Course Learning Outcomes for Unit VIII

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

7. Describe the impact of reform movements in America, from the pre-Colonial period to Reconstruction.
   7.1 Compare all sides of the abolition debate from the North and South.

10. Discuss the factors leading to the American Civil War.

Reading Assignment

West Virginia admitted as the 35th state in the union. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.americaslibrary.gov/jb/civil/jb_civil_wv_1.html

Whitman, W. (n.d.). 1861. Retrieved from http://www.publicdomainpoems.com/1861.html

Whitman, W. (1865). O captain! My captain! Retrieved from http://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/o-captain-my-captain

In order to access the articles and book review below, you must first log into the myCSU Student Portal and access the America: History and Life with Full Text database within the CSU Online Library.

Barkin, K. (2008). Ordinary Germans, slavery, and the U.S. Civil War. *Journal Of African American History*, *93*(1), 70-79.

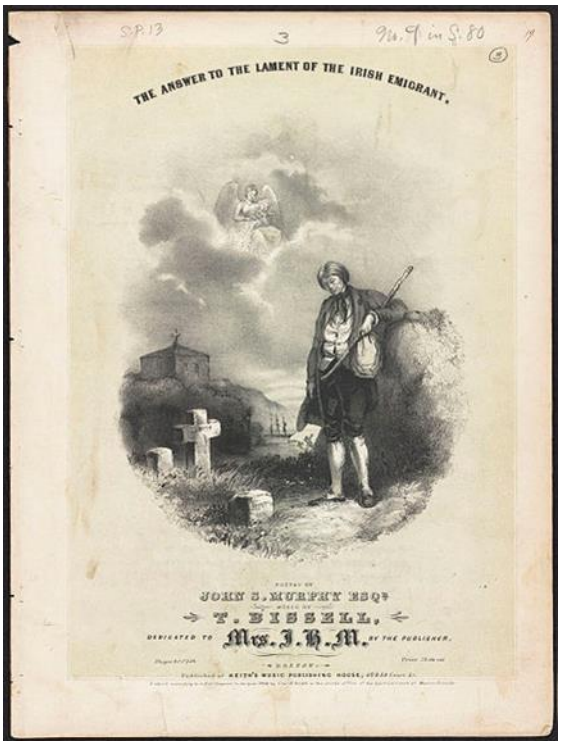
Harris, S. H. (1964). John L. O'Sullivan serves the Confederacy. *Civil War History*, *10*(3), 275-290.

Wood, A. D. (1972). The war within a war: Women nurses in the Union army. *Civil War History*, *18*(3), 197-212.

Unit Lesson

In the previous unit, we concluded with a close look at the rising political discourse emerging in the significant changes to the American population. What is often an overlooked fact is that the idea of America as a "melting pot" was perhaps never truer than in the northern cities along the Atlantic coast. This was especially true in terms of New York, which, with its room to sprawl and natural access to miles of coastline perfect for shipping, was a natural starting point for many Europeans.

European Migrations



Composition dedicated to the Irish struggles.
(Thayer, 1844)

Among the most desperate would be the Irish, suffering from a potato crop famine and blatant subjugation by wealthy English landlords. The Potato Famine, coupled with limited opportunities on the European mainland, made America the most likely chance for a better life. Unfortunately, for many, this was not found. Many Irish would end up in cheaply built and over-occupied shacks called tenements. With poor to no sewage systems and rampant malnutrition, the region was a cesspool of disease. Those healthy enough to work often could not find employment, as many established businesses displayed “No Irish” signs, fearing that the expected cheaper labor would still not make up for the lost business to be expected. On top of everything, the Protestant nation still held grave bias against loyal Catholics, which included the Irish, and used this as motivation against supporting them.

The Irish, however, were not the only group to migrate, and not all experiences were equal. Another of the largest migrations at this time were the Germans. Fueled by political unrest in their homeland, many Germanic families would come to America. Unlike the poverty-stricken Irish, however, they often had the collateral or capitol to settle west of the coast. In fact, one could say that these Germans were among the first to truly take advantage of the expansion fever in America, eventually settling much of what is now the Midwest, including cities like Chicago. Still, religion would be a factor for many, and as most of the German migrants were Catholic, this too caused rampant segregation in these early settlements.

Just as the East and Midwest were growing, so was the quickly developing West, but for different reasons. The Gold Rush of 1849 drew more than just prospectors from the east. It caught the eye of another major migration group seeking fortune: the Chinese.

Like most prospectors, very few Chinese migrants would find the treasures they came for, but with expansion came opportunity. The railroad was quickly carving up the western landscape, and this demand required cheap, unskilled labor. The Chinese would become a major labor force with this process, and this led to the deaths of many from explosives, breathing in dangerous particles, or simply workplace accidents. Like the Irish, where they drew ire was with their willingness to work for near nothing to survive, which undercut many non-Chinese family men, making them unable to obtain work.

Abolition

This fear of job loss was not unique to these migrations. There was one additional group that perhaps caused the most concern, even to immigrants: freed slaves.

As became clear when we discussed abolition in Unit VI, and in the pre-war North, this was especially a concern. While slavery was felt by many to be an unnecessary, racist charge, many of those same people feared what would happen if all of those laborers were suddenly equal. For persons who knew nothing of ownership or possession, and who had for generations lived in and on the absolute bare minimum, an influx of new labor into the northern market was a legitimate fear.

For generations, new immigrants had fulfilled the unskilled labor need in factories and ports. Successive generations were able to improve their situations or move out. But would this still be possible with the sudden release of millions of workers desperate to get away from their abusive owners?

> I can not but hate [the prospect of slavery's expansion]. I hate it because of the monstrous injustice of slavery itself. I hate it because it deprives our republican example of its just influence in the world—

> enables the enemies of free institutions, with plausibility, to taunt us as hypocrites—causes the real friends of freedom to doubt our sincerity…
> – Abraham Lincoln 1854

Lincoln / Douglas Debates

Lincoln's first test was not in Washington, but in Illinois where he practiced law and was raising a young family. The Republicans needed a forum for his ideas, and the Senatorial election of 1858 was just that forum.

Illinois was a free-soil state that was, for the same reasons just discussed, still very much divided concerning the issue of abolition. Though Lincoln did not advertise himself as an abolitionist, as it was political suicide, he did hold strong convictions that containment was not at all enough. To challenge him would be the incumbent Senator Stephen Douglas. Douglas had burst onto the scene with his successful proposal of the Compromise of 1850, but had since had a less-stellar record. He was recognized by many as a deciding factor in the controversial Kansas vote. Douglas himself was not an advocate of slavery, but his party was, and his platform of popular sovereignty had taken a sure victory out of the hands of free-soil supporters. However, his unwillingness to vote with the party caused a rift between him and President Buchanan.

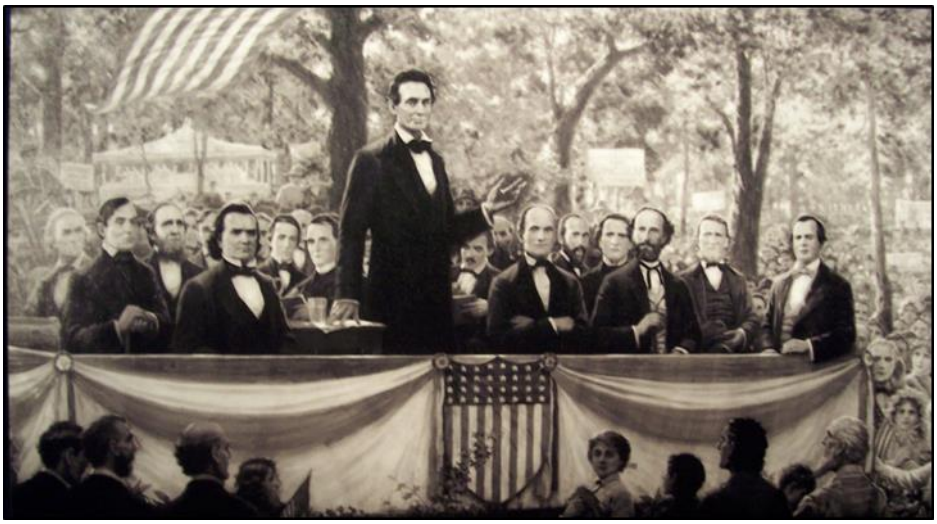
> I deny the right of Congress to force a slaveholding State upon an unwilling people. I deny their right to force a free State upon an unwilling people. I deny their right to force a good thing upon a people who are unwilling to receive it. The great principle is the right of every community to judge and decide for itself, whether a thing is right or wrong, whether it would be good or evil for them to adopt it; and the right of free action, the right of free thought, the right of free judgment upon the question is dearer to every true American than any other under a free government.
> – Democratic Senator Stephen A. Douglas, 1858 (as cited in *Political Debates Between Lincoln and Douglas*, 1902, p. 12)

For Douglas, this election was a necessary victory for his political career.

The campaign tour would be a series of stops throughout the state of Illinois for the two candidates. In the northern areas, Lincoln's strong anti-slave stand came to great applause, whereas Douglas generally dominated in the southern stops. The greater significance of this campaign, however, were the debates themselves, as Douglas was a national figure, and Lincoln fed off of that press. Also significant, this was a state election; for a national issue such as slavery to be the main platform was rare. It was clear from the divided receptions that this was the topic on many American minds, even over local affairs. Even committed states were not universal in their support one way or the other. Douglas would narrowly keep his seat, a position that also kept him in a key position for a run at the Presidency in 1860. More significantly, however, Lincoln was now a national name, and the Republicans had an outspoken leader.

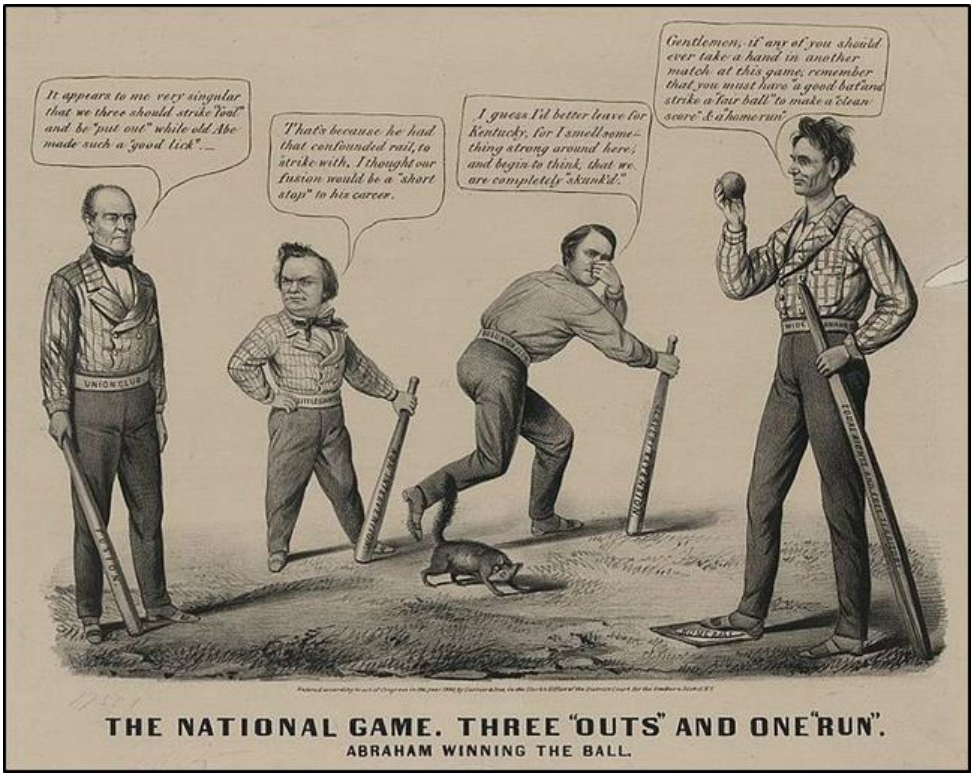
The Election of 1860

With the multitude of individual battles throughout the nation, it was clear that both sides had dug in and were unwilling to budge. Each side had great orators and political strategists, both had specific examples of aggression egged on and supported by the opposition, and both found ways to justify their perspective as the constitutional and religious right.



Lincoln standing next to opponent Douglas in front of a gathered crowd
(Lincoln Debating Douglas, n.d.)

At the center of everyone's attention was an election. So divided were the causes and views that the majority of states came down to a battle between two candidates. In the North, it was a rematch between Lincoln and Douglas, while in the South it came down to Buchanan's Vice President John C. Breckinridge and Tennessee Senator John Bell. Lincoln's chances at victory being so unlikely, his name only appeared on one third of southern ballots. Despite this, Lincoln would win all but one northern state outright, and despite not gaining a popular majority or even a single southern electoral vote, his electoral totals far surpassed his closest contender, Breckinridge.



Social commentary about the four presidential candidates in 1860
(Maurer, 1860)

Lincoln's election proved that a united North now politically trumped the South. With this understanding, the secessionist rhetoric was never stronger. On December 20, 1860, before Lincoln was even inaugurated into office, South Carolina formally seceded, followed closely after by Mississippi (Jan. 9th), Florida (Jan 10th), Alabama (Jan 11th), Georgia (Jan 19th), Louisiana (Jan 26th), and Texas (Feb 1st). Representatives of each would meet on February 7th in Montgomery, Alabama, to officially designate themselves unprotected by the northern states and form a separate nation: the Confederate States of America (CSA).

Lincoln would officially take his oath of office on March 4, 1861, and the six border states of Virginia, Arkansas, North Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Missouri would also secede later that year and join their neighbors as part of the CSA.

> "You can have no conflict, without being yourselves the aggressors. You have no oath registered in Heaven to destroy the government, while I shall have the most solemn one to 'preserve, protect, and defend' it."
> – President Abraham Lincoln, Inaugural Address, 1861 (as cited in "President Lincoln's First Inaugural Address, 1861" n.d.)

> "It is well that war is so terrible, or we should grow too fond of it."
> — Robert E. Lee, at Fredericksburg, 1863

The War of Northern Aggression

If you were completely unaware of American history and were to look at the situation in 1861, having only the quotes of leaders from both the Union and Confederacy, it might be impossible to think that either side could

possibly be the aggressor. Both considered their cause justified by both political and divine reason, and each considered the actions of the other as inexcusable actions towards an unpardonable end.

In total, thirteen states left the union, the first wave in the span of six months. Looking at the map and timeline, the issues were at least partially geographical in nature. The aggressive situations that had separated the two sides stemmed not from a question of creed, belief, or personal defense, but what was a direct attack on culture. In just over eighty years, the nation had rallied to defeat the most dominant military on earth, aggressively more than tripled its size, and held off what seemed like countless outside pressures. Now it had started to finally unravel due to an internal struggle.

A civil war is different than any other conflict. In international campaigns, you can quantify your wins and losses based on casualties and damage statistics. But when you are fighting your neighbor, every casualty, destruction, and theft is your loss. Each loss is just one more example of how separate the two sides of the same coin can be, and ultimately serves as one more issue that will have to be rectified before peace can be made.

As passionate as many were when discussing secession, no one truly wanted it to come to that. Southerners would ultimately blame the election of Abraham Lincoln, an outspoken nationalist with clear abolitionist views, to the nation's highest office as the catalyst of the war, but that is only the last in a series of events. Perhaps the more honest reason would be admitting that Lincoln's election to office was proof that the South no longer had the ability to defend its values nationally, and that the expanding nation was headed in a different direction than the tradition-laden South. Lincoln did not capture even forty percent of the popular vote, but the power of the government had swayed so much against slave-holding states in the preceding years that Southern votes ultimately did not matter. Perhaps the most important lesson learned from the Revolutionary era was that when your voice is shunned, it is time to either speak louder or reconsider the other half of the conversation.

Even for the states that seceded, the choice to actually take up arms against a neighbor was not an easy one. The states with the greatest conviction, such as South Carolina, were not going to be the site of the majority of the destruction. It was the Border States whose devotion would be ultimately most strenuously tested.

For states such as Kentucky and Maryland, who had both a nationalist and a slaveholding tradition, this was a nightmare. Both would ultimately remain loyal to the Union, but inside of these Border States there was a second internal conflict, as a literal neighbor-fighting-neighbor scenario erupted in many cases.

In those that would eventually secede, much of the same tension was seen. In Tennessee, for example, the mountainous east did not share the pro-slavery cause of the central and west. Many who had or would support secession also had hoped a peaceful resolution would come before hostilities. Instead, this internal rift would be the cause of some of the most heinous examples of vicious behavior, not unlike the rapport between Patriots and Loyalists on the path toward independence. Maryland, which would ultimately reject secession, was first stripped of its civil liberties and invaded to add pressure on the local government. In the already divided Missouri, political loyalty to the Union did not stop individuals who took up arms and terrorist tactics in support of the Confederacy. Kentucky would be nearly divided in two between the opposing sides. With Virginia already wavering toward (and ultimately choosing to) support the South, this border was an essential acquisition for the Union, despite its long-standing pro-slavery stance.

> I think to lose Kentucky is nearly the same as to lose the whole game. Kentucky gone, we can not hold Missouri, nor, as I think, Maryland. These all against us, and the job on our hands is too large for us. We would as well consent to separation at once, including the surrender of this capitol. – President Abraham Lincoln to Illinois Senator Orville Hickman Browning, 1861 (as cited in "Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln," para. 4)

Northern Interests

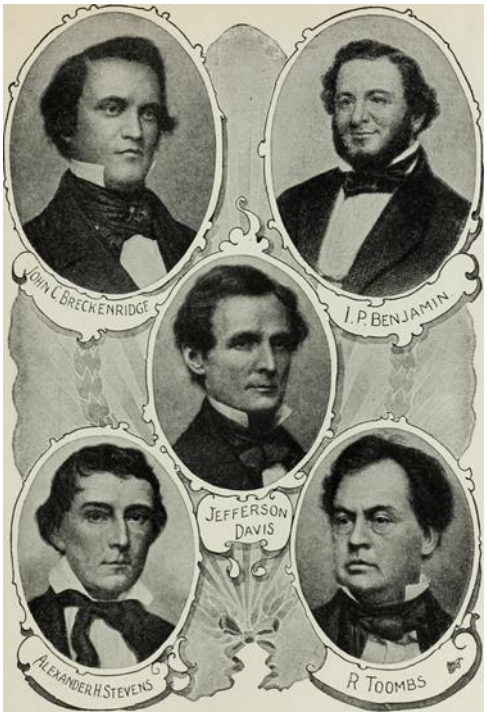
In the North, some would say the war was to combat a continued evil practice, and that liberation of an oppressed population was a priority. However, it is clear from the ideas of their own splintering parties that abolition was not the ultimate priority.

In fact, as we have already discussed, abolition's potential impact on the economy, especially for many lower-class workers, caused some political platforms to even advocate segregationist policies. More honest reasons

could include how the loss of the Southern states drastically impacted the potential for industrial growth in the North, and that much of the nation's military tradition was rooted in the South, so the adoption of new territory did not mean that separation from old bonds was a positive thing. The nation was fractured and weak after the southeastern separation, and while the nation had become astute at the gaining of land through economic and military means, salvaging lost territory was a foreign concept.

Abraham Lincoln knew the mess he was walking into. He was shrewd in his rhetoric and understood that his only hope at eventually reuniting the nation required keeping the focus of the war firmly on reunification and not abolition.

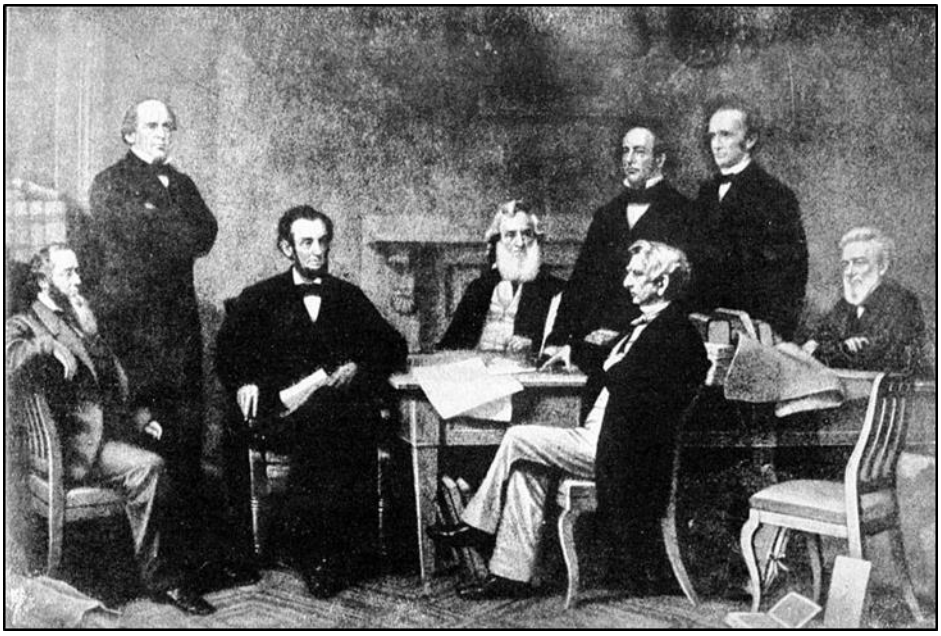
Lincoln's initial strategy was simple: remind the Southern leaders that his platform did not threaten slavery as it existed and hope that the pockets of abolition support throughout the nation would fight that battle. Jefferson Davis, named President of the Confederate States of America, too was methodical in his preparations. Not wanting to be singled out as the chief aggressor, or to aggravate additional support, Davis awaited Lincoln's reaction to the secession of the first wave of states.



Confederate Political Leadership.
(Confederate Statesmen and Leaders, 1912)

Fort Sumter

For the stalemate to end, there had to be a catalyst. Interestingly enough, South Carolina once again led the way, as a federally manned small fort off the Charleston shore would not change its alliances with the U.S. just because of its current situation. The barrage at Fort Sumter had a cataclysmic effect in much the same way as Concord hosted the "shot heard around the world." This seemingly minor skirmish would become accepted as the first shots of the war.


A depiction of Lincoln's cabinet.
(Collier's New Encyclopedia, 1921)

On April 12, 1861, during an attempted resupply of basic necessities, Davis ordered a two-day bombardment of Fort Sumter. When the dust cleared, the South took the strategic fort, but for this next generation of soldiers, who had little to no wartime experience, their world changed overnight—the nation was at war. Lincoln used Fort Sumter as a rallying cry in his message to Congress. On April 15th, along with the

declaration of war, so too came an overabundance of volunteers for the cause. Even former competitors strengthened Lincoln's oratory, lavishing zealous support and nationalistic praise that served to multiply the production and resources necessary for what was widely assumed and publicized as a short, aggressive affair.

The second wave of secession hit with the abdication of Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Arkansas. Finally, the hotly contested State of Missouri evolved into a battlefield within its own borders. In total, eleven of a possible fifteen states seceded. One new state would even split during the war itself—West Virginia, but this is often mistaken as a political measure when it actually had much more to do with economics. Like Eastern Tennessee, West Virginia is mountainous and generally survived on coal mining and logging, while the remainder of Virginia is flat and encouraged a strong agricultural tradition. The two geographies were so distinct in needs and perspective that the war was only one example of the infighting that would lead to its split. (For more information, see http://www.americaslibrary.gov/jb/civil/jb_civil_wv_1.html.)

The Union's Advantage

With the battle lines drawn, the war could begin in earnest, but even with the pickup of four additional states, the Union should still have been the clear victor of a short conflict. In preparing for war, the North was the clear superior on paper. In terms of population, industry, transportation, and production, the North dwarfed the South. The South's chief export, cotton, was the best-case scenario for the South to contend, at least for a while, but the North's naval power far exceeded that of the South. This allowed it to blockade major ports along the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico, to which the South did not have a response.

This same blockade would even threaten aggression toward European buyers, such as Britain and France, to keep them from interfering. Interestingly, a new trade developed between these European powers and the Union—grains for weapons—and dependence moved cotton production to the British-controlled regions of Egypt and India.

The final blow would be the association of the war with slavery, which had already been outlawed in Europe. This link would be unmistakable after President Lincoln delivered his most famous address on abolitionism in 1862 at the hallowed battlefield at Antietam (this is a topic we will return to later).

The Union's economy and infrastructure were also in much greater condition than those of the South. Just as discussed with the Articles of Confederation, the Confederate States of America was a collection of independent governments more than a strong central power over multiple local governments. This meant that economics, leadership, and even military were regulated by the individual state, not by Confederate President Jefferson Davis from the capitol in Richmond, VA.

Southern Strengths

What the South did have was a series of intangible strengths that would be the reason why the war lasted four years instead of four months: leadership, tradition, and geography. Jefferson Davis and Robert E. Lee, rather than Lincoln, were arguably the two superior leaders for their sides. Davis had a military education, wartime experience, and was previously the secretary of war; Lincoln's political career had only seen a few brief weeks in the Executive branch, and he had previously only served a short time as a congressman.

The Union ranks were plagued with a crossroads—many of her greatest leaders were either too old or too young to lead the army successfully, and until 1863, Lincoln had to continue to look for leadership during the war's progression. Robert E. Lee, on the other hand, had been at the top of his class at West Point, an officer in the Mexican American War, and, with the secession of Virginia, had refused the commission to lead the Union forces. Lee, however, was ultimately devoted to his home and the culture of the Old South.

> If Virginia stands by the old Union, so will I. But, if she secedes (though I do not believe in secession as a constitutional right, or that there is sufficient cause for revolution), then I will still follow my native State with my sword, and if need be with my life.
> – Robert E. Lee to Gen. Winfield Scott, 1861 (as cited in Virginia Historical Society, n.d., para 5)

Regarding tradition, with the exception of the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, NY, the nation's foremost military schools were in the South. Though each taught the importance of service to their country, most graduates would have to decide for themselves who their loyalties truly belonged to, just as Lee had. In total,

one-third of the enlisted officers followed Lee into the Confederate service. Many of the leaders in this war knew their opposing commanders. Some had served together, like Lee and Scott, during the Mexican American War, while others may have attended the same academy, or even represented the academy in the same clubs or sports. This was just one more aspect that made the proximity of the war so devastating.

Lastly, with regard to geography, the majority of the fighting would take place in the South. Because the geography and climate were greatly different than those of the North, this was a great advantage to the Southern cause. Southern men knew the trails and terrain—where to hide and fight, and how to escape. Even those in the South who did not choose sides found themselves compelled to join the Confederate cause.

A man would need to defend his family, possessions, and community because the invading force was not going to ask for proof of Union loyalty when setting fire to a town. Also, as an added measure of pressure, many Southern women made it clear that to fight was a show of bravery and manliness, and that it was better to be injured in battle than unscathed and afraid to fight for them.

The Unlisted Soldier

Women, who were unable to enlist, still had a role to play in the war effort (Roark et al., 2013, p. 409). Many of those who did not have to take on the roles vacated by husbands, fathers, brothers, or sons served for the first time as camp followers, servants to the cause, support for troops, and even nurses. Nursing had been a position previously considered only suitable for "disreputable" women. However, it developed into a major service industry during the war years, employing over 3,000 in the Union alone and opening a new role for women after the war. This was not an immediate progression; however, it was only possible through the efforts of trailblazing women on both sides, including Mary Ann Bickerdyke, Clara Barton, and Dorothea Dix, who refused to allow the armies to ignore such an important resource. Without any doubt, the work of these women saved the lives of countless thousands from untimely ends due to wounds, disease, and brutal conditions.

A leader of this women's movement, Mary Ann Bickerdyke's contributions to nursing and women's roles would continue to influence the service well after the war.

(Ritchie, 1867)

African Americans, too, would have a role in the war, starting with the 1861 Confiscation Act, which legalized the seizure of any slave associated with the Confederacy. Though it would take until 1863 to organize, possibly due to a clear need, the Union army would eventually begin to enlist African-American soldiers. Though not the only outfit, probably the most famous example was the 54th Massachusetts led by Robert Gould Shaw of Boston. Sadly, their most significant engagement was a slaughter on Fort Wagner, SC, on July 18, 1863, but the regiment itself was a great success.

Showing valor and sacrifice in the face of insurmountable odds, this regiment did a lot to change the views about African Americans in the United States military. The 1989 movie *Glory* is based on this regiment, and except for some key omissions and "Hollywood" magic, it is a good introduction to many of the basic attitudes, prejudices, and problems that emerged during the training of the regiment. Its ending is strategically placed to be powerful; however, the 54th and its struggles did not completely end at Fort Wagner. Near the end of the war, Sherman's Special Field Order 15 would also help to spark Reconstruction efforts in the South. In total, it is estimated that upwards of 200,000 African American soldiers would fight in some capacity for the Union by the end of the war.

First Bull Run / Manassas

This was a war that took place in stages, the first of which belonged to the South. Robert E. Lee commanded from Virginia an army that was the soul of the Southern attack. The presses, "experts," and politicians knew that the North's resources put them head over heels above the Southern threat, but it did not take long for the nation to realize this would not end quickly.

On July 21, 1861, in Northern Virginia, two armies, dressed to the nines, formed lines in textbook form. Seemingly appropriate to the fanfare of the occasion, off to the distance was a crowd of onlookers, some from the press, others just anticipating what was to happen.

Any gamblers would have put their money on blue, numbering 35,000, over the grey, only 20,000 strong and trying to defend a railroad depot from falling into enemy hands. After the first few volleys, however, something unexpected happened. It was the blue who were being shown up, and to make matters worse, an additional 25,000 men in grey came charging into the fray. Brigadier General Irvin McDowell, commanding from the back and now looking more green than navy blue, ordered a hasty retreat, much to the surprise of the crowd. The South successfully defended Manassas (Bull Run) in the first major battle since the war began. The headlines the next day confirmed the defeat.

Fort Sumter was not a fluke; the rebels were serious about their cause, and already looked better-trained and more-prepared for what was to come. Future engagements would make the casualties at Bull Run look minuscule and insignificant. However, it was the victory that mattered. All of the strategies, tactics, and resources would not guarantee a swift victory, and the Union spent the first year and a half revising and surviving. The first move was a change in leadership—General George B. McClellan took the helm.

The Early War

Through the first years of the war, there were two major fronts; the first, in what is currently Northern Virginia, would see much of the primary headline action. This was not only for the early major battles, but for the populations that were in potential risk of engagement, including Washington D.C. and Richmond, VA–the two capital cities. The second front, which we will pick up in a moment, followed the Mississippi River, and the most noted outcome of that campaign would come in 1862.

What may have been the most unlikely, yet intriguing, battlefield would take place near the harbor at Norfolk, VA, between two experimental “iron-clad” ships. Prior to this time, most water-based war vessels were heavy, wooden, and fought with either a precise ram to a strategic point from the front, or a volley of cannon fire from the side. The iron-clads would be among the first vessels to cause change in naval strategy.

The *Merrimack* was a converted warship, outfitted with iron plating and rechristened the *CSS Virginia.* It was practically impenetrable and served as the only offensive weapon of consequence against the Union blockade. Not to be outdone, the Union was working on a similar project. Barely visible from above water, with guns on a turret and placed at a strategic level to do maximum damage to wooden vessels, the *USS Monitor* engaged the *CSS Virginia* on March 9, 1862. Though this battle would end up a stalemate, it was arguably a successful test and would be an inspiration for the future of the U.S. Navy.

A small section in the larger painting “Battle of Hampton Roads” shows the scene between the two feuding ironclads.
(Kurz & Allison, 1889)

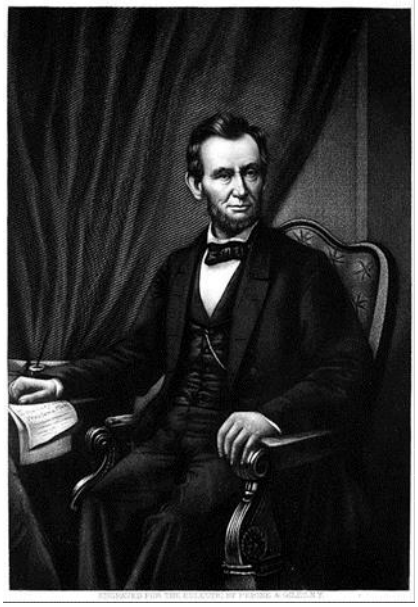
May of 1862 would see Lee take his first major field command just outside of Richmond. The boisterous McClellan became akin to a nervous mouse in combat, and the Southern veteran war hero riding opposite of him only made things worse. Flanking Lee was the hero of Manassas, General Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson, as well as E.B. “Jeb” Stuart, who was one of the most talented young officers to grace the field of battle. The superior leadership under Lee removed McClellan within a week of taking command, and with him the threat against Richmond. Lincoln, whom the delusional McClellan considered a “dunce,” was in a poor situation. Frustrated with McClellan, he tried substituting in yet another new commander, General John Pope, but Pope’s laughable defeat at Second Manassas forced Lincoln to reinstate McClellan yet again.

Antietam

Lee, now taking the offensive to the Union, would again engage McClellan on September 17, 1862, in what would become the single bloodiest day of the Civil War, at Antietam in Maryland. Lee would be pushed back south, but once again McClellan proved his lack of talent in commanding the superior force, and Lincoln would replace him with General Ambrose Burnside. Burnside would have no greater luck. On December 13,

1862, outside of Fredericksburg, Lee proved his superior strategy, causing 13,000 casualties to Burnsides' 5,000. Lincoln was witness to a conflict that had been expected to last only a few months, but was now close to two full years in. The out-manned, out-maneuvered, and out-resourced Confederacy showed few weaknesses, at least in the East.

Despite the foolhardy attitude of McClellan and the vast casualties, President Lincoln would use the news of this substantial victory as motivation for one of the most famous and influential speeches of his career: the Emancipation Proclamation. Signed on September 22, 1862, but issued on January 1, 1863, Lincoln promised that all slaves associated in any way with the Confederate cause "are, and henceforward shall be free (Lincoln, 1862)." Though subject to scrutiny over its limitations, such as only impacting seceded states, and purposely omitting Union controlled regions in the South (like Kentucky), this landmark document would serve a dual role as an order for acceptance of African American soldiers and sailors into the Union cause. Lincoln knew that ending slavery in the Confederacy would help to end the war, but he also knew that his words were only as powerful as those willing to hear them. While for Americans this was a direct challenge to the perceived sovereignty of the Confederate States of America, on a wider scale, it also attacked potential international Confederate sympathies by demonstrating that this war was addressing an abolitionist cause.



Lincoln with the Emancipation Proclamation.
(Perine & Giles, 1865)

If I could save the Union without freeing any slave I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing all of the slaves I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone I would also do that … I have here stated my purpose according to my view of official duty; and I intend no modification of my oft-expressed personal wish that all men everywhere could be free.
– Abraham Lincoln, 1862

The Western Front

To the west, a young but experienced General Ulysses S. Grant was an integral cog in the plan to shorten the war by constriction and destruction of supply lines. Grant was not favored by much of the Union brass. Considered a wildcard and an alcoholic, a condition that some historians today argue was due to depression caused by separation from his loved ones, he was dismissed by some as a commander, but he would prove to be perhaps the strongest leader in the entire Union outfit. The first break in Davis' supply line was his planned Pacific route at Glorieta Pass outside of Santa Fe, New Mexico, where the Union successfully routed a Confederate and Native American alliance of troops. From there, it was a march to Tennessee and a campaign to take the Mississippi River.

The Union blockade effectively shut down every major port along the Confederate coast, but that did not take away the strategic significance of the port cities New Orleans, Mobile, Savannah, and Charleston, all of which contributed to the still successful movement of supply and communication lines. Starting from Fort Donelson, then to Shiloh, and finally into sites along the river itself, this western Union campaign was successful in both taking and doling out punishment.

Shiloh was perhaps the strongest western parallel to what had been seen in Antietam. Grant was pummeled on day one, but kept his composure, and on day two would introduce tactics that would permanently remove the Confederate threat west of the Mississippi River. Twenty thousand casualties over two days, however, had a major effect. It awoke a fearless, relentless leader in Grant, and word of those successes would catch the attention of the frustrated Lincoln. Now that Grant controlled the Mississippi River, Vicksburg was the next target. The second wave of the war began in 1863.

The Latter War

Despite the string of victories that the South had earned in the first two years of the war, each loss the South took stung significantly more than a loss would affect the North, who could more easily replenish reserves, weapons, and necessities. With the outright threat to the future of slavery, this became an even direr situation. The civic rhetoric that had at first united the Confederate cause, along with the perceived superiority over slaves, was quickly losing its effectiveness as losses clearly took an unequal toll—while the rich lost more in quantity, the poor nearly starved to death.

The South's poor economic infrastructure did nothing to help address this loss. Soon it would require a draft to enlist any able-bodied Southern man, as well as a new program of eminent domain to ensure that those enlisted would have enough to mount a fight. Richmond was making itself into a centralizing government, exactly what had driven many to abandon the Union originally. In this confusion, and on the heels of the now "valid" Emancipation Proclamation, slaves began to dare to flee the plantation—some to freedom, others to join the Union forces.

The North had oddly opposite economic effects. The war did wonders for the strong industrial base in the North. It provided greater jobs and money to the still rapid influx of immigrants into eastern cities and allowed for stronger agreement in Congress, resulting in the passing economic bills. It also provided new opportunities for women and free African Americans to become more interwoven in society.

Socially, however, it deepened divides on almost every possible disagreement. The war had not started with a strong northern base of support due to fears of abolition and the heavy toll of loss. Now, in year three of what had been expected to last only months, the losses continued to pile up, and attitudes continued to strain against the continued conflict.

The North, like the South, would also have to institute a draft as voluntary enlistments slowed drastically. The option to buy one's way out of the draft ruffled feathers, as now those sent to war would be random draw of an overwhelmingly lower class pool. Northern people wanted an end to the fighting as much as those in the South, but neither side was willing to surrender. Lincoln took any actions he could to stifle the growing vocal resentment, including the removal of more civil liberties.

Turning Points

Back on the battlefield, if there is one thing that both sides agreed upon, it was that the war had a very clear turning point. Ironically, it affected both remaining fronts at the same time.

General George G. Meade would be the next commander of the disappointing eastern campaign; Stonewall Jackson, with the use of a brilliant flanking strategy at Chancellorsville, embarrassed Lincoln and the overconfident Union General Joseph Hooker. Lee still had all of the momentum despite having a significantly smaller army at his command. This momentum, however, would prove to breed a weakness in Lee. Expecting too much from his battered troops, he once again took the offensive, marching into Pennsylvania where he encountered Meade, who had already stationed his forces in the superior high grounds. This left Lee's forces in a vulnerable state.

For the next three days, July 1-3, 1863, these two generals would engage in the most devastating battle of the war. Lee's biggest mistake probably came in the early afternoon of the third day of fighting, during a siege known as Pickett's Charge. In an attempt to make some dent in the Union lines, he sent a sizable force into an open field where they were slaughtered after inflicting only minor damage. Lee lost a third of his army at Gettysburg, approximately 28,000 soldiers, and had to retreat, limping from his first major loss of the war.

125th New York Infantry Monument, one of many monuments that line the hallowed fields in Gettysburg, PA
(125th New York Infantry Monument, n.d.)

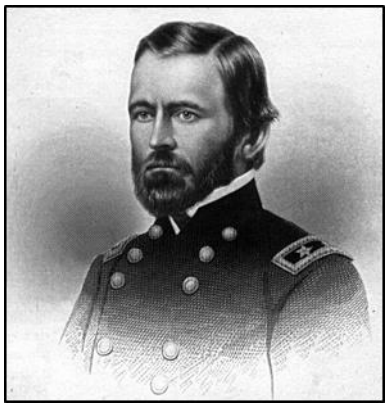
Grant, at the same time, was firmly in charge of the Mississippi River campaign. He had his sights on Vicksburg, a major post in the South's supply lines. Grant once again had taken overly aggressive tactics to weaken his opponents and force a conclusion. For six weeks, his army had sieged the city until on July 4th, 30,000 Southerners, starving and weary, gave up their city, officially capping the Confederate States of America's western border at the Mississippi River.

Now, in conjunction with the blockade surrounding the entire Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic shoreline, the Union controlled all Confederate borders. Just as at Vicksburg, with enough relentless artillery, it simply became a war of attrition. Grant greatly impressed Lincoln despite the concerns of his advisors. Lincoln needed results, and Grant was the first commander who had proven an ability to consistently deliver. The Confederacy had lost nearly 60,000 soldiers in three days and could never recoup the momentum held at the beginning of the war.

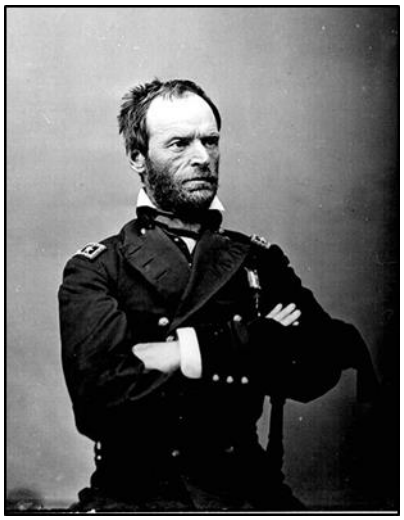
Grant's Total War Strategy

If hindsight was possible, the war would have ended on July 4, 1863. Instead, the fight would continue for almost another two full years, and the losses drove both sides to bitter feelings towards the war and their leadership. Having already sewn up the western border, Grant remained in Tennessee until March 1864 when Lincoln promoted him to general-in-chief of all Union armies. Grant's style was barbaric but effective. In a two pronged attack, Grant would engage what was left of Lee's army in Virginia while his most trusted friend, General William Tecumseh Sherman, was sent to Atlanta to once again enact a Western border by cutting the Confederate States of America in half.

Lee and Grant's engagements would prove to be some of the most devastating of the entire war. The Battle of the Wilderness would yield 18,000 Union and 11,000 Confederate casualties, Spotsylvania would take 18,000 Union and 10,000 Confederates, and Cold Harbor would take 13,000 Union and 5,000 Confederate. All three were decisive Union victories because the South had no option but to retreat. Grant was brutally aggressive; he knew that his superior resources should not be beaten, while Lee, having roughly 60,000 left in his army after Gettysburg, could not replenish his losses. Finally, Grant had Lee pinned at Petersburg outside of Richmond, and a siege reminiscent of Vicksburg began. Grant had Lee where he wanted him; now it was a matter of how long Lee could hold out without fresh supplies.



General Ulysses Simpson Grant.
(Ulysses Simpson Grant, n.d.)



General William Tecumseh Sherman
(General William Tecumseh Sherman, ca 1860)

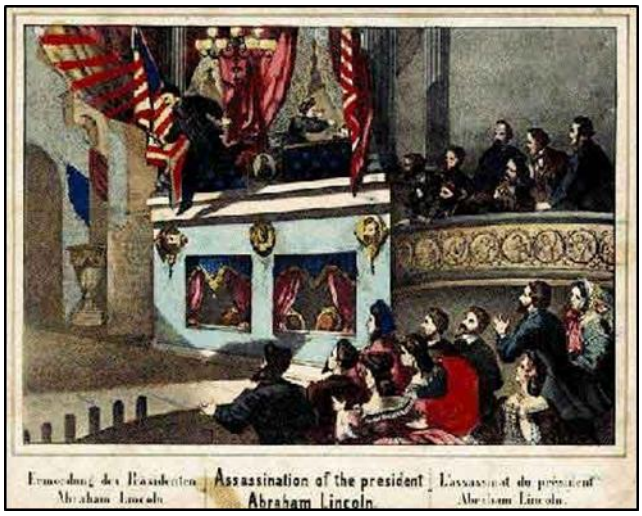
To the South, Sherman was just as relentless. With the exception of a brief skirmish at Kennesaw Mountain, he sliced through Georgia without opposition. Grant's command was to make war so brutal that the people of the South would plead for the war to end and never dare secede again.

Civilians were not to be hurt, but any possessions (e.g., food, money, metals) were to be confiscated or destroyed, and slaves were to be taken in by the army. Sherman could not be stopped; he took Atlanta and moved right on through to Savannah, accomplishing the task given to him by Grant and setting aside 400,000 acres south of Charleston, which would be affectionately known as "Sherman Land." This donation would be a part of the actions taken to start Reconstruction. While all of this was happening, Lincoln secured his second term with a resounding victory over familiar rival George McClellan in the 1864 Presidential election.

Surrender and Loss

Lee would leave Petersburg on April 2, 1865, opening the road to Richmond for Grant. Lee would formally surrender on April 9, 1865, at Appomattox Court House, where he and his men were immediately treated with civility: fed, given the opportunity to return home. They were even allowed to keep any army supply that would help them rebuild. Except for rare outliers, who would be quickly silenced, the Confederacy was dead and the war over. There were 620,000 American casualties—the costliest American war ever.

Lincoln's successful reelection and war victory also came with personal accomplishments, including the formal end to all slavery on American soil—an amendment that the former Confederate states would have to agree to prior to rejoining the United States. Less than a week after Lee's unconditional surrender, Lincoln was shot by Confederate sympathizer John Wilkes Booth. In the wake of Lincoln's assassination, his Vice President, Tennessee's Andrew Johnson, was sworn into office.



An illustration of the scene at Ford's Theatre.
(Barlow, 1865)

Johnson, like Lincoln, understood that he was walking into a storm, but even though their intentions were relatively similar, as in the peaceful reintroduction of secessionist states and a full pardon to any Confederates who renounced secession, his ties to his native Tennessee would lead to drastic challenges. It should be noted, however, that Johnson was from Greensboro, TN, one of several Eastern communities in the mountains that were vocally anti-slavery. However, that was little consolation for many still angry after years of fighting. Johnson would see the nation through the first few years of Reconstruction, but in 1868, he would be replaced as the Republican candidate by none other than Ulysses S. Grant, the hero of the Civil War.

The first nine decades of the United States tell the story of an unlikely nation, one that, despite its faults, would become an inspiration to many future nations. It was the first functioning democracy, survived numerous wars against internal and external pressures, and hashed out issues of moral and social consequence, all while keeping an oath to serve one's neighbor while respecting the framework established by the forefathers. Is there any one specific issue or event that was of greater significance than any other, to an individual? Perhaps yes, but no matter the trials, the United States continued to evolve.

The second American History course will start where this ends, looking at the end of Reconstruction and the advent of the next period in American history.

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