



John Pemberton's Surrender to Grant at Vicksburg: Primary Source Analysis

The following is an excerpt from General Pemberton's report on his surrender of Vicksburg on July 4, 1863. Read the excerpt and answer the questions below.

If I should be asked why the 4th of July was selected as the day for surrender, the answer is obvious. I believed that upon that day I should obtain better terms. Well aware of the vanity of our foe, I knew they would attach vast importance to the entrance on the 4th of July into the stronghold of the great river, and that, to gratify their national vanity, they would yield then what could not be extorted from them at any other time.

1. Why did John Pemberton believe surrendering on July 4th would lead to better terms?
2. What does Pemberton mean when he refers to “the vanity of our foe”?
3. How did Pemberton hope the Union army’s national pride would affect the surrender negotiations?
4. What does this quote reveal about how Pemberton viewed Union motivations during the Civil War?

Sample Answers:

1. Why did John Pemberton believe surrendering on July 4th would lead to better terms?

Pemberton thought the Union would be more willing to offer generous surrender terms because they would be excited about capturing Vicksburg on their Independence Day.

2. What does Pemberton mean when he refers to “the vanity of our foe”?

He believed the Union forces were proud and cared a lot about appearances and national pride, especially when it came to winning on an important day like the Fourth of July.

3. How did Pemberton hope the Union army’s national pride would affect the surrender negotiations?

He hoped that to celebrate their victory on such a meaningful day, the Union army would accept the surrender more easily and agree to better conditions for the Confederate troops.

4. What does this quote reveal about how Pemberton viewed Union motivations during the Civil War?

Pemberton saw the Union as driven by pride and symbolic victories, suggesting he believed they cared as much about reputation and timing as they did about military strategy.