CHAPTER 15

The War to Save the Union

ANTICIPATION/REACTION

*Directions*: Before you begin reading this chapter, place a check mark beside any of the following seven statements with which you *now* agree. Use the column entitled “Anticipation.” When you have completed your study of this chapter, come back to this section and place a check mark beside any of the statements with which you *then* agree. Use the column entitled “Reaction.” Note any variation in the placement of check marks from *anticipation* to *reaction* and explain why you changed your mind.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anticipation</th>
<th>Reaction</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The Civil War was fought to destroy slavery.</td>
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<td>2. During the Civil War, the Union’s civilian and military leadership was superior to the Confederacy’s.</td>
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<td>3. During the Civil War, both sides adopted a system of drafting manpower into military service.</td>
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<td>4. The Emancipation Proclamation abolished slavery throughout the United States.</td>
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<td>5. During the Civil War, African-American troops were enlisted in both the Union and Confederate armies.</td>
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<td>6. Although the Confederacy lost the war, on the field of battle, Union forces never defeated armies commanded by General Robert E. Lee.</td>
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<td>7. The Civil War greatly accelerated the growth of the national economy in the 1860s.</td>
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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

*After reading Chapter 15 you should be able to:*

1. Compare and contrast the relative advantages and disadvantages of the North and the South as the Civil War began.
2. Evaluate the Civil War’s impact on the homefront in both the North and the South.
3. Identify the key battles of the Civil War. Justify your choices.
4. Compare and contrast the leadership skills of Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis, and of Ulysses Grant and Robert E. Lee.
5. Assess the significance of the Emancipation Proclamation as an instrument of war and as a herald of social revolution.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Lincoln’s Cabinet

President Lincoln assembled a balanced Cabinet headed by William Seward, who hoped to dominate the president and conciliate the South, and Salmon Chase, who was a spokesman for abolitionists. In his first inaugural address, Lincoln declared that secession was illegal, but that his administration posed no threat to slavery.

Fort Sumter: The First Shot

When Lincoln tried to resupply Fort Sumter in Charleston harbor, Confederates fired on the fort. Lincoln then called for volunteers to suppress the southern rebellion. This caused four border states to secede. Southerners considered Lincoln’s call an act of aggression that denied them their right to self-determination. In Lincoln’s view, secession was undemocratic because it rejected the results of a freely held election. Slavery was the root cause of secession, but, in 1861, northerners were committed to saving the Union, not to freeing the slaves.

The Blue and the Gray

As the war began, the North enjoyed the advantage of a larger population, greater industrial capacity, a better railroad system, and control of the merchant marine and navy. But southerners believed northern and western public opinion would not support the war because northern manufacturers and merchants and western farmers were closely tied to southern business. Southerners also expected economic and military aid from Great Britain. They also rightly believed that they enjoyed superior military leadership and the advantage of defensive warfare.

Both sides faced great difficulties. In the North, recruiting was left to the states and most enlistees knew little of soldiering. But Lincoln claimed emergency powers for his presidency and provided bold leadership. The South had greater problems. It was handicapped by the states’ rights philosophy that hindered a unified Confederate war effort. Unlike Lincoln, who had an ability to think problems through and act unflinchingly, Confederate President Jefferson Davis, a reluctant secessionist, was a mediocre military thinker, meddled in details, and would not delegate authority.
The Test of Battle: Bull Run

The first military engagement between the inexperienced armies came near Manassas Junction, Virginia. Confederate troops routed Union forces, but the battle’s significance was psychological; southern morale soared while northerners set about making more realistic preparations for a long war. Lincoln’s basic strategy called for a naval blockade of the Confederate coast, control of the Mississippi River, and the invasion of Virginia. He appointed General George McClellan to command Union armies. McClellan had experience and was a talented administrator. To restore northern confidence, he began organizing, training, and supplying his army.

Paying for the War

The Union government’s demand for war supplies accelerated the tendency toward larger and more mechanized factories. To pay for the war, the North used income and excise taxes, and a direct tax on states, but loans and currency inflation were the key sources of revenue.

Politics as Usual

When southern Democrats seceded, Republicans dominated Congress. That party’s Radical faction grew stronger under the leadership of Charles Sumner and Thaddeus Stevens, both of whom insisted on abolition and political and civil rights for blacks. Northern Peace Democrats led by Charles Vallandigham demanded a negotiated peace. Lincoln periodically used martial law and suspended the writ of habeas corpus to control antiwar dissent, but the federal courts defended individual civil liberties.

Behind Confederate Lines

Jefferson Davis’ strategy was to defend the South, hoping in time to wear down the Union’s will to fight. Confederates were the first to draft men into military service, but wealthy planters easily escaped the draft. The South did not develop a two-party system, but Davis and southern governors were constantly at odds over policy. Like the North, the Confederacy turned to income and excise taxes, borrowing, and currency inflation to pay for the war. Confederates also used a tax in kind and mortgaged the cotton crop to raise revenue. They also hoped to use King Cotton to compel Britain to come to their aid, but the British had a surplus of cotton when the war began and they found alternative sources of the fiber in India and Egypt. In addition, crop failures forced Britain to import northern wheat, thus tying their economy more closely to the North than to the South.

Still, the relationship between the Union and Britain was troubled. The Trent affair nearly provoked war, and Lincoln’s government threatened war if the British government allowed...
British-built ironclad rams to be delivered to the Confederacy. The possibility of British intervention on behalf of the Confederacy faded as the North gained battlefield superiority.

**War in the West: Shiloh**

In early 1862, a Confederate invasion of New Mexico failed, and General Grant captured strategic forts in western Tennessee and invaded northern Mississippi, while the Union navy captured New Orleans. The carnage was appalling at the bloody battle of Shiloh, shaking the confidence of both armies. Modern technology had produced weapons of unprecedented accuracy and destructive power. Both sides now recognized how grim the war would be.

**McClellan: The Reluctant Warrior**

McClellan’s plan was to invade Richmond through the peninsula formed by the York and James rivers in Virginia. But he had no intellectual grasp of the demands of modern warfare. McClellan hoped to capture Richmond, but thought it uncivilized to crush the South by destroying Confederate armies. He was an unsurpassed military administrator and planner, but he did not like to fight and risk damage to his excellently prepared army.

Thus, McClellan’s Peninsula campaign was conducted with too much caution. Confederate commander Robert E. Lee was an excellent tactician, and, unlike McClellan, was bold and masterful on the battlefield. His plan for the Seven Days Battle for Richmond placed McClellan on the defensive. Again, the loss of life was terrible.

**Lee Counterattacks: Antietam**

Lincoln demoted McClellan, and his successor, General Henry Halleck, called off the Peninsula Campaign. As Union troops withdrew, Lee seized the initiative, won the second battle of Bull Run, and invaded Maryland. He hoped that a dramatic blow on Union soil would unnerve the northern public who would then demand a negotiated peace. But he was effectively countered at Antietam and withdrew his badly mauled army back into Virginia.

**The Emancipation Proclamation**

When the war began, Lincoln feared any move against slavery would alienate the border states. But he came under increasingly heavy pressure to emancipate the slaves as a way to crush the Confederacy by encouraging slaves to revolt. Radical Republicans in Congress had already abolished slavery in Washington, D.C. and the territories, and the Confiscation Act freed all slaves owned by southern rebels. Lincoln was personally sympathetic to the idea of freeing the
slaves, but he preferred compensated emancipation by state law and colonization of those freed. He was concerned that emancipation would divide the North and injure the war effort.

By mid-1862, Lincoln was convinced for military reasons that emancipation should become a northern war aim. Following the Battle of Antietam, he issued the Emancipation Proclamation that freed all slaves in areas still in rebellion. It did not free slaves in the border states or in former Confederate territories then occupied by Union forces. He justified emancipation as a way to weaken the Confederacy.

Southerners saw the Emancipation Proclamation as an incitement to slave rebellion, while some northerners did not think it went far enough to end slavery. It immediately aggravated racial prejudice in the North because many whites feared a massive migration of former slaves into northern communities. Consequently, as slaves were freed under the proclamation, the government adopted a containment policy to keep them in the South.

**The Draft Riots**

The Union’s 1863 Conscription Act, with its provisions for hired substitutes and $300 exemptions, was patently discriminatory against the poor. It provoked rioting in New York City where poor Irish Catholic workers resented blacks with whom they competed for jobs. This resentment and violent rioting reflected the public’s awareness that emancipation had produced a revolutionary change in American society. Nevertheless, most whites remained racists.

**The Emancipated People**

To blacks, the Emancipation Proclamation was a promise of future improvement and they expressed their appreciation to President Lincoln. In the South, much to the distress of the slaveowners, as Union armies approached, slaves abandoned the plantations and flocked to the Union lines.

**African American Soldiers**

When the war began, blacks were not enlisted for military service. But by 1862 the need for manpower altered white thinking, and the Emancipation Proclamation authorized black enlistment. Ending slavery had now clearly become a northern war goal. Black soldiers were paid less than whites, but they proved themselves in battle. Southerners demonstrated a special hatred for the Union’s black troops.
Antietam to Gettysburg

In the winter of 1862-1863, further Union attempts to capture Richmond were turned back by Lee’s army at Fredricksburg and Chancellorsville. While the morale of northerners was low, Lee again decided to risk a move into Union soil. But three days of bloody fighting at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, failed and he again pulled back into Virginia.

Lincoln Finds His General: Grant at Vicksburg

In the same week as Gettysburg, Grant laid siege to Vicksburg, a Confederate stronghold on the Mississippi River. His capture of Vicksburg gave the Union full control of the river and effectively severed the trans-Mississippi region from the rest of the Confederacy. The success of his brilliant campaign caused Lincoln to place Grant in charge of all Union armies west of the Appalachians. In a short time his forces captured the rail center of Chattanooga and cleared the way for an invasion of Georgia. Lincoln then gave Grant supreme command of all Union armies.

Economic and Social Effects, North and South

By the end of 1863 the Confederacy was losing manpower and on the road to defeat. Shortages produced by the blockade and the printing of paper currency led to drastic inflation in the Confederacy. The South also faced a deteriorating railroad network and shortages in labor, capital, and technology. States’ rights sentiment prevented the Confederacy from making effective use of its scarce resources.

By contrast, the northern economy flourished. Government purchases stimulated railroad operations and manufacturing, and bad harvests in Europe boosted agricultural prices. The Republican Congress passed legislation to encourage western settlement, build colleges, raise tariffs, construct a transcontinental railroad, and provide a uniform currency. These all stimulated the economy, but there were problems. Prices soared, but wages did not keep pace, and there was a chronic shortage of labor and numerous strikes. Inflation and shortages fostered the speculative spirit and a selfish materialism. Illegal but highly profitable cotton trading with the southern enemy was common.

The war hastened industrialization and created a more complex and efficient economy. It also trained business leaders to organize and plan on a large scale, speeded the mechanization of production, stimulated the growth of large corporations, and created a better banking system.

Women in Wartime

In both the North and the South, women took over management of farms and plantations or enlisted in the army medical corps. Some women also took jobs in industry and government
agencies; others committed themselves to improving sanitary conditions in army camps. The “proper sphere” of American women, North and South, was expanded by the modernizing effect of the war.

Grant in the Wilderness

Grant’s strategy was to have his Army of the Potomac capture Richmond while Sherman captured Atlanta; then the two armies would close a pincer movement on Lee’s army in Virginia. Grant’s forces fought a series of frustrating and extremely costly flanking movements around Richmond. Grant knew he could eventually win by grinding down Lee’s depleted forces with his own superior numbers and resources.

Sherman in Georgia

Huge casualty figures and the absence of a decisive victory made the northern public pessimistic. It appeared that Lincoln might not be able to win reelection in 1864. But on the eve of the election, General Sherman’s army captured Atlanta, and then began its march to the sea. Sherman’s aim was to conquer territory, destroy southern resources, and break the Confederate’s will to fight. In November, Lincoln was reelected and the South’s will began to falter. Sherman reached Savannah, then turned north to close the vise on Lee.

To Appomattox Court House

In his second inaugural address, Lincoln extended a conciliatory hand to the South. He asked for northern tolerance and mercy to gain a just and lasting peace. Grant captured Richmond in April 1865 and received Lee’s surrender at Appomattox Court House, Virginia.

Winners, Losers, and the Future

The Civil War cost the nation more than 600,000 lives and untold millions of dollars in lost property, especially in the South. It instilled hatred and bitterness that lasted for generations. It nurtured corruption, gross materialism, and selfishness. These more sordid effects of the war overshadow the numerous examples of wartime charity, self-sacrifice, and devotion to duty. Still, the war ended slavery, cemented the nation, and utterly discredited secession. The northern victory heartened the friends of republican government and democracy everywhere. The war created a better-integrated society and a more technologically advanced and productive economic system. It also left to the postwar generation a number of difficult problems.
PEOPLE, PLACES, AND THINGS

Define the following:

self-determination

 greenbacks

 writ of habeas corpus

 martial law

 conscription

 Describe the following:

 Trent affair

 Emancipation Proclamation

 Homestead Act

 Morrill Land Grant Act
Pacific Railway Act

National Banking Act

New York draft riots

Sherman’s march to the sea

Identify the following:

William Seward

Abraham Lincoln

Jefferson Davis

Stonewall Jackson

George McClellan

Charles Sumner
Locate the following places. Write in both the place name and its map location number.

1. Where the “first shot” of the Civil War was fired.

2. The four states that seceded and joined with the original seven in the Confederacy in 1861.

3. Site of the first pitched battle of the Civil War.
4. State formed from counties of a Confederate state that “seceded” from that state and joined the Union in 1863.

5. The two major battles of the Civil War that were fought on Union soil.

6. The last major Confederate stronghold on the Mississippi River. It fell to Grant’s siege in 1863.

7. The Confederate capital during the Civil War.

8. The southern rail center where a Union victory helped Lincoln win reelection in 1864.

9. The state traversed by General Sherman’s army in its march to the sea.
SELF-TEST

Multiple-Choice Questions

1. Which one of the following states did NOT secede from the Union after the firing on Fort Sumter?
   A. Kentucky
   B. Tennessee
   C. Virginia
   D. Arkansas

2. Confederate batteries fired on Fort Sumter when news was received that Lincoln
   A. ordered the fort to be reinforced with federal troops.
   B. ordered supplies to be sent to the fort.
   C. wanted federal troops to evacuate the fort.
   D. called for 75,000 volunteers to join the Union army.

3. When Lincoln was inaugurated as president, his primary goal was to
   A. invade the South.
   B. recapture Union installations in the South that had been seized by the Confederates.
   C. emancipate southern slaves.
   D. preserve the Union.

4. As the Civil War began, the North had all of the following advantages EXCEPT
   A. a large population.
   B. a complex railroad network.
   C. enormous industrial capabilities.
   D. superior military leadership.

5. When the Civil War began, the Confederacy expected
   A. its armies to invade the North.
   B. economic and military aid from Britain.
   C. a long and difficult war of attrition.
   D. that to win, they would have to abandon their states’ rights philosophy.

6. The Union’s strategy for the Civil War was to do all the following EXCEPT
   A. blockade the Confederate coastline.
   B. pressure the Confederates to negotiate a compromise peace.
   C. divide the Confederacy by gaining control of the Mississippi River.
   D. capture Richmond.
7. The Union government did NOT use _____ to finance the Civil War.
   A. income taxes on ordinary wage earners
   B. excise taxes
   C. borrowing
   D. direct taxes on states

8. Who was the outspoken leader of the antiwar Peace Democrats in the North during the Civil War?
   A. Charles Sumner
   B. Clement Vallandigham
   C. Thaddeus Stevens
   D. Samuel Chase

9. During the Civil War the Confederate cause was hampered by all of the following EXCEPT
   A. having to fight a defensive war.
   B. currency inflation.
   C. its own states’ rights philosophy.
   D. shortages of supplies and equipment.

10. England and the Union were nearly provoked into war by
    A. the incompetence of Charles Francis Adams, the American ambassador to England.
    B. England’s refusal to buy American cotton.
    C. the Union’s seizure of Confederate diplomats aboard a British ship.
    D. British commerce raider attacks on northern shipping.

11. During the first year of the Civil War the Union’s most important success came
    A. in northwestern Tennessee.
    B. at the Battle of Bull Run.
    C. in northern Virginia.
    D. at Antietam.

12. President Lincoln eventually concluded that General George McClellan was
    A. too cautious.
    B. a poor administrator.
    C. incapable of disciplining his troops.
    D. careless.

13. President Lincoln was originally cautious about emancipating the slaves because he claimed that it would do all of the following EXCEPT
    A. divide public opinion in the North.
    B. alienate the Union’s border states.
    C. encourage the slaves to revolt.
    D. infuriate Radical Republicans in Congress.
14. Lincoln justified the Emancipation Proclamation on grounds of
   A. moral imperatives.
   B. natural rights.
   C. economic advantage.
   D. military necessity.

15. The Emancipation Proclamation promised freedom to slaves
   A. in the Union border states.
   B. in Confederate-held states and territories.
   C. in Union territories.
   D. if they agreed to stay in the South.

16. The New York City draft riots were primarily a protest against
   A. the Emancipation Proclamation.
   B. conscription.
   C. Lincoln’s suspension of the writ of habeas corpus.
   D. the temporary declaration of martial law in the city.

17. After the Emancipation Proclamation, when blacks enlisted in the Union army they were
   A. paid less than white soldiers.
   B. allowed to elect their own commanders.
   C. generally poor combat soldiers.
   D. not allowed to engage in combat.

18. During the Civil War, Congress passed legislation to do all of the following EXCEPT
   A. provide free homesteads to settlers.
   B. build a transcontinental railroad.
   C. supply a uniform currency.
   D. lower tariff rates.

19. The proper sequence of these battles is: (A) Gettysburg, (B) Shiloh, (C) First Bull Run, (D) Antietam
   A. B, C, D, A
   B. D, A, B, C
   C. A, B, C, D
   D. C, B, D, A

20. During the Civil War, the Confederacy won all the following battles EXCEPT
   A. Vicksburg.
   B. Fredricksburg.
   C. Chancellorsville.
   D. Second Bull Run.
Essay Questions

1. Based on a consideration of their perceived advantages, explain why both sides felt confident of victory as the Civil War began.

2. Describe the economic and social changes in both the North and the South that accompanied the Civil War.

3. Select what you think were the five most important battles of the Civil War. Explain why you chose these battles; then tell how each battle contributed to the outcome of the Civil War.

4. Describe the personal and leadership qualities that made Lincoln a better wartime president than Jefferson Davis. Also, explain what command skills Grant utilized to overcome Lee’s recognized tactical expertise.

5. Evaluate the contribution the Emancipation Proclamation made to the war effort, and list ways it altered the social and economic systems of both the North and the South.
CRITICAL THINKING EXERCISE

Compare and Contrast

You have seen several times how historians compare and contrast information to gain a better understanding of two or more elements of historical study. The Civil War, pitting North against South, is a natural for comparing and contrasting. In the following exercise match each of the numbered statement to the key below.

N - if the statement is true of the North only
S - if the statement is true of the South only
B - if the statement is true of both the North and the South
X - if the statement is true of neither the North nor the South

___  1. Counting both blacks and whites, it had a population of over 20 million people in 1861.

___  2. It had control of the merchant marine and navy.

___  3. It expected Great Britain would provide it with crucial military and economic aid.

___  4. It had the advantage of fighting a defensive war.

___  5. It experienced no significant division or antiwar sentiment within its population.

___  6. At first it benefited from superior military leadership.

___  7. It won a decisive victory at Antietam.

___  8. It suffered the divisive handicap of the states’ rights philosophy.

___  9. Its president devoted too much time to details and failed to delegate authority well.

___ 10. Its president’s strength lay in his ability to think problems through and act unflinchingly.

___ 11. Its navy clamped a blockade on all enemy ports.

___ 12. It managed to wage war without spending the nation into significant indebtedness.

___ 13. Its Congress passed an income tax law and new excise taxes.


___ 15. Its government authorized loans to help finance the war.
16. Some of its financial obligations were met by printing paper money.
17. It relied primarily on a strong defense to wear down the enemy’s will to fight.
18. It suffered from shortages of labor.
19. It experienced shortages and printed great amounts of paper currency.
20. Its railroads operated close to capacity and with increasing efficiency.
21. As the war dragged on the continuing inflation eroded purchasing power.
22. The war stimulated production and the growth of large corporations.
23. Its women took over the management of farms when their men went off to war.
24. Its commanding general grasped the fundamental truth that the best strategy was to wage total war.
25. Its supply of volunteer enlistments was sufficient to prevent its having to draft men into military service.