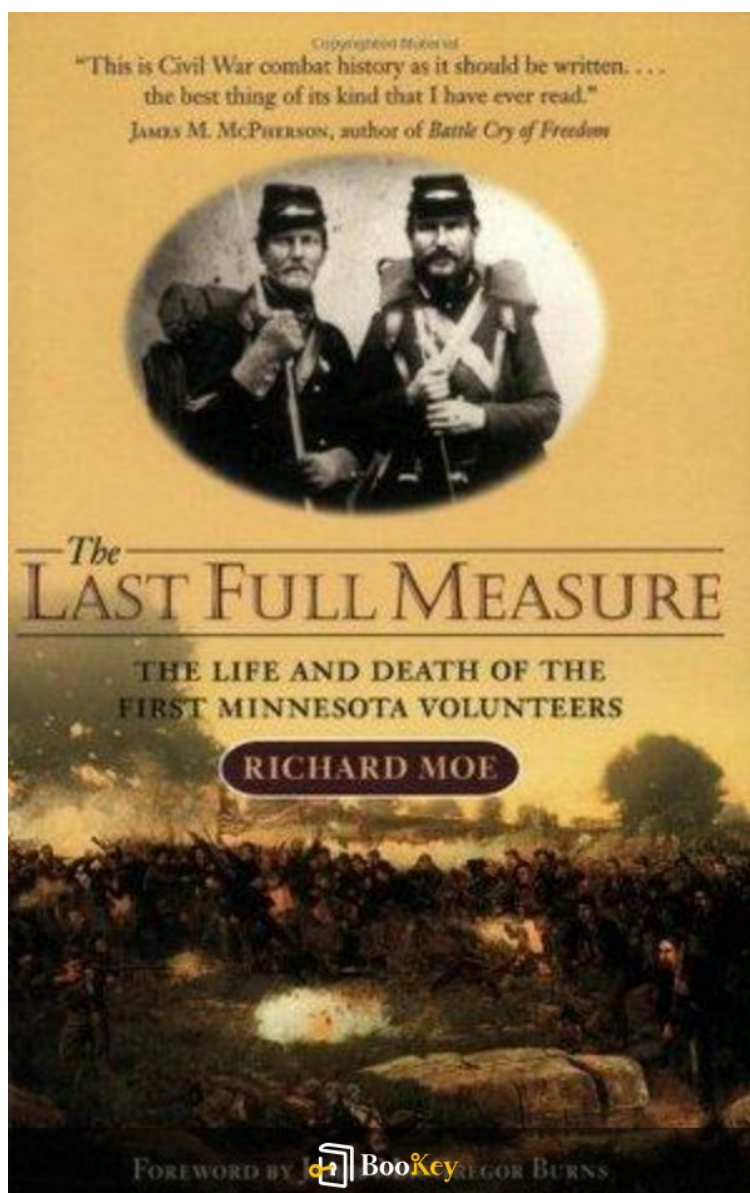


# The Last Full Measure By Richard Moe PDF

Richard Moe



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# About the book

Book Summary: "The Last Full Measure" by Richard Moe

In his gripping account, Richard Moe explores the final crucial months of the Civil War, showcasing the remarkable bravery and determination of both common soldiers and their leaders. Through careful research and evocative storytelling, Moe immerses readers in a nation grappling with division and conflict, where acts of sacrifice and heroism forge the future of the United States. This narrative not only portrays the intense battles between armies but also examines the intimate struggles and resilience of individuals, highlighting the human spirit during one of America's most tumultuous periods. Join Moe on this enlightening journey to appreciate the true cost of freedom and the lasting impact of those who fought tirelessly for unity.

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# About the author

### Profile: Richard Moe

Occupation: Author and Conservationist

Notable Contributions: American historical literature, preservation advocacy

Birthplace: Minneapolis, Minnesota

#### Career Highlights:

- Political Career: Served as Chief of Staff to Vice President Walter Mondale.
- Leadership Role: President of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, where he spearheaded initiatives aimed at preserving significant historical sites.

#### Key Publications:

- "The Last Full Measure": A book exploring the poignant stories of the Civil War.
- Additional Works: Moe has written several acclaimed books that showcase his strong engagement with American history.

#### Legacy:

Richard Moe's commitment to protecting America's cultural heritage,

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combined with his extensive knowledge of history, has earned him numerous awards and recognition as a key figure in the stewardship of national memory and history.

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# **The Last Full Measure By Richard Moe Summary**

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# **The Last Full Measure By Richard Moe**

## **Summary Chapter List**

1. The Context of the American Civil War: A Prelude to the Battle
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3. The Strategic Importance of Gettysburg: Setting the Stage
4. Culmination of the Battle: Key Moments and Turning Points
5. The Aftermath of Gettysburg: Reflections on Sacrifice and Legacy

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# 1. The Context of the American Civil War: A Prelude to the Battle

The American Civil War stands as one of the pivotal moments in the nation's history, a conflict that arose from deep-seated sociopolitical issues entwined with the moral question of slavery. The backdrop of this war is critical to understanding the conditions that led to the Battle of Gettysburg, as it encapsulates the failings of compromise, the entrenchment of sectional interests, and the fervor of individual leaders who played significant roles in shaping the trajectory of this devastating conflict.

The roots of the Civil War trace back long before the first shots were fired at Fort Sumter in 1861. Tensions had been brewing since the founding of the nation when the issue of slavery was first introduced into the political discourse. The Missouri Compromise of 1820 attempted to quell these tensions by balancing slave and free states but only provided a temporary reprieve. The Compromise of 1850 and the subsequent Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 further aggravated sectional strife by allowing new territories to determine the legality of slavery, leading to violent confrontations known as "Bleeding Kansas."

From the late 1850s, the ideological divide between the Northern and Southern states became increasingly pronounced, with the North largely opposing the expansion of slavery while the South sought to protect and

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expand its agrarian economy, which heavily relied on slave labor. The election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860, a candidate who advocated against the spread of slavery, confirmed the fears of many Southern leaders, prompting several states to secede from the Union. This secession was marked by a profound sense of betrayal felt by many in the South—an interpretation that led to the formation of the Confederate States of America.

Consequently, the early years of the Civil War were characterized by a series of early battles that, while significant, failed to resolve the underlying issues. The Battle of Bull Run in 1861 was a harbinger of the brutal realities of warfare, showing both armies that the conflict would not be a quick endeavor. As strategic leadership became crucial for both the Union and the Confederacy, command structures were still being tested. Figures like General George McClellan and General Robert E. Lee emerged as pivotal players, although their styles and ideologies were drastically different, reflective of the broader conflict.

As the war dragged on, the North faced not only the military challenge of the Southern army but also the socio-economic realities of a divided nation. The Confederacy, despite its initial successes, was hampered by shortages of resources and a lack of infrastructure, which began to strain its ability to sustain a prolonged conflict. On the other hand, the Union, with its industrial capabilities and manpower, sought to enact strategies that would bring total

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war to the South, aiming not only to defeat the Confederate armies but also to dismantle the very system of slavery that fueled the Southern economy.

By 1863, the significance of the approaching Battle of Gettysburg cannot be overstated. It was set against this complex backdrop of years of conflict, shifts in military leadership, and evolving tactics. Both sides understood that the stakes of this battle could determine the fate of the nation. For the Union, a victory was essential not only to secure its capital but also to reinvigorate its military and civilian morale, which had begun to wane. For the Confederacy, victory at Gettysburg would mean a decisive offensive push into the North, potentially securing recognition from foreign nations and shifting the war's momentum.

In conclusion, the context leading to the Battle of Gettysburg is not merely a timeline of events but a rich tapestry of political, social, and organizational dynamics. It reflects the struggle between differing ways of life, the resistance to change, and the inexorable pull of war that changed not only the landscape of America but also the future of its people. Understanding this context allows one to appreciate the significance of the Battle of Gettysburg and the decisions made by its key figures.

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## 2. Exploring the Leadership and Decisions of Key Figures

The Battle of Gettysburg, fought from July 1 to July 3, 1863, was not only a turning point in the American Civil War but also a showcase of military leadership and decision-making under extreme pressures. Among the key figures leading the Union and Confederate forces were General George G. Meade, commander of the Union Army of the Potomac, and General Robert E. Lee, commander of the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia. Their contrasting styles, decisions, and leadership philosophies had significant implications for the battle's outcome.

General Meade took command of the Army of the Potomac just days before the battle, which placed him in a precarious position. Although inexperienced at the head of such a large army, he was known for being an exceptional field commander. Meade's leadership was characterized by decisive, yet cautious, actions. His decision to concentrate Union forces on Cemetery Hill on the first day of the battle exemplified his strategic mindset. This decision effectively established a strong defensive position, allowing him to repel Confederate assaults and set the stage for subsequent days.

On the other hand, General Lee's leadership style was marked by aggressive tactics and audacious decisions. Lee's philosophy revolved around the belief that offensive actions could lead to a swift end to the war. His decision to

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engage at Gettysburg, despite its being a strategically questionable moment in the broader context of the campaign, was driven by his hope of achieving a decisive victory in the North. Lee's confidence in his offensive capabilities was displayed through his order for Pickett's Charge on the final day of the battle, a decision that would have dire consequences.

The relationship between Lee and his subordinates also played a critical role in shaping the outcomes of their decisions. Lee maintained a somewhat paternal approach, inspiring loyalty and initiative among his generals, yet this also meant that he sometimes relied too heavily on their judgment. For instance, the battle's disastrous third day could be attributed in part to Lee's reluctance to fully counteract his subordinates' recommendations and reassess the viability of attacking entrenched positions. The culmination of these decisions manifested in heavy Confederate losses, with over 50,000 casualties during the battle.

Conversely, Meade's command style encouraged collaboration and utilized the strengths of his officers. He adeptly managed criticism and consultation with his corps commanders, including General Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain and General Winfield Scott Hancock, both of whom played critical roles during key moments of the battle. Meade's ability to unite his army despite initial setbacks on the first day was indicative of his leadership caliber. The successful defense of Little Round Top by Chamberlain's 20th

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Maine regiment stands as a testament to Meade's ability to inspire his officers and soldiers to perform under pressure.

Furthermore, the political ramifications of leadership decisions could not be overlooked. Both generals faced pressures from their respective governments, which influenced their strategic choices. Lee, aware of the growing public and political pressure for a decisive victory, ordered aggressive maneuvers, while Meade was cognizant of the need to balance his offensive ambitions with the realities of maintaining the Union's morale and minimizing casualties, which were crucial both on the battlefield and in the eyes of the Northern populace.

Ultimately, the divergent leadership styles and decisions of Lee and Meade at Gettysburg exemplify the broader themes of military strategy and human psychology during wartime. Their respective approaches influenced not only the battle but the course of the Civil War itself. Meade's successful defense and command through discipline and methodical strategy contrasted sharply with Lee's aggressive but occasionally reckless tactics, underscoring how differing philosophies in leadership, when met with extreme circumstances, can profoundly affect the outcomes of historical events.

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### 3. The Strategic Importance of Gettysburg: Setting the Stage

In the summer of 1863, the American Civil War reached a pivotal moment. The conflict had already spiraled into a bloody struggle, with both the Union and Confederate forces amassing significant casualties and resources. As the tides of war shifted, the focus turned toward the town of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, which would become the site of one of the most significant battles in American history. Therefore, understanding the strategic importance of Gettysburg requires a closer look at its geographical, political, and military contexts leading up to the confrontation.

Geographically, Gettysburg was of immense significance. Ideally situated at the crossroads of several major roads, it was a critical junction that connected the eastern and western parts of Pennsylvania. The town was accessible not only for military maneuvers but also for supplies and reinforcements. Control of Gettysburg would allow either the Union or Confederate forces to dominate not only Pennsylvania but potentially threaten cities like Baltimore and Washington D.C. Therefore, it was not just a tactical battleground; it held the potential for broader strategic implications across the Northeastern United States.

Politically, the stakes were even higher. By the summer of 1863, the Confederacy sought to bolster support from the Northern states, hoping that

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victory on Union soil would sway public opinion and political will toward negotiating peace. General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia had just achieved significant victories in the spring, and the Confederate leadership aimed to capitalize on this momentum. Lee's invasion of the North was viewed as a bold attempt to not only relieve Virginia from the war's ravages but also to inspire sympathy for the Southern cause among Northern citizens, potentially fostering a peace movement that could alter the administration's resolve.

As the Confederate forces marched northward, Union leaders recognized the urgent need to stymie Lee's advance. Major General George G. Meade, newly appointed commander of the Army of the Potomac, understood that the upcoming encounter would either lead to a strengthening of the Union position or catastrophic losses that could tilt the war irreversibly in favor of the Confederacy. The Union army was determined not to repeat the mistakes of past encounters, particularly after the disastrous defeat at Fredericksburg, where over 12,000 Union soldiers were lost.

Moreover, the campaign in Pennsylvania was not merely about battlefield victory; it was a fight for the hearts and minds of a nation. As the conflict's casualty rates climbed, the need for a definitive win became crucial for both sides. For the Union, a victory at Gettysburg was essential to counter the growing despair and war fatigue among Northern civilians. The morale of

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the Union troops and their allies was largely predicated upon tangible victories against the Confederate army, and thus the outcome of the approaching battle would likely influence public perception and political support for the war effort.

Additionally, Lee's decision to invade the North was not without its risks. His army, although battle-hardened, was stretched thin and faced significant logistical challenges. The further north they ventured, the more precarious their supply lines became. The possibility of encountering not just the Union forces but also harsh terrain and uncooperative local populations added layers of complexity to Lee's strategy.

As both armies converged on Gettysburg in early July 1863, the landscape itself would play a crucial role in shaping the battle's dynamics. The hills, ridges, and open fields around the town provided both opportunities and challenges for troop movements, artillery placements, and defensive strategies. Understanding the terrain would become essential for commanders as they sought to leverage their forces to gain the upper hand.

In summary, the strategic importance of Gettysburg was a kaleidoscope of geographical, political, and military factors converging in an extraordinarily charged atmosphere. The struggles and aspirations of both the Union and Confederate sides framed the battlefield not just as a site of military

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engagement but as a crucible for the very existence of the nation. The implications of the battle would extend far beyond mere troop movements, signifying a turning point that would shape the future of the United States and its enduring quest for unity.

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## 4. Culmination of the Battle: Key Moments and Turning Points

The culmination of the Battle of Gettysburg represents a pivotal point not only in the Civil War but also in American history. This three-day confrontation in July 1863 had already been marked by intense skirmishes, strategic maneuvers, and substantial casualties, but it was the final day that decisively shaped the outcome of the battle and the fate of the Confederacy.

As the first light of July 3 dawned, the Union and Confederate armies braced themselves for one last, climactic clash. The Union forces, led by General George Meade, occupied strong defensive positions on Cemetery Ridge, while General Robert E. Lee's Confederate Army prepared for an aggressive assault aimed at breaking the Union center.

One of the key moments occurred in the early hours of that fateful morning when Lee, determined to exploit what he perceived as a weakness in the Union line, ordered an artillery bombardment aimed at disorienting and demoralizing the enemy. This barrage was meant to precede a large-scale infantry assault known as Pickett's Charge, named after Major General George Pickett, who commanded one of the attacking divisions. The cannonade, intended to soften Union defenses, rained down upon Cemetery Ridge, creating a cacophony that echoed through the valleys.

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However, the effectiveness of this initial artillery assault proved limited. Union gunners quickly found their range, and despite the Confederate efforts, they inflicted substantial casualties on the advancing troops. By the time Pickett's division surged forward, the Union forces had already prepared their defenses and were poised to repel the attack. The culmination of this moment—the strategic decision to undertake Pickett's Charge—would be analyzed for generations as a turning point marked by Lee's miscalculation.

As the Confederate soldiers charged across the open fields toward the Union line, they faced crippling enfilading fire from Union artillery and infantry. The scene was one of terror and valor; thousands of Confederate men advanced against volley after volley, with many falling to the ground before they could even reach the enemy. The sight of those brave Confederate soldiers bravely facing insurmountable odds became one of the defining images of the battle.

The turning point came swiftly; the Union forces held their ground and resisted the onslaught with fierce determination. Culminating in a fierce clash near the Copse of Trees—an area that would become legendary in Civil War lore—Union soldiers, including the famous 69th Pennsylvania Infantry, responded with resolute fire, effectively tearing through the ranks of the advancing Confederates. The discipline and sheer numbers of the

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Union troops ultimately overwhelmed Pickett's forces, leading to catastrophic losses for the Confederacy.

Critically, the aftermath of Pickett's Charge and the events of July 3 underscored the stark contrast in leadership approaches. Lee, once invincible in the South, began to face the consequences of hubris; his overconfidence in his troops and underestimation of Union resilience marked a turning point in his military strategy.

The battlefield on that day filled with the cries of the wounded and the dying became not only a site of combat but a somber reminder of the human cost of war. By the time the remnants of Pickett's Charge retreated, the Confederate Army had sustained irreparable losses, with an estimated 50% casualty rate among those who advanced. In total, by the end of the battle, the South would incur approximately 28,000 casualties, while the North faced around 23,000.

Thus, the culmination of the Battle of Gettysburg represented a decisive moment in the Civil War. Not only did it halt Lee's invasion of the North, but it also galvanized the Union cause, leading to increased morale and a shift toward offensive strategies. In the coming months, the battle would lay the groundwork for pivotal victories in the West, and ultimately, as the summer faded into fall, the Union would begin to gain momentum that

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would culminate in the ultimate surrender of the Confederate States.

On July 4, the day following the culmination of battles, as the Union celebrated its hard-fought victory, the Confederates found themselves retrenching and retreating from the field. This shifting tide, marked evermore by the haunting memories of the brave sacrifices made on that fateful day, solidified Gettysburg's place not just as a military engagement, but as a defining moment representing the struggle for the soul of a nation.

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## 5. The Aftermath of Gettysburg: Reflections on Sacrifice and Legacy

The aftermath of the Battle of Gettysburg was a profound turning point in the American Civil War, marked not just by immediate military consequences but also by deep emotional and philosophical reflections on sacrifice and legacy. In the immediate days following the battle, which lasted from July 1 to July 3, 1863, the landscape was littered with the grim reminders of one of the bloodiest confrontations in American history. Approximately 51,000 soldiers were killed, wounded, missing, or captured, and the sheer scale of death and suffering left an indelible mark not only on the battlefield but also on American society.

In the wake of the battle, both the Union and Confederate forces were forced to reckon with the consequences of their sacrifices. For the Union, the victory at Gettysburg served as a crucial turning point, boosting morale and providing a strategic advantage in the eastern theater of the war. It was a moment that further solidified the belief in the righteousness of their cause—the preservation of the Union and the end of slavery. However, it also raised pressing ethical questions: was the loss of life justified, and what did it mean for a nation so deeply divided?

The legacy of Gettysburg extended beyond mere military strategy. For many Americans, the significance of the battle became intertwined with the ideals

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of freedom and democracy. President Abraham Lincoln, during the dedication of the Soldiers' National Cemetery in November 1863, articulated this reflection in his famous Gettysburg Address. He evoked the memory of those who fell at Gettysburg and framed their sacrifice as pivotal to ensuring a new birth of freedom, which underscored the fight for equality and the enduring nature of democracy. Lincoln's words emphasized the unyielding commitment to honor those who died; the battle would symbolize not only the declining fortunes of the Confederacy but also the moral imperative to continue fighting for the ideals they held dear.

Conversely, for the Confederacy, Gettysburg was a devastating blow that challenged their hope for independence. The loss led to a reevaluation of their military strategies and, more importantly, their ideological commitment to the principles for which they fought. The immense sacrifices compelled Southern leaders and populations to grapple with the stark realities of their situation. As they mourned their dead, the meaning of their sacrifice became a touchstone for future Confederate propaganda, serving to sustain morale and foster a spirit of perseverance despite the growing evidence of defeat.

The human cost of Gettysburg manifested in physical and psychological scars that would haunt the nation for generations. Veterans returned home not only bearing the marks of battle but also grappling with the trauma that came with it—a precursor to what we now recognize as post-traumatic stress

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disorder. Communities were forever altered as families mourned their fallen, and the challenge of integrating disabled veterans into society became acute. Memorialization efforts, beginning almost immediately after the battle, aimed to honor the sacrifices made but also served as a reminder of the ongoing struggle for healing and reconciliation.

The profound reflections on sacrifice and legacy in the aftermath of Gettysburg drove home the idea that the Civil War was not just a military confrontation, but a moral and ethical struggle. Individuals and communities began to engage in conversations about the meaning of their sacrifices. The legacy of Gettysburg—in images, memorials, literature, and personal narratives—continued to shape American culture and identity well beyond the Civil War. It positioned Gettysburg not merely as a site of conflict but as a hallowed ground of remembrance and a testament to the complex interplay of sacrifice and national identity.

Ultimately, the aftermath of Gettysburg was marked by a deep recognition of the sacrifices made by countless individuals. These sacrifices—whether through bloodshed on the battlefield, struggles with the weight of loss, or the quest for a united nation—shaped the legacy of the Civil War and transformed the United States. The reflections emerging from the aftermath of Gettysburg force us to grapple with the ongoing relevance of those sacrifices and the principles of freedom, equality, and democracy that

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continue to evolve within the American landscape.

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