

14

Ulysses S Grant Top 100 Americans

Ulysses S. Grant (born Hiram Ulysses Grant; April 27, 1822 – July 23, 1885) was the 18th President of the United States (1869–77). As Commanding General, Grant worked closely with President Abraham Lincoln to lead the Union Army to victory over the Confederacy in the American Civil War. He implemented Congressional Reconstruction, often at odds with President Andrew Johnson. Twice elected president, Grant led the Republicans in their effort to remove the vestiges of Confederate nationalism and slavery, protect African American citizenship, and support economic prosperity nationwide. His presidency has often come under criticism for tolerating corruption and in his second term leading the nation into a severe economic depression.

Grant graduated in 1843 from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and retired after serving in the Mexican–American War. When the Civil War began in 1861, he rejoined the U.S. Army. In 1862, Grant took control of Kentucky and most of Tennessee, and led Union forces to victory in the Battle of Shiloh, earning a reputation as an aggressive commander. He incorporated displaced African American slaves into the Union war effort. In July 1863, after a series of coordinated battles, Grant defeated Confederate armies and seized Vicksburg, giving the Union control of the Mississippi River and dividing the Confederacy in two. After his victories in the Chattanooga Campaign, Lincoln promoted him to lieutenant-general and Commanding General of the United States. Grant confronted Robert E. Lee in a series of bloody battles in 1864, trapping Lee's army in their defence of Richmond. Grant coordinated a series of devastating campaigns in other theaters. Lee's surrender to Grant at Appomattox ended the war. Historians have hailed Grant's military genius, and his strategies are featured in military history textbooks, but a minority contend that he won by brute force rather than superior strategy.

After the Civil War, Grant led the army's supervision of Reconstruction in the former Confederate states. Elected president in 1868 and reelected in 1872, Grant stabilized the nation during the turbulent Reconstruction period, prosecuted the Ku Klux Klan, and enforced civil and voting rights laws using the army and the Department of Justice. He used the army to build the Republican Party in the South, based on black voters, Northern newcomers ("Carpetbaggers"), and native Southern white supporters ("Scalawags"). After the disenfranchisement of some former Confederates, Republicans gained majorities and African Americans were elected to Congress and high state offices. In his second term, the Republican coalitions in the South splintered and were defeated one by one as Redeemers (conservative whites) regained control using coercion and violence. Grant's Indian peace policy initially reduced frontier violence, but is best known for the Great Sioux War of 1876, where George Custer and his regiment were killed at the Battle of the Little Bighorn. Throughout his presidency, Grant faced congressional investigations into corruption in executive agencies, including bribery charges against two of his Cabinet members. Grant's administration implemented a gold standard and sought to strengthen the dollar.