

Lesson 5 Emancipation and Life in Wartime

Lesson Summary

Lincoln's main goal in fighting the Civil War was not to end slavery but to preserve the Union. Although he opposed slavery, he hesitated to free enslaved people for fear that it might provoke the border states into secession. Furthermore, he knew that most Northerners did not care enough about slavery to fight a war to end it.

But by mid-1862, Lincoln realized how important slavery was to the southern war effort. On January 1, 1863, Lincoln issued the **Emancipation Proclamation**. The proclamation did not immediately free anyone from slavery, but it changed the war's purpose.

African Americans in the North were not allowed to fight in the Union army until Congress changed the law in 1862. The **54th Massachusetts Regiment** was a successful and well-known African American unit. African Americans in the South did what they could to avoid helping the Confederacy and often escaped to freedom as soon as a Union Army approached.

Conditions on both sides were horrifying. Soldiers lined up to be shot at by cannonballs and bullets. New weapon technologies added to battlefield casualties. In addition, soldiers died from infected wounds as well as diseases such as pneumonia and malaria.

Both the North and the South established a **draft**, a system of required military service. Men were required to enlist in the army or navy, though Northerners could pay others to enlist in their place, and Southern slave owners were not required to enlist. Draft riots broke out in many Northern cities in 1863 as poor and middle-class people protested special treatment for the wealthy.

Both the North and the South introduced an **income tax** to raise money to pay for the war. Both also printed paper money, which led to wild inflation.

The Southern economy was devastated due to the cost of the war; the loss of the cotton trade; the destruction of land, people, and buildings; and severe shortages brought on by the Union blockade. Southerners faced food shortages and loss of their livelihood.

The North's economy suffered much less harm. Unlike the South, Northern industries grew to meet the demands of the military and of farm production.

Women in the North and South contributed to the war effort in many ways. Mostly, they took up the roles their male family members had played: running businesses and farms, working in factories and on farms, and serving as nurses and teachers.