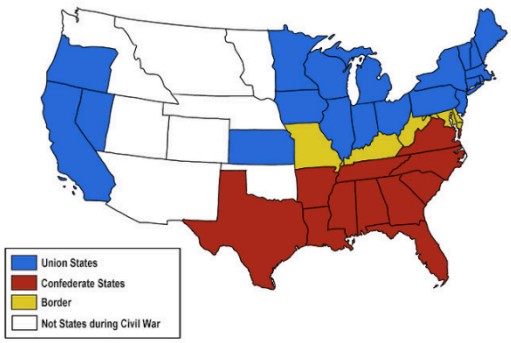
The Civil War Begins



Furious at Lincoln's election and fearing a federal invasion, seven southern states had seceded. The new Commander in Chief tried desperately to save the Union. In his inaugural address, Lincoln promised not to end slavery where it existed. The federal government "will not assail [attack] you. You can have no conflict without being yourselves the aggressors," he said, trying to calm southerners' fears.

However, Lincoln also stated his intention to preserve the Union. He believed that saving the Union would help to save democracy. If the Union and its government failed, then monarchs could say that people were unable to rule themselves. As a result, Lincoln refused to recognize secession, declaring the Union to be "unbroken."

In fact, after decades of painful compromises, the Union was badly broken. From the Lower South, a battle cry was arising, born out of fear, rage—and excitement. Confederate officials began seizing branches of the federal mint, arsenals, and military outposts. In a last-ditch effort to avoid war between the states, Secretary of State Seward suggested a united effort of threatening war against Spain and France for interfering in Mexico and the Caribbean. In the highly charged atmosphere, it would take only a spark to unleash the heat of war.

Fort Sumpter - In 1861 that spark occurred at Fort Sumter, a federal outpost in Charleston, South Carolina, that was attacked by Confederate troops, beginning the Civil War. Determined to seize the fortress—which controlled the entrance to Charleston Harbor—the Confederates ringed the harbor with heavy guns. Instead of surrendering the fort, Lincoln decided to send in ships to provide badly needed supplies to defend the fort. Confederate officials demanded that the federal troops evacuate. The fort's commander, Major Robert Anderson, refused.



Now it was Jefferson Davis who faced a dilemma. If he did nothing, he would damage the image of the Confederacy as a sovereign, independent nation. On the other hand, if Davis ordered an attack on Fort Sumter, he would turn peaceful secession into war. Davis chose war. Before sunrise on April 12, 1861, Confederate guns opened fire on Fort Sumter. A witness wrote that the first shots brought "every soldier in the harbor to his feet, and every man, woman, and child in the city of Charleston from their beds." The Civil War had begun. The fort, although massive, stood little chance. Its heavy guns faced the Atlantic Ocean, not the shore. After 34 hours of cannon blasts, Fort Sumter surrendered.

Reaction to Lincoln's

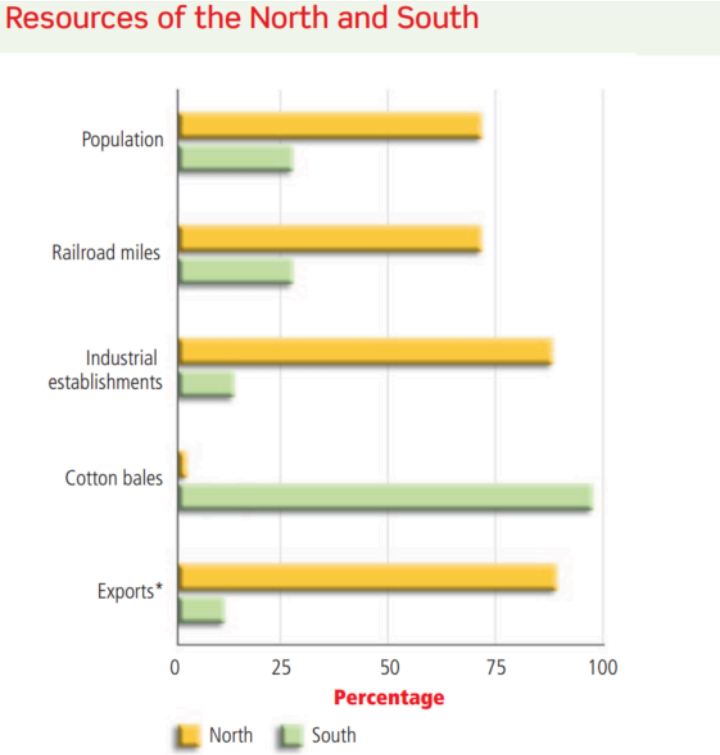


Call The fall of Fort Sumter stunned the North. Lincoln declared the South to be in a state of rebellion and asked state governors for 75,000 militiamen to put down the

rebellion. States now had to choose: Would they secede, or would they stay in the Union? Democratic senator Stephen Douglas, speaking in support of Lincoln's call for troops, declared, "There can be no neutrals in this war, only patriots—or traitors." Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and the states north of them rallied to the president's call. The crucial slave states of the Upper South— North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and Arkansas—seceded and joined the Confederate States of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, and South Carolina. The slave states of the Upper South provided soldiers and supplies to the rest of the South. The western territories were disputed between the Union and the Confederacy.

Border States - Wedged between the North and the South were the key border states of Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, and Missouri—slave states that did not join the Confederacy. Kentucky and Missouri controlled parts of important rivers. Maryland separated the Union capital, Washington, DC, from the North. People in the border states were deeply divided on the war. The president's own wife, Mary Todd Lincoln, had four brothers from Kentucky who fought for the Confederacy. Lincoln sent federal troops into the border states to help keep them in the Union. He also sent soldiers into western Virginia, where Union loyalties were strong. West Virginia set up its own state government in 1863.

Resources



Northern Resources - Numbers tell an important story about the Civil War. Consider the North's advantages. It could draw soldiers and workers from a population of 22 million. The South had only 5.5 million people to draw from. One of the greatest advantages in the North was the region's network of roads, canals, and railroads. Some 22,000 miles of railroad track could move soldiers and supplies throughout the North. The South had only about 9,000 miles of track. In the North, the Civil War stimulated economic growth. To supply the military, the production of coal, iron, wheat, and wool increased. Also, the export of corn, wheat, beef, and pork to Europe doubled. In the South, the export of resources decreased because of the Union blockade. Finally, the Union had money. It had a more developed economy, banking system, and a currency called greenbacks. The South had to start printing its own Confederate dollars. Some states printed their own money, too. This led to financial chaos.



Southern Resources - The Confederacy had advantages as well. With its strong military tradition, the South put many brilliant officers into battle. Southern farms provided food for its armies. The South's best advantage, however, was strategic. It needed only to defend itself until the North grew tired of fighting. The North had to invade and control the South. To accomplish this, the Union army had to travel huge distances. For example, the distance from northern Virginia to central Georgia is about the length of Scotland and England combined. Because of distances such as this, the North had to maintain long supply lines. The South hoped to wear down the North and to capture Washington, DC. Confederate president Jefferson Davis also tried to win foreign allies through cotton diplomacy. This was the idea that Great Britain would support the Confederacy because it needed the South's raw cotton to supply its booming textile

industry. Cotton diplomacy did not work as the South had hoped. Britain had large supplies of cotton, and it got more from India and Egypt.

Preparing for War

The North and the South now rushed to war. Neither side was prepared for the tragedy to come. Volunteer militias had sparked the revolution that created the United States. Now they would battle for its future. At the start of the war, the Union army had only 16,000 soldiers. Within months that number had swelled to a half million soldiers. Southern men rose up to defend their land and their ways of life. Virginian Thomas Webber came to fight "against the invading foe [enemy] who now pollute the sacred soil of my beloved native state." When Union soldiers asked one captured rebel why he was fighting, he replied, "I'm fighting because you're down here."



Both the Union and Confederate armies faced shortages of clothing, food, and even rifles. While the U.S. Army troops had standard issue uniforms, volunteer militias frequently had their own uniforms and individual volunteers often simply wore their own clothes. Eventually, each side chose a color for their uniforms. The Union chose blue. The Confederates wore gray. The problem with volunteers was that many of them had no idea how to fight. Schoolteachers, farmers, and laborers all had to learn the combat basics of marching, shooting, and using bayonets.

Civil War – Questions

1. What event triggered the war between the Union and the Confederacy?

2. How did the Union's strategy differ from that of the Confederacy?

3. What resources did the North have more of? How do you think this would influence the war?

4. Which side do you believe was better prepared for war? Explain your answer.

5. In what ways were the armies of the North and South unprepared for war?

6. Why did men volunteer to fight in the war?