

The American Civil War





Before and during the U.S. Civil War, much of the South's money was earned through slavery.

The Civil War Begins

Although the United States was less than 100 years old, it was a troubled country. The South's income came mostly from cotton farming. Cotton was cheap to grow if enslaved people worked the fields. The North's income came from businesses that did not use slavery. Including banks and railroads.

When the United States was formed, five of the 13 states demanded that slavery remain legal. As new states were added, the North and South argued about whether slavery should be legal in these places.

In 1860, the South believed that President Lincoln would make slavery illegal, so 11 states formed their own country, which they called the Confederate States of America. The 23 remaining states were called the Union. In 1861, the Confederate States and the Union could not agree on slavery and other things, so they went to war.

Key Notes:

What were the two sides in the Civil War.



This painting shows the Union and Confederate armies fighting during the Battle of Gettysburg.

The Battle of Gettysburg

In the spring of 1861, the Confederate army fired on a Union fort, and the Civil War began. Most of the fighting took place in the Confederate states or in Union states that allowed slavery. However, in July 1863, the South's army invaded the North. Two large armies, one Southern and one Northern, met at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. During the three days of fighting, about 51,000 soldiers died.

The Battle of Gettysburg was a turning point in the war. After that Pennsylvania battle, the Confederate army did not invade the North again.

In November 1863, President Lincoln gave a speech at Gettysburg to honor the soldiers of both armies who had fought and died there. He ended his speech by saying that a government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the Earth.

Key Notes:

Who did President Lincoln honor at Gettysburg?



Civil War Soldiers

Union soldiers wore blue uniforms, and Confederate soldiers wore gray uniforms. At first, soldiers in both armies had enough food and weapons. However, as the war went on, the Confederacy began to run out of supplies. Some Confederate soldiers could not even get shoes.

Many freed and runaway slaves enlisted in, or joined, the Union army. However, even though they were free, African American soldiers were not treated well. They were not allowed to fight with white soldiers. They were given old uniforms and weapons in poor condition. Even so, African Americans enlisted in the army and fought hard for the Union.

More American lives were lost in the Civil War than in any other war the United States has ever fought. By the time the fighting stopped, more than one million soldiers had died or were wounded.

Key Notes:

How were the Union army and the Confederate army different?

This picture shows a group of Union soldiers in New York in 1861.



This painting shows General Lee's surrender to General Grant. The states came together again to rebuild the United States.

After the War

In April 1865, General Lee, the leader of the Confederate army, surrendered to General Grant, the leader of the Union army. General Grant told the Union soldiers not to celebrate but to treat the Confederate soldiers as their fellow Americans.

The nation also did not celebrate the end of the war. Less than a week after the South surrendered, President Lincoln was killed by a Southerner who was angry that the Confederacy lost the war. Although president Lincoln had served the Union, he did not live to bring the nation together again.

After the war, the South faced many problems. It needed new sources of income. The land had not been farmed, so there was little food. Although slavery was now illegal, people of many different races did not get along. It took the United States many years to heal.

Key Notes:

How did General Grant want the Union soldiers to act after the war?

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