

To what extent do sources A-D support the notion that the South was bound to lose the War?

SOURCE B

General McClellan,

I fail to understand why you have not made much movement toward the South with the given amount of time and men that I have allotted. The rebel capital has not been swiftly captured as I had asked, and you have not made haste, as time is crucial to all battles. I refuse to send you reinforcements to make up for your failures. Must I remind you we have the upper hand when it comes to resources? The more time that is spent the more these great men of our country will suffer. Let our brothers of the south join this union with some amount of grace. A swift victory is needed, lest we make these rebellious states a country.

Your President,
Abraham Lincoln

Letter from President Lincoln to his General McClellan, Peninsula Campaign, July of 1862

Source analysis:

Source B does not wholly support the question as it only somewhat agrees, because this letter admits to northern “failures” as they were unable to “capture the rebel capital” during this battle. Meaning that the south may not be bound to lose the war as General Lee was arguably a reason for why the war was kept ongoing for the south for so long, because he knew his enemy’s strengths and weaknesses. Lee was a brilliant strategist and was aware of what the south could do. While in contrast it is known that McClellan was known for his arrogance and indecisiveness, and his shortcomings for overestimating the South. Thus, the south may not have been bound to lose due to strong military leadership. So, on this point, it can be seen as agreeing with the prompt. But the document also disagrees on the point that it admits to the Union having more resources because the south was greatly outnumbered when it came to manpower as the union army had the “upper hand”, this is in agreement in source A as it says that “they outnumber us in every way”. Meaning that the south was bound to lose due to the lack of resources and military strength. The south was fighting a war like running a marathon without shoes, it was without enough proper support. Moreover, source A disagrees with source B that the crucial point that could cause the south to lose the war is the “blockade” while source B only mentions that they will lose due to the lack of resources. They further disagree in the year that they were written, Source A is a southern document and has the benefit of hindsight because they are further into the war. The conditions of the war have changed drastically for the south by this point, so the tones and political atmosphere, as well as opinions, have also changed, causing this document to be better in source. But this could also make them biased due to emotional attachment or involvement in the war and conditions. While source B is not as good a source because it is a Union letter and it only focuses on one specific event in time, making them less aware of the actual conditions of the southern army and potential for a narrow view of the entire

situation. However, since it is a northern source, it makes it less vulnerable to bias on the topic of southern failures. So overall, source B is not the strongest in source or the strongest in agreement with the prompt. While source A is more suited to agree with the prompt than source B.