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Source: Excerpts from two letters written by General Robert E. Lee to Confederate President Jefferson Davis. US War Department.

Near Gettysburg, Pa., July 4, 1863.

Mr. PRESIDENT:

It is believed that the enemy suffered severely in these operations, but our own loss has not been light. General Barksdale is killed. Generals Garnett and Armistead are missing.... Generals Pender and Trimble are wounded in the leg, General Hood in the arm, and General Heth slightly in the head. General Kemper, it is feared, is mortally wounded. Our losses embrace many other valuable officers and men....

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

R. E. LEE, General

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Camp Orange, Va., August 8, 1863.

Mr. PRESIDENT:

Your letters of July 28 and August 2 have been received, and I have waited for a leisure hour to reply, but I fear that will never come....

I have seen and heard of expression of discontent in the public journals at the result of the expedition.... I therefore, in all sincerity, request Your Excellency to take measures to supply my place. I do this with the more earnestness because no one is more aware than myself of my inability for the duties of my position. I cannot even accomplish what I myself desire. How can I fulfill the expectations of others?...

With sentiments of great esteem, I am, very respectfully and truly, yours,

R. E. LEE, General.

Note: President Davis did not accept General Lee's request.

Document Analysis

1. To whom and on what dates did Robert E. Lee write each of these letters?
2. In the second letter, Robert E. Lee asks Jeff Davis to "supply my place." What does Lee mean?
3. In the second letter, what were the expectations that Lee had been unable to meet?
4. How do these letters suggest that Gettysburg was a turning point in the war? Explain.