Chapter 15
Battle Cries and Freedom Songs: 
The Civil War, 1861—1865

Chapter Summary

Chapter 15 offers an overview of the Civil War. Special emphasis is given to the relative advantages and disadvantages of each side on the eve of war; each side's military strategies and attitudes about the length and nature of the war; the major battles of the years from 1861 to 1863; the events culminating in Lincoln's decision to issue the Emancipation Proclamation; the impact of the Civil War on the northern economy, political life, and social life; the impact of the Civil War on the southern economy and government; the military accomplishments of Grant and Sherman during 1864 and 1865; and an assessment of the overall impact of the war on the United States.

I. Mobilization, North and South
   A. War Fever
   B. The North's Advantage in Resources
   C. Leaders, Governments, and Strategies
      1. Lincoln's fight for the border states
      2. Strategies and tactics

II. The Early War, 1861–1862
   A. First Bull Run
   B. The War in the West
   C. Reassessing the War: The Human Toll
   D. The War in the East

III. Turning Points, 1862–1863
   A. The Naval War and the Diplomatic War
      1. The naval war
      2. The diplomatic front
   B. Antietam
   C. Emancipation
      1. The Emancipation Proclamation
      2. “Stealing freedom”
      3. Black troops in the Union Army
   D. From Fredericksburg to Gettysburg
      1. Fredericksburg
      2. Chancellorsville
      3. Gettysburg
   E. Vicksburg, Chattanooga, and the West
      1. Vicksburg
      2. Chattanooga
      3. The war in the Trans-Mississippi West
IV. The War Transforms the North
A. Wartime Legislation and Politics
   1. Suppressing dissent
   2. Boosting the economy
   3. Conscription and the Draft Riots
B. The Northern Economy
   1. Trade unions and strikebreakers
   2. Profiteers and corruption
C. Northern Women and the War

V. The Confederacy Disintegrates
A. Southern Politics
B. The Southern Economy
C. Southern Women and the War

VI. The Union Prevails, 1864–1865
A. Grant’s Plan to End the War
   1. From the Wilderness to Cold Harbor
   2. Atlanta
B. The Election of 1864 and Sherman’s March
   1. The Republican victory
   2. Sherman’s March to the Sea
   3. Arming the Confederate’s slaves
C. The Road to Appomattox and the Death of Lincoln
   1. The surrender at Appomattox
   2. The death of Lincoln

VII. Conclusion

Learning Objectives

After a careful examination of Chapter 15, students should be able to do the following:

1. Describe the initial responses in the North and South to the outbreak of Civil War.
2. Analyze the advantages and disadvantages of the North and South in terms of their readiness for war.
3. Describe the difficulties in terms of leadership facing the South at the outset of the war. Comment on the leadership ability of Jefferson Davis.
4. Describe the response of the border states to the outbreak of Civil War.
5. Describe the leadership, strategy, tactics, and outcome of the First Battle of Bull Run.
6. Describe the conditions in army hospitals during the Civil War. Describe the role of women in the Civil War and comment on the conditions of camp life.
7. Describe the strengths and weaknesses of General George B. McClellan as leader of the Army of the Potomac. Describe the leadership style of General Robert E. Lee as head of the Army of Northern Virginia.
8. Explain the European response to the American Civil War. Explain why the South believed it could secure recognition from Britain.

9. Point out the reasons why the Battle of Antietam is considered a turning point in the Civil War.

10. Outline the provisions of the Emancipation Proclamation and describe southern, northern, and European responses to the document.

11. Describe the response of ex-slaves and free southern African Americans to the opportunity to fight in the Union Army. Comment on the treatment of African American troops by the United States Army and explain the significance of the performance of African American troops at Fort Wagner, South Carolina.

12. Explain the significance of Gettysburg and Vicksburg as turning points in the Civil War.

13. Define the term *writ of habeas corpus* and discuss Lincoln's suspension of the right during the Civil War. Explain the Supreme Court's decision in the case *Ex parte Milligan*.

14. Identify the Copperhead faction in the Northwest and explain its political agenda regarding the Civil War.

15. Identify the Radical Republican faction in Lincoln's party and explain the challenge it presented to Lincoln in terms of party policy and its overall effectiveness in influencing Republican policy.

16. Discuss the New York City Draft Riot by identifying the participants and their reasons for protesting conscription laws.

17. Describe the impact of the Civil War on the northern and southern economies.

18. Discuss the role of northern and southern women in the Civil War.

19. Identify characteristics of the Confederate political system that actually retarded the South's ability to wage war effectively.

20. Identify the two major initiatives Ulysses Grant brought to the Union war strategy. Identify three challenges faced by Grant in his efforts to implement these strategies.

21. Explain the significance of the fall of Atlanta to the overall Union war effort as well as to the outcome of the election of 1864.

22. Identify the candidates and issues of the 1864 presidential election. Explain what might have happened if Lincoln had failed to win reelection.

23. Explain the impact of Sherman's March to the Sea.

24. Outline the terms of surrender dictated by Grant at Appomattox.

25. Explain the importance of Lincoln's assassination to the future of Reconstruction in the defeated South.
26. Comment on the Civil War’s impact on the northern economy, the southern economy, the power of the federal government, and gender and race relations in the United States.

Topics for Classroom Lecture

1. Discuss the Confederacy in terms of its government organization and effectiveness during the Civil War. Explain to students the link between a confederate form of government and the southern devotion to states’ rights. What characteristics of a confederate form of government would make it difficult for Jefferson Davis to conduct a war? How would the fact that the Confederacy was a confederation impact efforts at recruitment, raising finances, and creating the fundamental unity needed to wage war and win? Discuss the irony of the fact that the Confederacy was fighting for states’ rights yet a states’ rights form of government would be one of the factors that would lead to defeat.

2. Discuss the distinctions between Union and Confederate military leadership during the Civil War. What strengths and weaknesses existed on each side regarding the quality and effectiveness of leadership? What advantages did the North have that would offset its difficulties in finding effective generals to lead the Union Army?

3. Discuss the issue of dissent during the Civil War. Choose either the North or the South as the focus of the lecture. If the North is the focus, look at the Copperheads or at the Irish in New York City. Who opposed the war and why? In what regions of the North was dissent strongest? Is there a reason for this? Is socio-economic background a factor? Do the same for the South. Who in the South opposed the Civil War and why? Again, is region a factor in defining dissent? Is class a factor?

4. Discuss the role of women in the Civil War. Consider American views on womanhood during the early nineteenth century, particularly the cult of domesticity. How did the Civil War impact these ideals regarding women and the home? Compare the roles of women in the Civil War to the roles of women during earlier wars in America as well as to the role of women in modern wars. Are there parallels? Distinctions?

Topics for Class Discussion and Essays

1. Have students read a copy of the Emancipation Proclamation before class, and then conduct a discussion focusing on some of the following questions:
   a. Did the Emancipation Proclamation end slavery in the United States?
   b. Where did the proclamation end slavery? Were there slave states where slavery was protected and not abolished? Where were those states? Why did Lincoln protect slavery in these states?
   c. Was the Emancipation Proclamation primarily the result of a moral decision or a military decision on Lincoln’s part? Was it an emotional decision or a pragmatic decision?
   d. What is the historical significance of the Emancipation Proclamation?

2. Have students read the Gettysburg Address, then hold a discussion focusing on some of the following areas:
   a. Have students choose phrases from the address that speak directly to the Union war aims of reunion and emancipation.
   b. Have students comment on Lincoln’s meaning of the phrase all men are created equal. Have students recall where the phrase comes from. What did the original author mean by
it? What did Lincoln mean by it? What has happened to the American understanding of equality during the period between the American Revolution and the Civil War?

c. Have students think about the phrase new birth of freedom. Again, are American ideas about freedom changing during the Civil War? To what extent? If the reference refers to emancipation, how much freedom was inherent in even the northern interpretation of emancipation?

3. Discuss the issue of civil rights during the Civil War. Have students respond to the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus by the Lincoln government during the war and the subsequent arrests for disloyalty. Does civil war justify this abridgment of civil rights? Should the Lincoln administration have tolerated the opposition of the western Copperheads to the Civil War? How does this situation during the Civil War compare to the use of the Sedition Act of 1798 by Federalists at the turn of the century? How does it compare to the use of the Sedition Act of 1918 by the Wilson administration during World War I?

4. Some historians have discussed the American Revolution as the First American Civil War. Now that students have studied both the Revolution and the Civil War, have them discuss the parallels and distinctions between the two.
   a. Consider the Continental Congress’s adoption of the Declaration of Independence and the South’s secession from the Union. Are there parallels between these two events? Are there distinctions?
   b. Was the Declaration of Independence by Americans in 1776 an act of secession? How could it be seen that way? Was the southern secession in 1860—1861 a declaration of independence? How could it be seen that way?
   c. How do victory and defeat define the way people identify military events in history? Would the American Revolution be called a revolution if the United States had lost? Would the American Civil War be called a civil war if the South had won?

**Topics for Term Papers and Class Projects**

1. Write a paper on the history of the 54th Massachusetts Regiment, focusing specifically on its performance at Fort Wagner, South Carolina. How was the regiment recruited? What is the significance of the Massachusetts 54th in terms of the lasting reputation and historical legacy of African American troops who fought in the Civil War?

2. Research the role of southern women in the Civil War, focusing on the diary of Mary Chesnutt of South Carolina. Chesnutt left an extensive record in which she addressed issues such as slavery, gender roles in the antebellum South, class distinction in the antebellum South, and the impact of the Civil War on southern society.

3. Research the military personality of William Tecumseh Sherman. Examine his innovative contributions to the northern war effort. Why is Sherman often considered the originator of concepts about modern war?

**Resources for Lectures and Research Projects**


**Audio-Visual Resources**

This nine-part epic series, which made Ken Burns an icon of popular history, uses archival photos and historical narrative to chronicle the events of the most tumultuous war in American history.

*Civil War Journal: Women at War*, A&E Video, 50 minutes.  
This video takes a look at the role of women in the Civil War.

This video examines the American idea of freedom as it developed during the two defining moments in American history: the Revolution and Civil War.

This feature film starring Denzel Washington and Matthew Broderick depicts the role of the Massachusetts 54th Colored Infantry in the Civil War.

*Images of the Civil War*, A&E Video.  
Civil War historian James McPherson narrates this examination of visuals from the Civil War, focusing primarily on the paintings and illustrations of Mort Kutsler.

This four-part series examines the complicated personal and political life of a statesman who was arguably the greatest president in American history.

Shearer presents a historical account of the events that inspired the feature film *Glory*. 