

CW6.3 – The Confederate Strategy: Offensive-Defensive

Directions: The Confederate military strategy during the Civil War has often been described as an “offensive-defensive” strategy. The following excerpt from James McPherson’s *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* defines this term and gives specific battles in the war that provide examples of this strategy. Read the following paragraph and answer the questions that follow on a separate piece of paper in order to be able to explain this strategy in your own words.

*“The Confederates eventually synthesized these various strands of strategic theory and political reality into what Davis called an **“offensive-defensive”** strategy. This consisted of defending the Confederate homeland by using interior lines of communication... to concentrate dispersed forces against an invading army and, if opportunity offered, to go over to the offensive, even to the extent of invading the North....it emerged from a series of major campaigns in the Virginia-Maryland and Tennessee-Kentucky theaters during 1862, and culminated at Gettysburg in 1863.”*

-James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era*, p. 338, Oxford University Press, NY, 1988.

1. What part of speech is the phrase “offensive-defensive” being used as? (Circle one: noun, adjective, verb?)
2. Highlight or underline any terms or phrases that you think help define the term “offensive-defensive.”
3. The first word of the second sentence, “this,” refers back to the term “offensive-defensive” in the first sentence. In other words, instead of repeating the phrase “offensive-defensive,” the author chose to substitute the longer phrase with the word “this” in the second sentence. How then, does the author specifically define “offensive-defensive?” (Circle the appropriate phrase).
4. In the second sentence, the author refers to “interior lines of communication...to concentrate dispersed forces.” Define the words interior, communication, concentrate, and dispersed and then rewrite the phrase in your own words.
5. In the last sentence “...it emerged... in 1863,” the author refers to a series of battles in the war. Explain what these battles might have to do with the term “offensive-defensive?”
6. Explain the Confederate “offensive-defensive” strategy in your own words.

CW6.3K – The Confederate Strategy: Offensive-Defensive Key

“The Confederates eventually synthesized these various strands of strategic theory and political reality into what Davis called an **“offensive-defensive”** strategy. This consisted of defending the Confederate homeland by using interior lines of communication... to concentrate dispersed forces against an invading army and, if opportunity offered, to go over to the offensive, even to the extent of invading the North...it emerged from a series of major campaigns in the Virginia-Maryland and Tennessee-Kentucky theaters during 1862, and culminated at Gettysburg in 1863.”

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1. adjective
2. See above.
3. See above.
4. **Interior:** internal, inside; Communication: process of exchanging information; Concentrate: to pull together; Dispersed: spread apart.
5. Answers will vary, but should include the sense that these battles were examples of the offensive-defensive strategy.
6. Answers will vary, but should include the sense that offensive-defensive strategy meant that the Confederacy would focus on defending its own territory, except when the opportunity presented itself to attack Union territory.