QUESTION SHEET FOR SHERMAN’S MARCH TO THE SEA

Note: The first 5 questions deal with General Sherman’s letter to General Grant.

1. Where does Sherman report to Grant that he is located at the time the letter is written? Approximately how many men does Sherman have under his command?

2. How does Sherman describe how he has provisioned his men? Describe the kinds of food his men had. Why did the army have more food at this point in the march compared to when the march began?

3. Sherman also describes how he will demand Savannah’s surrender. In his letter, how does he plan to subdue the city if it doesn’t surrender? Why did he plan this way?

4. How does Sherman describe the situation in Tennessee? What does he write about General Thomas?

5. How does Sherman describe the Confederate forces in Savannah?

The next 5 questions focus on the lyrics to the song Marching Through Georgia

6. How does the writer of the song describe (in the first stanza) the events of Sherman’s march?

7. How does the song corroborate Sherman’s remarks about foraging through Southern farms?

8. How does the song describe people Sherman’s men encounter in the South?

9. If you had to make a determination about why the Civil War was fought based on the lyrics on the song alone, what conclusion would you make? Why?

10. Many have noted that they thought Sherman’s march was too severe. Others have noted that it was the only way to subdue the South and win the war as quickly as possible. In your own words, discuss which view you believe is correct. Explain your answer.
Answer Key

1. Where does Sherman report to Grant that he is located at the time the letter is written? Approximately how many men does Sherman have under his command?

2. How does Sherman describe how he has provisioned his men? Describe the kinds of food his men had. Why did the army have more food at this point in the march compared to when the march began?
   (The army had various kinds of livestock, including cattle, turkeys, chickens, sheep, hogs, as well as poultry, potatoes, bread, and sweet potatoes. The men were able to forage by taking supplies from farms they passed on their way to Savannah.)

3. Sherman also describes how he will demand Savannah’s surrender. In his letter, how does he plan to subdue the city if it doesn’t surrender? Why did he plan this way?
   (His plan was to bombard the city because he “will not risk the lives of our men by assaults across the narrow causeway by which alone I can now reach it.”)

4. How does Sherman describe the situation in Tennessee? What does he write about General Thomas?
   (Sherman notes, “I myself am somewhat astonished at the attitude of things in Tennessee.” He added that he was concerned about Thomas because of Thomas’s lack of action against Hood in Tennessee. He notes that he knows “that General Thomas is slow in mind and action, but he is judicious and brave, and the troops feel great confidence in him”.)

5. How does Sherman describe the Confederate forces in Savannah?
   (He believes (General) Hardee “has good artillerists, some 5,000 or 6,000 infantry, and it may be a mongrel mass of 8,000 to 10,000 militia.”)

The next few questions focus on the lyrics to the song Marching Through Georgia.

6. How does the writer of the song describe (in the first stanza) the events of Sherman’s march?
   (The events of the march are described in past tense, but also in a patriotic tone.)

7. How does the song corroborate Sherman’s remarks about foraging through Southern farms?
   (The lyrics say… “The turkeys gobbled which our commissary found… how the sweet potatoes even started from the ground…”)

8. How does the song describe people Sherman’s men encounter in the South?
   (Answers vary. Students may note that the song seems to focus more on “union men”, that is, those who are living in the path of Sherman’s march who are still
loyal to the union. However, the lyrics do also mention “saucy rebels”, and “Treason”.

9. If you had to make a determination about why the Civil War was fought based on the lyrics on the song alone, what conclusion would you make? Why? (Answers vary. Some may note the word “freedom” mentioned and it may be concluded that the war was fought to end slavery. Others may note the use of the word “union” and “rebels”, and may conclude that the war was fought to save the union.)

10. Many have noted that they thought Sherman’s march was too severe. Others have noted that it was the only way to subdue the South and win the war as quickly as possible. In your own words, discuss which view you believe is correct. Explain your answer.