

1

The Conflict Takes Shape

As
You
Read

Explore These Questions

- What strengths and weaknesses did the Confederacy have?
- What strengths and weaknesses did the Union have?
- What special qualities did Presidents Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis possess?

Define

- racism
- martial law

Identify

- border states
- Robert E. Lee



Confederate canteen

SETTING the Scene

In April 1861, President Abraham Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers to serve as soldiers for 90 days in a campaign against the South. The response was overwhelming. Throughout the North, crowds cheered the Stars and Stripes and booed the southern “traitors.”

Southerners were just as enthusiastic for the war. They rallied to the Stars and Bars, as they called the new Confederate flag. Volunteers flooded into the Confederate army.

With flags held high, both northerners and southerners marched off to war. Most felt certain that a single, gallant battle would bring a quick end to the conflict. Few suspected that the Civil War would last four terrible years and be the most destructive war in the nation’s history.

A Nation Divided

As the war began, each side was convinced that its cause was just. Southerners believed that they had the right to leave the Union. In fact, they called the conflict the War for Southern Independence. Southerners wanted independence so that they could keep their traditional way of life—including the institution of slavery.

Northerners, meanwhile, believed that they had to fight to save the Union. At the outset of the war, abolishing slavery was not an official goal of the North. In fact, many northerners, guided by feelings of racism,

approved of slavery. **Racism** is the belief that one race is superior to another.

In April 1861, eight slave states were still in the Union. They had to make the difficult decision of which side to join. *Virginia*,* North Carolina, Tennessee, and Arkansas joined the Confederacy. The four **border states** of Delaware, Kentucky, Missouri, and Maryland remained in the Union. (See the map on page 449.)

Still, some citizens of the border states supported the South. For example, in April 1861, pro-Confederate mobs attacked Union troops in Baltimore, Maryland. In response, President Lincoln declared **martial law**, or rule by the army instead of the elected government. Many people who sided with the South were arrested.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Both sides in the conflict had strengths and weaknesses as the war began. The South had the strong advantage of fighting a defensive war. It was up to the North to go on the offensive, to attack and defeat the South. If the North did not move its forces into the South, the Confederacy would remain a separate country.

*Many people in western Virginia supported the Union. When Virginia seceded, westerners formed their own government. West Virginia became a state of the Union in 1863.

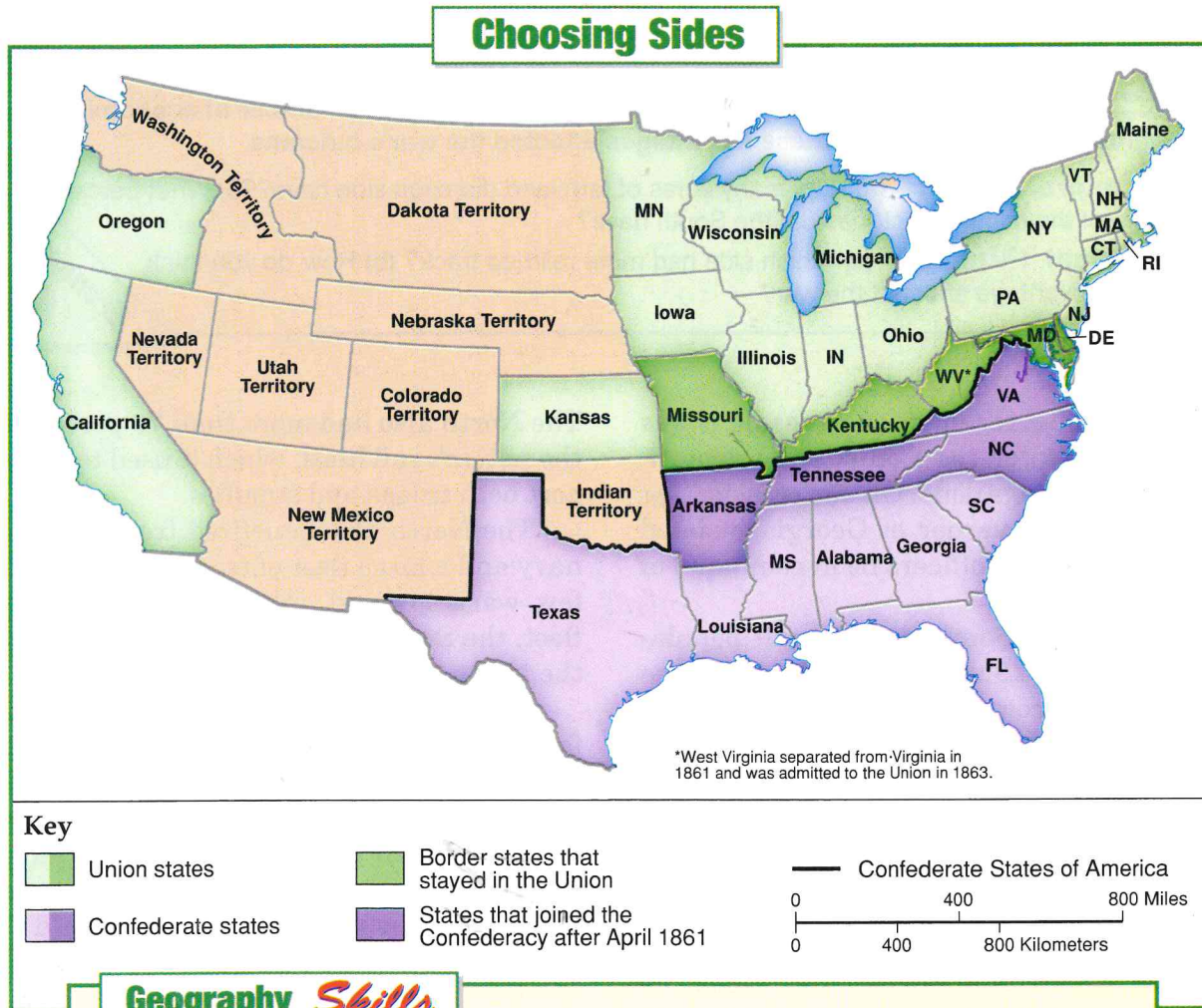
The South

Southerners believed that they were fighting a war for independence, similar to the American Revolution. Defending their homeland and their way of life gave them a strong reason to fight bravely. “Our men must prevail in combat,” one Confederate said, “or they will lose their property, country, freedom—in short, everything.”

Also, many southerners had skills that made them good soldiers. Hunting was an important part of southern life. From an early age, boys learned to ride horses and

use guns. Wealthy young men often went to military school. Before the Civil War, many of the best officers in the United States Army were from the South.

The South, however, had serious economic weaknesses. (See the chart on page 450.) It had few factories to produce weapons and other vital supplies. It also had few railroads to move troops and supplies. The railroads that it did have often did not connect to one another. The South also had political problems. The Confederate constitution favored states’ rights and limited the authority



Geography Skills

In April 1861, eight slave states were still in the Union. As war began, these states had to choose sides in the struggle.

- 1. Comprehension** On the map, locate: (a) Maryland, (b) Virginia, (c) West Virginia, (d) Kentucky, (e) Arkansas.
- 2. Region** (a) Which states seceded after April 1861? (b) Which border states stayed in the Union?
- 3. Critical Thinking** Why do you think many Civil War battles took place in Virginia?

Resources of the North and South, 1861

Resources	North		South	
	Number	Percent of Total	Number	Percent of Total
Farmland	105,835 acres	65%	56,832 acres	35%
Railroad Track	21,847 miles	71%	8,947 miles	29%
Value of Manufactured Goods	\$1,794,417,000	92%	\$155,552,000	8%
Factories	119,500	85%	20,600	15%
Workers in Industry	1,198,000	92%	111,000	8%
Population	22,340,000	63%	9,103,000 (3,954,000 slaves)	37%

Source: Historical Statistics of the United States

Chart Skills

As the Civil War began, the North enjoyed a number of economic advantages over the South. These advantages affected the war's outcome.

- 1. Comprehension** (a) How many acres of farmland did each side have? (b) What percentage of the nation's factories did the South have?
- 2. Critical Thinking** (a) Which side had more railroad track? (b) How do you think this advantage affected the war?

Economics

of the central government. As a result, it was often difficult for the Confederate government to get things done. On one occasion, for example, the governor of Georgia insisted that only Georgia officers be in command of Georgia troops.

Finally, the South had a small population. Only about 9 million people lived in the Confederacy, compared with 22 million in the Union. More than one third of the southern population were enslaved African Americans. As a result, the South did not have enough people to serve as soldiers and to support the war effort.

The North

The North had almost four times as many free citizens as the South. Thus, it had a large source of volunteers. It also had many people to grow food and to work in factories making supplies.

Industry was the North's greatest resource. Before the war, northern factories made more than 90 percent of the nation's manufactured goods. These factories quickly began making supplies for the Union army.

The North also had more than 70 percent of the nation's rail lines, which it used to transport both troops and supplies.

The North also benefited from a strong navy and a large fleet of trading ships. With few warships and only a small merchant fleet, the South was unable to compete with the North at sea.

Despite these advantages, the North faced a difficult military challenge. To bring the South back into the Union, northern soldiers had to conquer a huge area. Instead of defending their homes, they were invading unfamiliar land. As Union armies invaded the South, their lines of supply would be much longer than those of the Confederates and thus more open to attack.

Wartime Leaders

Leadership was a very important factor in the Civil War. President Jefferson Davis of the Confederacy, President Abraham Lincoln of the Union, and military leaders on both sides played key roles in determining the war's outcome.

President Jefferson Davis

Many people thought Davis was a stronger leader than Lincoln. Davis had attended the United States Military Academy at West Point. He had served as an officer in the Mexican War. Later, he served as Secretary of War. He was widely respected for his honesty and courage.

Davis, however, did not like to turn over to others the details of military planning. When he made a decision, according to his wife, he “could not understand any other man coming to a different conclusion.” As a result, Davis spent much time arguing with his advisers.

President Abraham Lincoln

At first, some northerners had doubts about Abraham Lincoln’s ability to lead. He had little experience in national politics or military matters. In time, however, Lincoln proved to be a patient but strong leader and a fine war planner.

Day by day, Lincoln gained the respect of those around him. Many especially liked his sense of humor. They noted that Lincoln even accepted criticism with a smile. When Secretary of War Edwin Stanton called Lincoln a fool, Lincoln commented, “Did Stanton

say I was a fool? Then I must be one, for Stanton is generally right and he always says what he means.”

Military leaders

As the war began, army officers in the South had to make a choice. They could stay in the Union army and fight against their home states, or they could join the Confederate forces.

Robert E. Lee faced this dilemma when his home state of Virginia seceded. President Lincoln asked Lee to command the Union army. Lee refused. He explained in a letter to a friend:

“I cannot raise my hand against my birthplace, my home, my children. I should like, above all things, that our difficulties might be peaceably arranged. . . . What ever may be the result of the contest, I foresee that the country will have to pass through a terrible ordeal.”

Later, **Robert E. Lee** became commander of the Confederate army. In fact, many of the best officers served for the Confederacy. As a result, President Lincoln had trouble finding generals to match those of the South.

★ Section 1 Review ★

Recall

1. **Locate** (a) West Virginia, (b) Delaware, (c) Kentucky, (d) Missouri, (e) Maryland.
2. **Identify** (a) border states, (b) Robert E. Lee.
3. **Define** (a) racism, (b) martial law.

Comprehension

4. Describe two advantages that the South had over the North at the start of the Civil War.
5. Describe two advantages that the North had over the South at the start of the Civil War.

6. Explain one strength and one weakness of each of the following leaders: (a) President Abraham Lincoln, (b) President Jefferson Davis.

Critical Thinking and Writing

7. **Identifying Alternatives** List arguments for and against a border state’s staying in the Union in 1861.
8. **Analyzing Ideas** Jefferson Davis said this of the Confederacy: “All we ask is to be left alone.” (a) What do you think Davis meant? (b) Why was the Union unwilling to agree to Davis’s wish?



Activity Making a Decision You are the captain of your hometown school basketball team. A rival school’s coach has offered you a scholarship if you will play for them. Write the coach a letter informing him of your decision and the reasons for your decision. As you write your letter, keep in mind Robert E. Lee’s difficult choice at the start of the Civil War.