

Name: _____ Class: _____

A Nation Divided: North vs. South

By USHistory.org
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The American Civil War was fought within the United States from 1861 to 1865. The election of President Abraham Lincoln in 1860 increased tension between the North and South. Lincoln's political party was interested in stopping the spread of slavery, which was a central institution in the South. By May 1861, 11 Southern states had withdrawn from the U.S. and formed the Confederate States of America; the remaining Northern states were known as the Union. What followed was one of the bloodiest wars in American history. As you read, take notes on how the views of the North and South differed.

The Power of the North

- [1] Within days of the fall of Fort Sumter,¹ four more states joined the Confederacy: Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Arkansas.² The battle lines were now drawn.

On paper, the Union outweighed the Confederacy in almost every way. Nearly 21 million people lived in 23 Northern states. The South claimed just 9 million people — including 3.5 million slaves — in Confederate states. Despite the North's greater population, however, the South had an army almost equal in size during the first year of the war.



"Union soldiers before Marye's Heights, Second Fredericksburg" by Andrew J. Russell is in the public domain.

The North had an enormous industrial advantage as well. At the beginning of the war, the Confederacy had only one-ninth the industrial capacity of the Union. But that statistic was misleading. In 1860, the North manufactured 97 percent of the country's firearms, 96 percent of its railroad locomotives, 94 percent of its cloth, 93 percent of its pig iron, and over 90 percent of its boots and shoes. The North had twice the density of railroads per square mile. There was not even one rifleworks³ in the entire South.

All of the principal ingredients of gunpowder were imported.⁴ Since the North controlled the navy, the seas were in the hands of the Union. A blockade⁵ could suffocate the South. Still, the Confederacy was not without resources and willpower.

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1. The Battle of Fort Sumter was the first battle of the American Civil War.
 2. 11 Southern slave-states made up the Confederacy; the original seven were South Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas.
 3. a factory that produces rifles
 4. to bring goods or services into a country from abroad for sale
 5. A "blockade" is an act or means of sealing off a place to prevent good or people from entering or leaving.

The Subtle Strength of the South

- [5] The South could produce all the food it needed, though transporting it to soldiers and civilians was a major problem. The South also had a great nucleus⁶ of trained officers. Seven of the eight military colleges in the country were in the South.

The South also proved to be very resourceful. By the end of the war, it had established armories⁷ and foundries in several states. They built huge gunpowder mills and melted down thousands of church and plantation bells for bronze to build cannons.

The South's greatest strength lay in the fact that it was fighting on the defensive in its own territory. Familiar with the landscape, Southerners could harass Northern invaders.

The Uncertainties of War

The military and political objectives of the Union were much more difficult to accomplish. The Union had to invade, conquer, and occupy⁸ the South. It had to destroy the South's capacity and will to resist — a formidable⁹ challenge in any war.

Southerners enjoyed the initial advantage of morale:¹⁰ The South was fighting to maintain its way of life, whereas the North was fighting to maintain a union. Slavery did not become a moral cause of the Union effort until Lincoln announced the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863.¹¹

- [10] When the war began, many key questions were still unanswered. What if the slave states of Maryland, Kentucky, Missouri, and Delaware had joined the Confederacy? What if Britain or France had come to the aid of the South? What if a few decisive early Confederate victories had turned Northern public opinion against the war?

Indeed, the North looked much better on paper. But many factors undetermined at the outbreak of war could have tilted the balance sheet toward a different outcome.

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6. a great mass or core
 7. An "armory" is a place where weapons are kept.
 8. to take control or possession of hostile territory
 9. **Formidable (adjective):** causing fear or awe, often due to great size, power, or difficulty to overcome
 10. **Morale (noun):** the feelings of enthusiasm and loyalty that a person or group has about a task or job
 11. The Emancipation Proclamation was an Executive Order issued on September 22, 1862, which promised to begin freeing slaves in the Confederate states that remained in rebellion against the Union on January 1, 1863.

Northern Advantages

Northern Weaknesses

Southern Advantages

Southern Weaknesses