow's venomous words, the Confederate authorities in Knoxville arrested him and ultimately expelled him from the South.

        Exile did not end Brownlow's war with the Confederacy. Due to the publicity generated by his resistance and arrest in Tennessee, he found himself a hero to the North and used this newfound fame as a weapon against the South. He lectured across the North, urging the reconquering of the seceding states. Brownlow's message reached even more people through Parson *Brownlow's Book*, which used vivid language to tell the story of his resistance to the Confederacy.

      With the war's end, Parson Brownlow and his fellow East Tennessee Unionists formed a state government with Brownlow as governor. Publicly, as governor, his attitude was one of revenge upon the Confederates, though privately his attitude was charitable and forgiving toward individuals. However, most Tennesseans disliked Brownlow's plans for revenge; they wanted to forgive and forget. Brownlow pushed Tennessee to ratify the Fourteenth Amendment in 1866 which allowed Tennessee fully rejoin the Union. Brownlow's actions in aiding African Americans to gain the right to vote drew the ire of the Ku Klux Klan. Brownlow's efforts to crush the Ku Klux Klan were largely ineffective. The group grew in power and influence following Brownlow's departure from governorship in 1868. Brownlow tried to improve Tennessee's financial situation by supporting the sale of government bonds to rebuild railroads damaged in the war. Unfortunately, Brownlow's reputation was damaged by his allies who took advantage of Brownlow's poor health to steal state funds. Brownlow was elected to the Senate in 1868, where he accomplished little due to his poor health. After his service in the Senate, Brownlow returned to East Tennessee, where he remained popular. Parson Brownlow died after years of illness in 1877.

David Farragut

Essential Question: What role did David Farragut play in the Civil War?

On July 26, 1866, David Glasgow Farragut was named the first full admiral in American history. He was honored for a career in the navy that spanned over fifty years. One historian wrote that Farragut was similar to Ulysses S. Grant in that "he possessed great force of character rather than a subtle intellect."[9] It was for his service during the Civil War, however, that Farragut earned his most recognition and praise.

David Glasgow Farragut was born James Glasgow Farragut in Campbell's Station, Tennessee, an area near Knoxville, on July 5, 1801. After his birth, he was taken to New Orleans, where he was adopted by Commodore David Porter. The story goes that Porter's elderly father, himself once a master sailor in the U.S. Navy under George Washington, was fishing and collapsed with sunstroke. Farragut's father found him and took him to the Farragut home, where the family cared for the dying Porter until the end. In order to repay the tenderness of the Farragut family, Commodore Porter adopted young James and became his guardian.

James began service in the navy with his new father when he was only nine years old. In the War of 1812, James served with Porter in a sea battle with two British ships off the coast of Chile. A gunner on their ship, the *Essex*, was struck by a cannonball and fell against the young Farragut, pushing him backward through an open hatch. Farragut struck his head and received the only wound he would ever receive during his naval career. In recognition of the battle, he changed his name to David, in honor of his adopted father.[10]

Afterward, David Farragut's journeys took him to Europe and the Gulf of Mexico. During the Mexican War, he served as captain of the sloop *Saratoga*. At the outbreak of the Civil War, Farragut awaited orders in Norfolk, Virginia. As a southerner, he had to decide whether to fight for the land of his birth or for the government he flourished under. In the end, Farragut believed President Abraham Lincoln was justified in his military actions against the southern rebels. Therefore, Farragut decided to remain a U.S. naval officer. When heckled by southern leaders who tried to get him to renege and join the Confederacy, Farragut responded, "Mind what I tell you: You fellows will catch the devil before you get through with this business."[11] After a short time at desk duty, Farragut was assigned to oversee the West Gulf Blockade Squadron and their operations in the Gulf of Mexico.[12]

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[9] James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 419.

[10] Michael S. Davis, "Farragut, David Glasgow," *Encyclopedia of the American Civil War*, Vol. 2, ed. David S. Heidler and Jeanne T. Heidler (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2000), 683.

[11] David D. Porter, "The Opening of the Lower Mississippi," *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, vol. II, (New York: The Century Co., 1887), PDF book, 26.

[12] *Ibid*., 684.

During the spring of 1862, Farragut received orders which laid out a plan for his fleet to travel up the Mississippi River and aid Union armies in their attempt to control the river and cut the Confederacy in half. One of the keys to the success of the operation was for Farragut to capture the port of New Orleans.

The battle for the largest city in the South began in April, 1862. Against heavy resistance, Farragut steamed his ships up the river, taking cannon fire from all sides. Confederates pushed flaming rafts into the river to set Union ships ablaze. The rebels fired from incomplete ironclads still moored to their docks.[13] None of this stopped Farragut and his fleet. They passed the river defenses, defeated them from the north, and sailed triumphantly into the city.

With New Orleans in Union hands, Farragut took his fleet up and won the river capturing cities and frustrating Confederates. The only city he failed to capture was Vicksburg, along the final Confederate stronghold on the Mississippi. His accomplishments on the Mississippi earned Farragut a promotion to the rank of rear admiral. In March 1863, Farragut again sailed for Vicksburg to blockade the town. With the help of Grant's forces on the other side of the fortress, the town fell on July 4.

Farragut's next mission consisted of shutting down Confederate blockade runners. To do this, Farragut had to capture rebel ports that harbored such runners. The first harbor targeted was Mobile. Attempting to mimic his success in New Orleans, Farragut tried to run the gauntlet of Mobile's defenses. Instead of cruising through, however, the Union navy encountered Confederate water mines, called torpedoes. Several Union ships were lost due to the mines, and with the whole operation in chaos, Farragut delivered order for which he is remembered. He strapped himself to the rigging of his flagship, the *Hartford*, and shouted the memorable phrase, "Damn the torpedoes. Full steam ahead." His ships finally passed through, and Mobile surrendered. After the capture of Mobile, Farragut was promoted to vice admiral.[14]

In 1865, Farragut was one of the first Union officers to enter Richmond after its fall. After the war, Farragut settled in New York, where the government awarded him $50,000 to buy a home. To commemorate his lifelong service to the navy, he was given the rank of full admiral in 1866. He was the first American to hold such rank. The newly-minted full admiral went on a European goodwill tour. In 1870, while inspecting a naval yard in New Hampshire, Farragut died after suffering a heart attack.

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[13] McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 419-20.
[14] Davis, "Farragut, David Glasgow," 684.

Tennesseans in the Civil War

Read the text for each of the Tennesseans listed in the graphic organizer below. Summarize the key facts for each person.

	Nathan Bedford Forrest	William Brownlow	David Farragut
Union or Confederate			
Soldier or Politician			
Key Fact 1			
Key Fact 2			
Key Fact 3			