Chapter Sixteen

The Civil War, 1861–1865
Chapter Focus Questions

What social and political changes were created by the unprecedented nature and scale of the Civil War?

What were the major military campaigns of the war?

How important was the end of slavery to the war efforts of North and South?
Mother Bickerdyke Connects Northern Communities to their Boys at War

Northern communities that had sent men to the Union Army were shocked to learn of the number of deaths due to disease.

A Galesburg, Illinois congregation sent Mary Ann Bickerdyke to teach her “boys” basic sanitation and nutrition.

“Mother” Bickerdyke’s work exposed the need for support services and helped to create the United States Sanitary Commission.
Nurse Ann Bell shown preparing medicine for a wounded soldier. Prompted by the medical crisis of the war, women such as Bell and “Mother” Bickerdyke actively participated in the war effort as nurses. SOURCE: Union Hospital, Center of Military History, U.S. Army.
Fort Sumter: The War Begins

Both Lincoln and Jefferson Davis initially wanted peace.

A conflict was brewing at Fort Sumter in South Carolina.
  - The Union garrison was low on supplies.
  - Lincoln announced his intention to send food.
  - The Confederacy attacked and the defenders of Fort Sumter surrendered to the Confederate troops.

War was greeted enthusiastically by communities on both sides.

Men enlisted and women prepared supplies.
This Currier and Ives lithograph shows the opening moment of the Civil War. On April 12, 1861, Confederate General P.G.T. Beauregard ordered the shelling of Fort Sumter in Charleston harbor. Two days later, Union Major Robert Anderson surrendered, and mobilization began for what turned out to be the most devastating war in American history.
The Border States

Four strategically important border states did not secede: Missouri, Kentucky, Maryland, and Delaware.

- These states could have added 40 percent to the white population and military manpower of the Confederacy as well as 80 percent to its manufacturing capacity.
- The border states also hurt the Confederate argument that the southern states were forced to secede in order to protect their right to own slaves.

In Maryland, Lincoln cracked down on dissent by declaring martial law and arresting pro-Confederate leaders.

In Missouri, guerilla warfare broke out.

Kentucky also remained in the Union but sent troops to both sides.
The Battle of Bull Run

The first Battle of Bull Run shattered both sides’ enthusiastic notions of the war.

The Union marched off to the shout of “On to Richmond.”

Confederate resistance drove them back in an uncontrolled retreat.

The war would not be a quick and glorious conquest.
The contrast between the hope and valor of these young southern volunteer soldiers, photographed shortly before the first battle of Bull Run, and the later advertisements for substitutes (at right), is marked. Southern exemptions for slave owners and lavish payment for substitutes increasingly bred resentment among the ordinary people of the South.

SOURCE: (a) First Virginia Regiment, Cook Collection, Valentine Museum Library, Richmond History Center; (b) Richmond Dispatch, Library of Congress.
The Relative Strengths of North and South

On paper, the Union seemed to enjoy an overwhelming material advantage.
- The North had a far greater population and industrial capacity.
- They also seemed able to feed, clothe, and arm as many soldiers as necessary.

The South had strong advantages as well.
- They would be fighting a defensive war.
- They had strong military leadership.
- The North would have to fight a war of conquest with untrained troops.
- The South also believed that cotton would be a powerful weapon in gaining foreign support.
Lincoln Takes Charge

Lincoln faced an awesome task as president, including gaining support from his own party.

Lincoln quickly took on extra-legal power:
- expanding the budget
- calling up state militias
- taking other actions without congressional sanction

Lincoln was the first president to act as commander-in-chief, directing military policy, tempered by his intention to seek North-South reconciliation.
This photograph, taken a month before his inauguration, shows Lincoln looking presidential. It was clearly intended to reassure a public still doubtful about his abilities.

SOURCE: Photograph of Abram Lincoln, February 24, 1861.
Expanding the Powers of the Federal Government

The greatest expansion of government came in the War Department, which required unprecedented mobilization.

The Union had to find new ways of raising funds.

Bond sales in small amounts, new taxes, and printing paper money financed the government.

Democrats protested economic centralization.

Free from southern opposition, the Republicans enacted their economic programs including:

- a doubling of the tariff
- chartering companies to build a transcontinental railroad
- a Homestead Act
- the establishment of land grant colleges

The federal government was permanently strengthened.
Lincoln was further challenged by the potential foreign recognition of the Confederacy.

- The South hoped that King Cotton would gain them foreign support.
- The North worked to insure that England and France refused to support the South.

Nonbelligerence helped keep Great Britain and France neutral, including accepting a temporary French incursion into Mexico that violated the Monroe Doctrine.
Jefferson Davis Tries to Unify the Confederacy

Jefferson Davis needed to forge a nation out of eleven states, but he lacked Lincoln’s political astuteness and skill.

Davis tended to “micro-manage” the war and lost the public confidence needed to build support for the sacrifices required by war.
Confederate Disappointments

In diplomacy, southern hopes for foreign recognition failed because Great Britain and France did not recognize the Confederate government.

The Confederate economy faltered as finances were in disarray with runaway inflation.
Contradictions of Southern Nationalism

In the military, after the initial blush of enthusiasm, the Confederacy turned to a draft that exempted wealthy slaveholders.

“It’s a rich man’s war, but a poor man’s fight.”

Loyalty was a problem because most southern whites:

- felt a loyalty to their states
- lacked a sense of loyalty to the Confederate nation
- feared that centralization would destroy the very identity they sought to preserve.
The War in Northern Virginia

Maps: Overall Strategy of the War

The Anaconda Plan, the initial northern strategy, envisioned squeezing the South with a blockade to prompt surrender without an invasion.

- Popular clamor for sudden action was tempered by the Bull Run disaster.

In spring 1862, the new Union commander of eastern troops, George McClellan, planned a march along Virginia’s James Peninsula toward Richmond.

- Robert E. Lee mounted a successful counterattack, driving McClellan back.

Davis ordered an invasion of Maryland that was stopped in September at Antietam.

A final Union thrust also ended in December at Fredericksburg.

Map: Major Battles in the East, 1861-1862
The initial Northern strategy for subduing the South, the so-called Anaconda Plan, entailed strangling it by a blockade at sea and obtaining control of the Mississippi River. But at the end of 1862, it was clear that the South's defensive strategy could only be broken by the invasion of Southern territory. In 1864, Sherman’s “March to the Sea” and Grant’s hammering tactics in northern Virginia brought the war home to the South. Lee’s surrender to Grant at Appomattox Courthouse on April 9, 1865, ended the bloodiest war in the nation’s history.
MAP 16.1c Overall Strategy of the Civil War
Northern Virginia was the most crucial and the most constant theater of battle. The prizes were the two opposing capitals, Washington and Richmond, only 70 miles apart. By the summer of 1862, George B. McClellan, famously cautious, had achieved only stalemate in the Peninsular campaign. He did, however, turn back Robert E. Lee at Antietam in September.
Things went better for the Union in the west. Troops commanded by Ulysses S. Grant captured forts along Tennessee’s river systems. In April they defeated Confederate troops at Shiloh. Union conquests of Memphis and New Orleans made control of the Mississippi River seem only a matter of time.
Ulysses S. Grant waged a mobile war, winning at Fort Henry and Fort Donelson in Tennessee in February 1862, and at Shiloh in April, and capturing Memphis in June. He then laid siege to Vicksburg, as Admiral David Farragut captured New Orleans and began to advance up the Mississippi River.
The War in the Trans-Mississippi West

In the West, sporadic Confederate campaigns, at times aided by relocated Indians, were successfully overcome by federal troops and state militia.

In the Far West, small bands secured the region, though Indian and guerrilla fighting throughout the Missouri area plagued the Union.

No part of the country and none of its inhabitants, could remain untouched by the Civil War.
The Naval War

The Union was aided by its superior navy that in time tightened its grip over southern blockade-runners and seized several coastal areas.

- 1862—about 10 percent of Confederate ships were stopped
- 1864—around 30 percent were stopped
- 1865—50 percent were stopped

The battle between ironclad ships ended without a clear victor.

The most successful naval operation was the seizing of coastal areas.
The Black Response

When the Union navy captured Port Royal in South Carolina, 10,000 slaves greeted the troops.

The Union policy of treating runaway slaves as contraband contributed to the demise of slavery.

By the end of the war, one out of four slaves in the South had supported the Union by leaving their masters.
The Politics of Emancipation

Lincoln personally hated slavery but initially opposed actions to destroy it.

- At the beginning of the war, the military necessity of holding the border states and placating staunchly racist northerners made emancipation politically impractical. His decision to emancipate the slaves came out of military necessity.

Following the Union victory at Antietam, Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation that declared effective January 1, 1863, slaves in the areas under Confederate control were freed.

- No slaves were immediately freed but the act encouraged many to seek freedom.

- Abolitionists pushed the Republicans to ratify the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865, that permanently outlawed slavery.
Black Fighting Men

Lincoln also permitted the recruitment of African American troops.

Nearly 200 African Americans served under white officers, many of whom had been abolitionists.

African-American soldiers encountered racism on both sides.

- Until June 1864, African-American soldiers received unequal pay.
- The Confederates could treat captured African-American soldiers as runaway slaves and could therefore execute them.

But African-American soldiers did manage to make a dent in northern white racism as some nondiscriminatory laws were passed.
This recruiting poster for African Americans in 1863 (they were barred from enlistment before then) depicts a regiment of black union soldiers adjacent to their white commander. Nearly 200,000 African American men—1 in 5—served in the Union army or navy.

The Toll of War

New firearms technology brought more accurate and, hence, more deadly weapons.

Conventional tactics called for massive assaults that brought huge casualties.

Medical ignorance and disease also contributed to heavy casualty rates.

Both North and South were unprepared to handle the supply and health needs of their armies.
FIGURE 16.1 The Casualties Mount up  This Chart of the ten costliest battles at the Civil War shows the relentless toll of casualties (killed, wounded, missing, captured) on both Union and Confederate Soldiers.
Army Nurses

Northern women volunteered as nurses and organized their communities through the United States Sanitary Commission to help provide relief. Southern women had no comparable organization though thousands volunteered as nurses.

Despite these volunteers, most medical support staff continued to be men.
The Life of the Common Soldier

- Common soldiers who anticipated a short and glorious war instead experienced massive, horrendously bloody battles.
- Disease was a common cause of death.
- Soldiers suffered from the uncertainty of supply, especially on the Confederate side.
- Desertion, going AWOL, and fraternization with the enemy were common.
The Union home front was wrought with problems.

The Democratic Party divided into War Democrats who supported the war effort and Peace Democrats or “Copperheads” who did not.

Democrats criticized the centralization of power and the efforts towards emancipation.

Copperhead leader Clement Vallandigham urged a negotiated peace and suggested an alliance between western Democrats and southerners.

Lincoln responded by declaring martial law, leading to the arrest of 13,000 people. Lincoln also had to cope with radicals and conservatives within his own party.
Economic and Social Strains on the North

The war stimulated the northern economy, but not all industries profited.

With $1 billion in government contracts, profiteers flourished.

For most people the war only brought inflation that outpaced wages.

As workers formed unions, manufacturers hired strikebreakers, many of whom were African American, thus exacerbating racial tensions.

Lower-class whites resented the Union draft that allowed conscripts to buy their way out for $300.
The New York City Draft Riots

Protests against the draft occurred throughout the North in 1863.
- Riots and disturbances broke out in many cities.

Between July 13 and July 17, 1863, New Yorkers rioted against the draft, killing 105 people.
- Anger at the draft and racial prejudice were what most contemporaries saw as the cause of violence—African American men were the major target of said violence.
- Urban growth and tensions also contributed to the riots.
A black man is lynched during the New York City Draft Riots in July 1863. Free black people and their institutions were major victims of the worst rioting in American history until then. The riots were more than a protest against the draft; they were also an outburst of frustration over urban problems that had been festering for decades. SOURCE:Culver Pictures, Inc.
The Failure of Southern Nationalism

Southerners saw even greater changes than the North.
- Class resentments were greater in the South.
- High inflation left many destitute.

In spring 1865, food riots broke out throughout the South.

Desertion rates were high.

Slaves were increasingly disobedient and one quarter fled to Union lines.

Peace movements sprang up throughout the Confederacy.
The Turning Point of 1863

In May 1863 in the East, Robert E. Lee beat back an army twice his size at Chancellorsville.

- Losses were high on both sides with Lee losing 20 percent of his army.

Lee moved north into Maryland and Pennsylvania, but his offensive was stopped by George Meade at Gettysburg from July 1–3.

- Lee never mounted another offensive.

The next day in the west, Grant completed his siege of Vicksburg and soon followed up by capturing Chattanooga.

- This dissuaded England and France from recognizing the Confederacy.
- The Union now controlled the entire Mississippi River.
- Union peace movements ceased.
In June, Lee boldly struck north into Maryland and Pennsylvania, hoping for a victory that would cause Britain and France to demand a negotiated peace on Confederate terms. Instead, he lost the hard-fought battle of Gettysburg, July 1–3. The very next day, Grant’s long siege of Vicksburg succeeded. These two great Fourth of July victories turned the tide in favor of the Union. The Confederates never again mounted a major offensive. Total Union control of the Mississippi now exposed the Lower South to attack.
Grant and Sherman

Map: Sherman’s Campaign in Georgia

Grant’s successes led Lincoln to appoint him general-in-chief of all Union forces.

With Sherman, he conceived a plan of destroying the fabric of southern life.

- They hoped that the South would surrender rather than face total destruction.

In Virginia, Grant encouraged slaves to run away while he destroyed anything that could be used by the enemy.

After Sherman captured Atlanta, he began his march to the sea destroying everything in his path.

Sherman also issued a special order that set aside land for the freed slaves.
MAP 16.5 Sherman’s Campaign in Georgia, 1864 Ulysses S. Grant and William Tecumseh Sherman, two like-minded generals, commanded the Union’s armies in the final push to victory. While Grant hammered away at Lee in northern Virginia, Sherman captured Atlanta in September (a victory that may have been vital to Lincoln’s reelection) and began his March to the Sea in November 1864.
The 1864 Election

Lincoln did not like his own chances for re-election in 1864 because:

- his party was divided
- the Democrat, General George McClellan was a war hero who proclaimed the war a failure.

Sherman’s capture of Atlanta on September 1 helped turn the tide.

Lincoln won 55 percent of the vote and secured a mandate for his policy of unconditional surrender.
Nearing the End

Map: The Final Battles in Virginia, 1864–1865

In the East, Grant hammered Lee into submission—but it took a year and cost thousands of Union lives.

To counteract a Union manpower advantage that grew more and more evident, some Southerners contemplated freeing slaves and enrolling them in the army.

- Two regiments of black soldiers were organized, but never used. It was too late.

By 1865, southern support for the war had disappeared.
In the war’s final phase early in 1865, Sherman closed one arm of a pincers by marching north from Savannah, while Grant attacked Lee’s last defensive positions in Petersburg and Richmond. Lee retreated from them on April 2 and surrendered at Appomattox Court House on April 9, 1865.
Photography and War

Photography showed the horrors of war to the American public.
This striking photograph by Thomas C. Roche shows a dead Confederate soldier, killed at Petersburg on April 3, 1865, only six days before the surrender at Appomattox. The new medium of photography conveyed the horror of the war with a gruesome reality to the American public.

SOURCE: Library of Congress.
Appomattox

In the spring of 1865, Lee and remaining troops, outnumbered two to one, still held Petersburg and Richmond.

Starving, short of ammunition, and losing men in battle and desertion every day, Lee retreated on April 2.

Seven days later Lee and his 25,000 troops surrendered to Grant at Appomattox Court House.

Confederate troops were given parole and sent home.

They could not be tried for treason in the future.

On May 10, Jefferson Davis, who hoped to set up a new government in Texas, was captured and the war came to a close.
Abraham Lincoln toured Richmond, the Confederate capital, just hours after Jefferson Davis had fled. This photograph, taken April 4, 1865, shows Yankee cavalry horses in the foreground, and the smoldering city in the background. It gives a sense of the devastation suffered by the South and the immense task of rebuilding and reconciliation that Lincoln did not live to accomplish. SOURCE: Library of Congress.
Death of a President

On April 14, 1865, President Lincoln was assassinated at Ford’s Theater in Washington.

For the people of the Union, the joy of victory was muted by mourning for their great leader.

The nation was left with Lincoln’s vision for the coming peace which he expressed in his Second Inaugural Address.
Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address

With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation’s wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.

—Abraham Lincoln

March 4, 1865