

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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Preface .....	XI
Acknowledgements .....	XIII
Introduction .....	XV
<b>UNIT ONE: THE PERIOD OF CIVIL WAR AND RECONSTRUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
Lesson 1: Prelude to the Civil War .....	5
Lesson 2: The Civil War Begins .....	19
Lesson 3: First Year of the Civil War .....	33
Lesson 4: Second Year of the Civil War .....	47
Lesson 5: Third Year of the Civil War .....	61
Lesson 6: Fourth Year of the Civil War .....	75
Lesson 7: Presidential Reconstruction .....	91
Lesson 8: Congressional Reconstruction .....	105
<b>UNIT TWO: THE GILDED AGE.....</b>	<b>119</b>
Lesson 9: Presidents of the Gilded Age .....	123
Lesson 10: The Spanish-American War and Its Aftermath .....	139
Lesson 11: The Last Western Frontier .....	155
Lesson 12: The Second Industrial Revolution .....	169
Lesson 13: The Progressive Movement .....	183
Lesson 14: Gilded Age Family Life .....	195
Lesson 15: Gilded Age Culture: Society, Religion, and Recreation.....	207
Lesson 16: Gilded Age Culture: The Arts .....	219

<b>UNIT THREE: TWO WORLD WARS AND A GREAT DEPRESSION .....</b>	<b>233</b>
Lesson 17: The Great War — World War I .....	237
Lesson 18: The Roaring Twenties .....	257
Lesson 19: Roaring Twenties Family Life .....	271
Lesson 20: Roaring Twenties Culture .....	285
Lesson 21: The Great Depression .....	299
Lesson 22: Great Depression Family Life and Culture .....	315
Lesson 23: World War II .....	329
Lesson 24: World War II — The American Home Front .....	351
 <b>UNIT FOUR: THE COLD WAR AND BEYOND .....</b>	 <b>365</b>
Lesson 25: The Beginning of the Cold War .....	369
Lesson 26: The Economy and Family Life During the Early Cold War Years .....	385
Lesson 27: Society and Culture During the Early Cold War Years .....	397
Lesson 28: The Sixties and Seventies .....	417
Lesson 29: The Economy and Family Life During the Sixties and Seventies .....	437
Lesson 30: Society and Culture During the Sixties and Seventies .....	449
Lesson 31: The End of the Cold War and Beyond .....	463
Lesson 32: Economics, Family Life, and Culture During the Eighties and Nineties .....	483
 Afterword .....	 501
Appendix: Charter Documents of the United States .....	507
Endnotes .....	533
 Index .....	 537

# LESSON 2

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*The Civil War Begins* . . . . . 1860 — 1861 A.D.

## ATMOSPHERE

### UNCLE TOM'S CABIN

On June 5, 1851, the *National Era*, an antislavery newspaper in Washington, D.C., published the first of forty weekly installments of a story written by an abolitionist named Harriet Beecher Stowe. This series, which dramatized the evils of slavery, appeared under the title *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Life Among the Lowly*. Week after week, the *Era* sold out, and the story soon appeared in book form. The first edition of five thousand copies sold out in two days, and fifty thousand more were sold within a few months. By 1852, two million copies of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had been sold in the United States, and the book had been translated into a half dozen other languages.

Harriet Beecher Stowe became an international celebrity, and her dramatization of the evils of slavery most definitely fanned the flames of the nation's growing conflict over this issue. In fact, when President Lincoln first met Stowe, he remarked, "So you're the little woman who wrote the book that made this great war."<sup>2</sup>



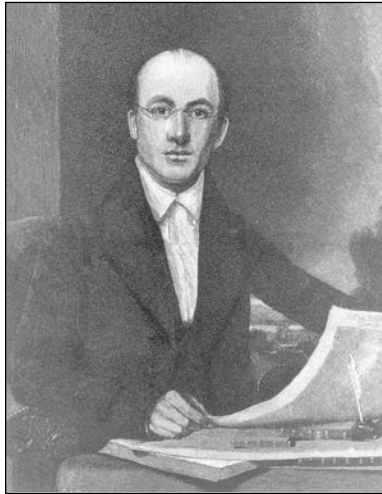
**Promotional poster for  
*Uncle Tom's Cabin***

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**Harriet Beecher Stowe**

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**William Lloyd Garrison**

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“No; I mean, really, Tom is a good, steady, sensible, pious fellow. He got religion at a camp-meeting, four years ago; and I believe he really did get it. I’ve trusted him, since then, with everything I have — money, house, horses — and let him come and go round the country; and I always found him true and square in everything....

“Well, Tom’s got the real article, if ever a fellow had... Why, last fall, I let him go to Cincinnati alone, to do business for me, and bring home five hundred dollars. ‘Tom,’ says I to him, ‘I trust you, because I think you’re a Christian — I know you wouldn’t cheat.’ Tom comes back, sure enough; I knew he would. Some low fellows, they say, said to him — ‘Tom, why don’t you make tracks for Canada?’ ‘Ah, master trusted me, and I couldn’t...’”

—excerpt from *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*

The story of Uncle Tom, a long-suffering Christian slave, and Howe’s other fictional characters inflamed the passions of northerners opposed to slavery. The saga of their struggles put the issue of slavery into human, personal terms. Outraged southerners, on the other hand, considered *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* to be a distortion of the southern way of life. They complained that the novel turned slaves into saints and their owners into devils. “Anti-Tom” novels were written that described healthy slaves in the South, well treated by their kind masters, and free blacks in the North, paid starvation wages and living in terrible housing conditions.

### PROMINENT ABOLITIONISTS

In addition to *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, the writings of other abolitionists, such as William Lloyd Garrison, continued to keep the debate over slavery hot in both the North and the South. Garrison, editor of an abolitionist newspaper called *The Liberator*, became famous for burning a copy of the U.S. Constitution in public because he believed that it protected slavery.

All kinds of people were moved to join the abolitionist movement — men and women, wealthy and poor, religious and nonreligious. A number of freed slaves played a prominent role; the most well known of these were Frederick Douglass and Sojourner Truth. Many aboli-

tionists wrote books and newspaper articles and traveled many miles to speak for the cause at churches and various other meetings.

Of course, most southerners resented these abolitionists, who called for an end to slavery but would never have to deal with the economic disaster that the abolition of slavery would bring upon the South. Slave owners feared that abolitionist activities would stir up their slaves and lead to slave rebellions. In reaction to these fears, southern states began passing laws limiting freedom of speech and freedom of the press. Abolitionist newspapers were often burned there also. By the 1850s, most southerners perceived the abolitionist message as posing a major threat to their way of life.

### JOHN BROWN'S RAID

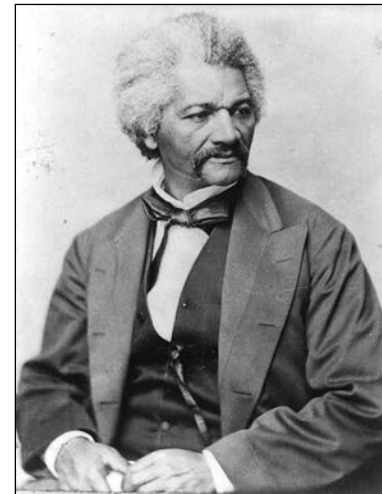
Southern fears seemed to be confirmed on October 16, 1859. On that day John Brown, a fanatical abolitionist, rode into Harpers Ferry, Virginia, with about twenty men of both races and captured the army post. His plan was to seize the weapons at the arsenal, get them into the hands of slaves, and start a slave rebellion that would sweep across the South.

However, Brown was captured by a battalion of U.S. Marines and militiamen under the command of Colonel Robert E. Lee. He was then tried and hung for treason. John Brown's death made him a martyr to abolitionists, whereas southerners saw him as a monster. After Brown's Harpers Ferry raid, many southerners believed that those in the North might do anything to bring about the abolition of slavery. Brown and his raid were immortalized by the song "John Brown's Body," which became a favorite Union marching song during the Civil War.

## EVENT

### ELECTION OF 1860 AND THE CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA — SIXTH STEP TO WAR

Lincoln's election as president on November 6, 1860, polarized the North and South. As a candidate of the Republican Party, he represented those who were opposed to the extension of slavery and in



**Frederick Douglass**

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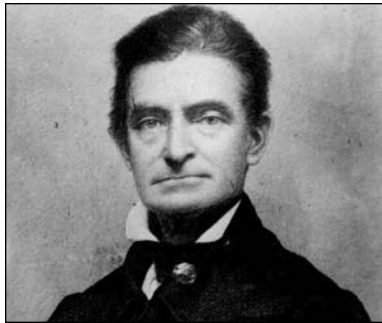
**Sojourner Truth**

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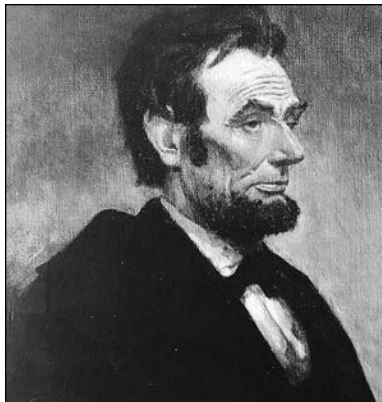
**John Brown's raid  
at Harpers Ferry**

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**John Brown**

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**Abraham Lincoln**

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favor of protective tariffs. Yet, Lincoln did want to keep the Union together and to prevent war.

On December 20, 1860, however, South Carolina seceded from the Union. By early February of 1861, South Carolina had been joined by Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, and Texas. That same month, six of these states met in Montgomery, Alabama, to establish the Confederate States of America. They adopted the Confederate Constitution on February 8, and on February 9, they elected Jefferson Davis to serve as their president. Although some in the North argued that these southern states should be allowed to leave peacefully, most northerners saw slavery as a moral and social evil and believed that the Union should be preserved.

**Abraham Lincoln (1861 – 1865)**

The sixteenth president of the United States was born in a log cabin in Kentucky on February 12, 1801. The son of a humble frontiersman, Lincoln received little formal schooling during his childhood. However, he was determined to educate himself and to read whatever books he could find. In his teen and early adult years, he worked on a farm splitting rails for fences and as a storekeeper. During the mid-1830s, Lincoln was admitted to the Illinois bar and was elected to several terms in the Illinois legislature. In 1845, he was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, where he served one term. In 1858, he ran for the U.S. Senate against Stephen A. Douglas and lost. However, Lincoln's debates with Douglas concerning slavery made him a nationally known public speaker.

A tall, gangly man, Abraham Lincoln became known for his great intelligence and personal integrity. He had a strong sense of justice and remained true to his political convictions. Lincoln's election to the presidency in 1860 marked one of the most amazing rises to power in American history. Although Lincoln was not a war hero, a prominent political leader, or a wealthy man, he became the first Republican candidate elected president of the United States. During the five years he served in office, Lincoln was known for his sharp wit

and warm humor, his straightforward leadership style, and his consummate skills at writing and delivering speeches.

However, President Lincoln certainly had his critics. Democrats accused him of acting like a dictator when he suspended the writ of habeas corpus in 1862, making it possible to hold known secessionists and disloyal individuals without a trial. Many people also blamed Lincoln for the great amount of bloodshed and destruction caused by the war. They criticized him for his determination to continue the fighting until the Confederacy was totally defeated and the Union restored. Lincoln received numerous letters from people threatening to kill him, but he paid little attention to the possible conspiracies against his life.

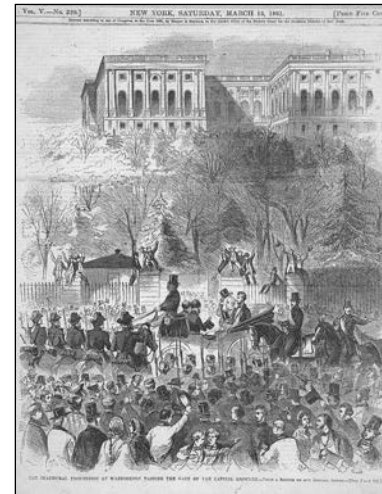
### Lincoln's First Inaugural Address

As early as 1858, Lincoln had publicly declared, "A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe that this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free."<sup>3</sup> Now, as the nation stood poised to fulfill this prophecy, Lincoln delivered his first inaugural address on March 4, 1861.

In this speech the new American president stood firmly against secession and offered friendship to the seceding states if they returned to the Union. Lincoln assured the South that he had no intention of interfering with slavery where it already existed or of using American troops to invade the South. However, he also declared that he would use military power to protect federal arsenals and military installations in the states that had seceded. Following Lincoln's inauguration, Confederate forces began seizing United States forts, naval yards, post offices, and other buildings in the South. In order to avoid bloodshed, federal troops at first turned over these facilities without a fight.

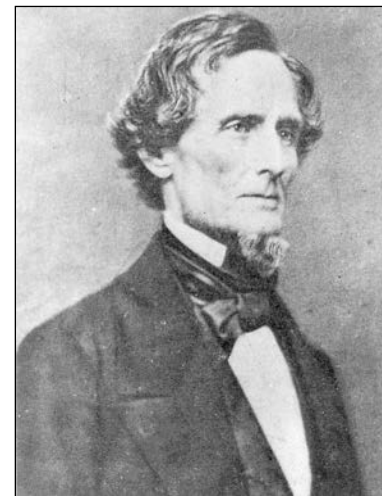
### Jefferson Davis (1861 – 1865)

The newly chosen president of the Confederate States of America, Jefferson Davis, was born in Kentucky in 1808. A graduate of West Point, Davis had a distinguished military and political career. In 1845, he was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, but he resigned after a year to fight in the Mexican War. Two years later, Davis was elected to



### Depiction of Lincoln's inauguration

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### Jefferson Davis

*Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division [LC-USZ61-139]*



**Editorial depiction of  
Pierre G. T. Beauregard  
and Jefferson Davis**

*Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs  
Division [LC-USZ61-139]*



**Brigadier General Beauregard**

*Wikimedia Commons*

the U.S. Senate from Mississippi. During the administration of President Pierce, Jefferson Davis served in his cabinet as the secretary of war. After Pierce left office, Davis re-entered the Senate, where he remained until resigning in January of 1861. Known for his intelligence and giftedness as a speaker, Davis also had a reputation for not being able to delegate or handle personal interactions with subordinates well.

**SIEGE OF FORT SUMTER AND  
THE FIRST SHOTS OF THE CIVIL WAR**

The Civil War can easily be measured in five Aprils. The fighting began on April 12, 1861, and ended on April 9, 1865. The first shots of the war were fired by Confederate forces upon Fort Sumter following a one-month siege of this U.S. fort located in Charleston harbor and held by sixty-five Union soldiers. The decision to shoot first cast the Confederacy in the role of the aggressor, as Lincoln had wanted. He could now appeal to the nation to move ahead to put down an armed insurrection in the South.

When Union rations became low during the siege, the Confederate government refused to provide more food supplies. Brigadier General Pierre G. T. Beauregard, commander of the Confederate forces at Charleston, demanded that the Union troops at Fort Sumter surrender. Major Robert Anderson, the U.S. Army officer in charge of the fort, would not agree to surrender and sent a request for help to President Lincoln, who soon had relief supplies on the way to the fort.

On April 12, Confederate forces opened fire on Fort Sumter. Seventy guns, manned and supported by more than ten thousand Confederate soldiers, bombarded Fort Sumter for thirty-four hours. Men, women, and children in Charleston stood on their rooftops or lined the shores of the harbor to watch the bombardment. Because Anderson and his men were protected by the fort's stone walls, they suffered few serious injuries during the assault. However, when Union soldiers surrendered to the Confederates, they fired a fifty-gun salute to the American flag, and a cannon exploded prematurely. One Union soldier was killed, and at least three were wounded.



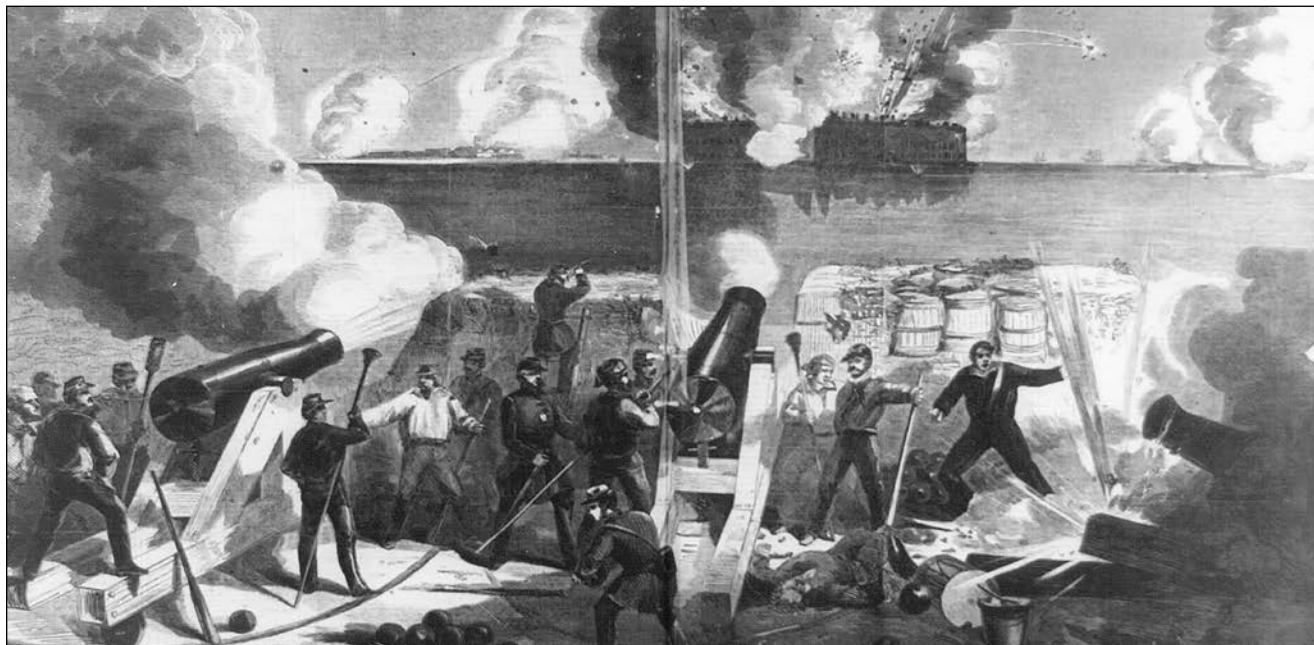
After surrendering on April 13, the Union troops at Fort Sumter were allowed to evacuate and sail north on a federal steamer. Beauregard, an expert artillery man, became an instant southern hero, and Fort Sumter became a visible symbol that war had really begun. War fever gripped both the Union and the Confederacy, with both sides having dreams of a quick, easy victory—not visions of four years of bloodshed and horror. Union troops planned to force the Confederate states back into the Union, and the Confederacy expected to make the Union recognize its independence. Each hoped to accomplish its goal in about three months.

### A CALL TO ARMS

On April 15, two days after the surrender of Fort Sumter, President Lincoln declared the South to be in a state of insurrection, and he called upon state governors to raise seventy-five thousand militiamen to serve for ninety days in order to put down the rebellion. At that time, the army of the United States had only between sixteen and seventeen thousand soldiers, with most of those stationed in the West.

### Confederate attack on Fort Sumter

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**Confederate capitol  
in Richmond**

*Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs  
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Lincoln's call was eagerly answered, with nearly every northern state sending more than its quota of men.

Jefferson Davis had been authorized by the Confederate Congress on March 6 to call for one hundred thousand volunteers to establish a provisional army for the new Confederate nation.

**MORE STATES SECEDE AND A NEW  
CONFEDERATE CAPITAL**

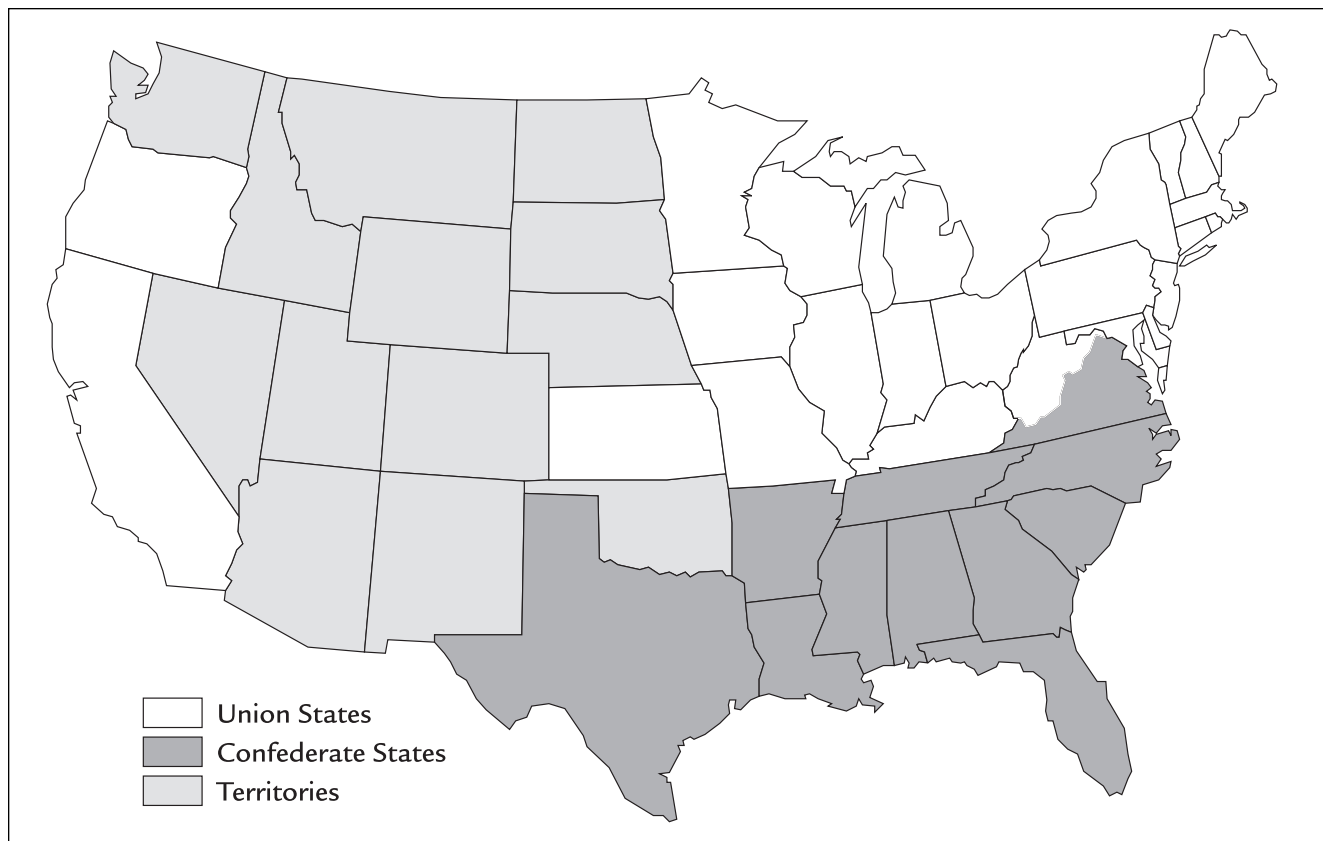
On April 17, Virginia seceded from the Union. Two days later, on April 19, Lincoln declared a naval blockade of the ports of all the seceding states. Any vessel found interfering with U.S. merchant shipping would be treated like a pirate under international law. This blockade limited the ability of the South to stay well supplied in its war against the industrialized North. Blockade running became a huge private business in which large fortunes could be made.

On May 29, the capital of the Confederacy was moved from Montgomery, Alabama, to Richmond, Virginia. By early June, three more states had joined the Confederacy — Arkansas, Tennessee, and North Carolina. Thus, by the summer of 1861, there was a new eleven-state Confederate nation that consisted of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas. Twenty-three states remained in the Union — Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Kentucky, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, Oregon, and California. The territories of Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, Dakota, Washington, and Nebraska also fought on the Union side. In 1861, the people in western Virginia decided to pull away from the rest of the state; they entered the Union as the state of West Virginia in 1863. Nevada was admitted to the Union in 1864. During the war, none of the stars representing the seceded states were removed from the Union flag, the Stars and Stripes.

Both the Union and the Confederacy included several states in which some of the people supported the North and others supported

the South. Some of the heaviest fighting of the war occurred in these border states. On the northern side, they included Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, Missouri, and West Virginia. On the southern side were Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Arkansas. Many families in both the North and the South were torn by divided loyalties, and close relatives often fought against each other. Soldiers who attended military school together or who fought together in the Mexican War had to choose whether to fight for the Union or the Confederacy. Thus, Civil War military leaders were often faced with the interesting situation of being well acquainted with the strengths and weaknesses of the men commanding the troops fighting against them.

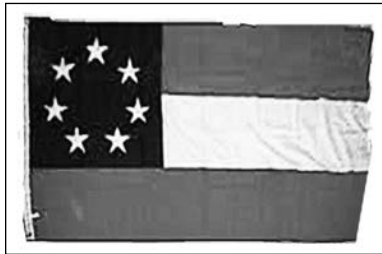
**Union states, Confederate states, and territories in the summer of 1861**





### Union flag as of 1861

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### The first official flag of the Confederacy

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## UNION AND CONFEDERATE RESOURCES COMPARED

A comparison of the resources available to the Union and Confederacy as the war began indicates that the Union definitely seemed to have more advantages.

- **Population:** There were approximately 22 million people in the Union, as compared to 9 million in the Confederacy (with one-third of those being slaves). The Union had 4 million men available for military service, whereas the Confederacy had only about 1.1 million.
- **Financial Resources:** The Union had far greater financial resources than the Confederacy.
- **Railroad Mileage:** The Confederacy had a far less developed railroad system than the Union. In 1861, three-fourths of the thirty thousand miles of railroad tracks in the United States lay in Union territory.
- **Factories:** The Union had a strong system of one hundred thousand manufacturing plants used to make weapons and uniforms, as well as other supplies for Union troops. The Confederacy had little industry and had to import many of its military supplies.
- **Military Strength/Leadership:** In addition to a larger and more established army, the Union had a navy of ninety ships. The Confederacy had almost no navy to defend its coast against the Union blockade. Of the eight military colleges in the United States, all but one were in the South. Also, more southern men were familiar with riding horses and using hunting weapons than were northern men, who more often grew up in cities and worked in shops or factories.

- **Psychological Advantage:** The Confederacy had the psychological advantage of defending its homeland. Although the Union seemed to possess more advantages, many believed that the Confederacy might win the war if it could inflict a major defeat on the Union or capture Washington, D.C., quickly.

## IMPACT

- New states that were added to the Union during this time: West Virginia (1863) and Nevada (1864).
- Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, dramatized the evils of slavery and fanned the flames of the nation's growing conflict over this issue. The writings of another abolitionist, William Lloyd Garrison, kept the debate over slavery hot. Freed slaves, such as Frederick Douglass and Sojourner Truth, also played a prominent role in the American abolitionist movement.
- John Brown's raid on the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, in October of 1859, confirmed the South's growing fears that abolitionist activities would lead to slave rebellions.
- Although Abraham Lincoln was not a war hero, a prominent political leader, or a wealthy man, in 1860 he became the first Republican candidate to be elected president. He was a man known for his integrity, intelligence, and strong sense of justice. However, he was also criticized by some for suspending the writ of habeas corpus during the Civil War and for the great amount of bloodshed and destruction caused by the war.
- Following Lincoln's election as president in November 1860, South Carolina seceded from the Union. By early February 1861, six other states had joined South Carolina to form the

Confederate States of America. Jefferson Davis was elected president of the new Confederate nation.

- Confederate forces began seizing U.S. forts, naval yards, post offices, and other federal buildings found in the seceded states. On April 12, 1861, the first shots of the war were fired by Confederate forces upon Fort Sumter, located in Charleston harbor.
- War fever gripped the Union and Confederacy, with both sides believing that they would win a quick and easy victory in three months. In April 1861, Lincoln ordered a naval blockade of the ports of all the seceding states; by early June, four more states had seceded from the Union and joined the original seven in the Confederacy.
- The Union seemed to have distinct advantages over the Confederacy—a larger population, greater financial resources, a more developed railroad system, a strong system of manufacturing plants, and a larger and more established army and navy. However, the Confederacy had the psychological advantage of defending its homeland.