**IV. The American Civil War**

**Lincoln and the Election of 1860**

In 1854, a coalition of northern Democrats who opposed slavery, Whigs, and Free Soilers (a party opposing slavery in new territories) came together and formed the Republican Party. While the Republicans did not call for the immediate abolition of slavery, they did adopt the Free Soilers' position of opposing the extension of slavery into new US territories. Within a few years, former Illinois congressman, Abraham Lincoln, emerged as one of the party's most formidable political figures. After losing his bid for a US Senate seat in 1858, Lincoln bounced back to become the Republican's presidential candidate two years later. By the time of the presidential election of 1860, the country was at a boiling point regarding slavery. The issue caused deep division among members of the Democratic Party. At their convention, the Democrats split along sectional lines. Northern Democrats supported popular sovereignty and nominated Stephen Douglas. Southern Democrats wanted federal protection of slavery in all US territories and nominated Vice President John Breckinridge. The Republicans, of course, chose Lincoln. The South felt threatened by Lincoln's candidacy because, unlike Douglas who considered slavery a legitimate choice, Lincoln considered it a moral evil. The southern states feared that Lincoln would seek not only to prevent slavery in the new territories, but to dismantle it in the South as well. When Lincoln won the election, South Carolina responded by seceding (withdrawing) from the Union on December 20, 1860. Within two months, six other states had seceded as well: Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Louisiana and Texas. In February 1861, southern delegates from the seceded states met in Montgomery, Alabama to draft their own constitution and elected Jefferson Davis to serve as president of the new Confederate States of America.(They chose a Georgian, Alexander Stephens, to be their Vice President.)

**Fort Sumter**

President Abraham Lincoln knew he could not let the South secede. However, he also knew that US citizens had different opinions about going to war. Many in the North were sick of the slavery debate. They wanted Lincoln to let the South leave and take their disgusting slavery with them. Others wanted to preserve the Union but favored negotiating (talking to work out a peaceful solution) with the South. Only a few favored force. As a result, Lincoln did not have enough support to launch any military action against the Confederacy even if he wanted to. If there was going to be a war, the South would have to start it.

In April, 1861, Union troops located at Fort Sumter, South Carolina, were running low on supplies. Lincoln sent word to the governor of South Carolina that he was sending ships with food for the soldiers but no weapons. South Carolina would not tolerate Union troops so close to home any longer, however, and on April 12, Confederate forces opened fire. The South's attack forced the Union troops to leave the fort, but it also gave Lincoln the support he needed. Many northerners who at first opposed the war now felt the Union had been attacked. They were ready to support their president if he decided war was necessary. In response, President Lincoln issued a call for 75,000 volunteers. Border States (slave states in the Upper South) were forced to decide whether to support the Union or the Confederacy. With a great deal of controversy and division, Kentucky, Missouri, Maryland, and the northwest regions of Virginia remained in the Union, while the rest of Virginia, North Carolina, Arkansas and Tennessee joined the Confederacy. The capital of the Confederacy was then moved from Montgomery, Alabama to Richmond, Virginia. The Civil War had begun.

**Key Figures of the Civil War:**

***Abraham Lincoln:*** President of the United States of America during the Civil War and the first Republican president in history.

***Ulysses S. Grant:*** Initially an effective general in the Union's western battles, he eventually assumed command of the entire Union army in 1864. He defeated the South and accepted Robert E. Lee's surrender at Appomattox Courthouse. He went on to become the 18th president of the United States.

***William T. Sherman:*** Union general who took command of the western forces after Grant decided to remain with troops in the East. His capture of Atlanta in 1864 signaled to both the North and the South that the war was all but won for the Union and helped Lincoln win re-election in 1864. He is most remembered for his "march to the sea," in which he burned and destroyed southern cities and railways in an effort to disrupt the Confederate war effort and trap Lee between himself and General Grant.

***Jefferson Davis:*** First and only president of the Confederate States of America.

***Robert E. Lee:*** Assumed command of the Confederacy's Army of Northern Virginia after General Joseph Johnston was injured. Despite winning several impressive victories during the course of the war, he did not have nearly enough men to sustain the war effort past early 1865. He eventually surrendered to General Grant.

Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson: Confederate general and right-hand man to Robert E. Lee. Noted for his ability to use geography to his advantage, he swiftly navigated the Shenandoah Valley which stretched from the Allegheny Mountains in northern Virginia north towards Washington, D.C. One of his most brilliant moves came at the battle of Chancellorsville, when he successfully marched his troops over 12 miles undetected and attacked the unsuspecting Union forces. Jackson was such an effective leader that many believe the South would have won the war had he lived to fight at Gettysburg.

**Lincoln and the War**

**Anaconda Plan**

The First Battle of Bull Run (also known as First Manassas because Manassas was the nearest town) was the first confrontation between the two armies and a humiliating defeat for the Union forces. Because they were only 30 miles from Washington, DC, the victorious Confederates could have invaded the capital had they been better organized. Instead, they failed to pursue the retreating Union army and missed a golden opportunity. The battle made it evident that the war would be longer than expected and led Lincoln to adopt General Winfield Scott's Anaconda Plan. This plan involved surrounding the Confederacy and cutting off all supply lines, much like an anaconda wraps around its prey and squeezes the life out of it. It restricted southern trade and communications by seizing control of the Mississippi River, cutting Confederate territory in half, and instituted coastal blockades (use of naval power to keep ships from entering or leaving enemy ports, such as Savannah). Smugglers often used ships called "blockade runners" to get through these blockades and supply the South with goods.

**Lincoln's Political Struggles**

Lincoln was glad that several slave states elected to stay with the Union. He realized, however, that southern sympathizers were common in these areas. If Maryland joined the Confederacy, the Union capital of Washington, DC would be surrounded by Confederate territory. Concerned that Confederate sympathizers might successfully sway Maryland to secede, President Lincoln took drastic action. He declared martial law in Maryland, suspended the writ of habeas corpus (the guarantee that a person cannot be imprisoned without being brought before a judge) and jailed the strongest supporters of the Confederacy. This allowed the Maryland legislature to vote in favor of remaining with the Union. Lincoln continued to use such measures throughout the war.

Another point of contention in the North was Lincoln's decision to establish a draft. A draft is a policy in which the government selects certain individuals for military service rather than waiting for them to enlist. Lincoln's draft was particularly unpopular among the poor and immigrants. They resented the fact that wealthy citizens could avoid military service in exchange for paying $300 or by hiring a substitute to serve in their place. In July 1863, draft riots broke out in New York City, killing more than 100 people and resulting in the lynching of at least 11 African Americans by immigrants and poorer whites who blamed blacks for the war.

One group that was among Lincoln's most notable political opponents came to be called the Copperheads. Named after a deadly snake, Copperheads were Union Democrats who criticized Lincoln and the war. They played on some northerners' fears and predicted that freeing southern slaves would mean huge numbers of African Americans migrating north to steal white jobs. Radical Copperheads even encouraged Union soldiers to desert (abandon) the army, while calling on citizens to resist the draft.

**Emancipation Proclamation**

On January 1, 1863, following a much needed Union victory at Antietam, Maryland, President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation. This proclamation freed the slaves in the Confederate States, while maintaining slavery in the Border States loyal to the Union. (Lincoln still needed the support of these states and could not yet risk alienating them by forcing them to give up slavery.) With this executive order, Lincoln hoped to give the war a moral focus beyond just saving the Union. He also hoped to undermine the South's reliance on slave labor and ensure the support of England and France, both of which had already abolished slavery. The Emancipation Proclamation also encouraged free African Americans to serve in the Union army. Although originally not allowed to enlist, early Union defeats led Congress to authorize accepting African Americans into the army in 1862. On warships, whites and blacks served side by side. In the army, however, African Americans served only in all black regiments under the command of white officers. Seeing their battle as one to free their own people from the bonds of slavery, African Americans served notably during the war. One of the most valiant African American units, the 54th Massachusetts, actually saw its first action in Georgia. The movie Glory tells the story of the 54th Massachusetts.

**Election of 1864 and Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address**

The discontent that many in the North felt towards the war meant that Lincoln was in danger of losing the 1864 election. In an effort to defeat Lincoln and negotiate an end to the war, the Democrats nominated former Union general, George McClellan, for president. However, Sherman's capture of Atlanta two months before the election signaled to everyone that Union victory was within reach, and Lincoln was elected to a second term. During his second inaugural address, in March 1865, Lincoln expressed both his conviction that slavery was evil and his hope of reuniting the nation once the war was over. Rather than basking in the glory of what everyone knew would soon be a Union victory and the end of the Confederacy, Lincoln expressed his sorrow that so many on both sides had suffered and communicated a vision for rebuilding the South rather than punishing it.

**Key Battles of the Civil War**

**The Eastern Theater:**

On land, the war was fought on two primary fronts, or theaters: Eastern and Western. In 1862, Robert E. Lee assumed command of the Army of Northern Virginia after General Joseph Johnston was wounded. One of his first major victories came at the Second Battle of Bull Run (Second Manassas). The battle ended Union hopes of invading Richmond and emboldened Lee to attempt an invasion of the North.

**Antietam (September 17, 1862)**

Lee and his generals tried to maintain secrecy as they made preparations for their invasion. Meanwhile, General McClellan (the Union's commanding general), remained unaware of the Confederate army's whereabouts until a copy of Lee's orders were found wrapped around some cigars at an abandoned Confederate camp. Now aware of Lee's plans, McClellan saw to it that Lee met a prepared Union force at Antietam Creek, Maryland. The battle of Antietam proved to be the bloodiest single day of the war, halting the Confederate advance. McClellan hesitated, however, and Lee's army slipped away to fight another day.

**Chancellorsville (May 1-5, 1863**)

The Battle of Chancellorsville is known by many as "Lee's perfect battle" because of the great planning and good fortune that aided the Confederates. Thanks to the efforts of his most gifted general, Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson, Lee's army defeated more than 70,000 Union troops with only 40,000 Confederate soldiers. Unfortunately for the Confederacy, however, Jackson was accidentally shot by his own troops while scouting the enemy's position at night. His left arm had to be amputated, leading to Lee's famous quote, "Jackson has lost his left arm, but I have lost my right." Although his injuries did not initially seem life threatening, Jackson died after contracting pneumonia during his recovery. As a result, Robert E. Lee was without his most talented and reliable commander at Gettysburg.

**Gettysburg (July 1-3, 1863)**

Fought just outside Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, the battle of Gettysburg was a key turning point in the war. Without Jackson to assist him, Lee's forces proved less aggressive than usual and failed to win valuable high ground early in the battle. Union forces under the command of General George Meade defeated Lee's army and ended any hope the South had of successfully invading the North. With more than 51,000 soldiers killed, wounded, or missing, Gettysburg was the bloodiest battle of the entire Civil War. Four months later President Lincoln gave his famed Gettysburg Address at a ceremony dedicating a cemetery on the sight of the battlefield. Although a relatively short speech, it was a powerful affirmation of Lincoln's desire to see the Union survive and the nation reunited.

**The Western Theater:** Vicksburg (May 15 - July 4, 1863)

In the late spring of 1863, the town of Vicksburg, Mississippi was the last Confederate obstacle to total Union control of the Mississippi River. Ignoring advice to withdraw, General Ulysses S. Grant laid siege (a strategy by which an army surrounds its enemy, cuts off their supplies, and starves them into surrendering) to Vicksburg for almost two months. By the time the town finally surrendered on July 4, residents had been reduced to eating horses, mules, dogs, and even rats.

**Sherman's Atlanta Campaign and March to the Sea (May - December 1864)**

In 1864, Lincoln appointed Grant to be overall commander of the entire Union army. Grant decided to take command of the eastern forces and put his most trusted general, William T. Sherman, in charge of his western forces. In May 1864, Sherman began an invasion of Georgia. He wanted to reach Atlanta because of its importance as a railway hub. If Sherman took Atlanta, he could seriously hurt the South by disrupting its major rail lines. As

Sherman advanced south, General Johnston's Confederate forces tried to delay his march with several small attacks.

Johnston did not want to meet Sherman in a full-scale battle because Sherman had more men and Johnston feared that a defeat would mean the end of his army. Finally, after a series of bloody fights, Johnston's forces prepared to make their stand just north of Atlanta at Kennesaw Mountain. When a direct assault on Kennesaw Mountain failed, Sherman decided to flank (move around) Johnston's army to reach Atlanta. The move worked and, on July 8, the first Union forces crossed the Chattahoochee River to reach the outskirts of Atlanta. Jefferson Davis was furious with Johnston for not engaging Sherman in a full-scale battle and replaced him with General John Bell Hood. By then, however, it was too late. Hood evacuated the city on September 1, 1864, and Sherman's army moved into Atlanta the very next day. Sherman's successful Atlanta campaign not only placed the city under Union control, it also reignited support for President Lincoln in the North. Before Atlanta, many northerners wanted to negotiate with the South and end the war. After Sherman's success, however, people in the Union believed victory was in sight and re-elected Lincoln to a second term.

After taking Atlanta, Sherman ordered much of the city burned. He then began a march from Atlanta to Savannah that became known as his march to the sea. On its way to the coast, Sherman's army burned buildings, destroyed rail lines, set fire to factories, and demolished bridges. Sherman hoped to cripple the South's ability to make and ship supplies so that it could not keep fighting. People in Savannah were so terrified by news of the destruction that, when Sherman finally reached the city, they surrendered without a fight. Sherman then turned north into the Carolinas. All the while, General Joseph Johnston continued trying to resist Sherman as best he could.

**Union Victory**

In March of 1864, President Lincoln put Ulysses S. Grant in command of the Union army. Grant, knowing he had far more men than Lee, began a campaign designed to crush the Confederate army in a series of head-to-head confrontations. Pushing south, Grant engaged Lee in a number of bloody battles. In less than two months, Grant's army suffered some 65,000 casualties. Still, the Union's overwhelming numbers meant that the Confederates were the ones on the retreat. Finally, when Lee's army found itself surrounded in Virginia, the Confederate general elected to surrender rather than see more lives lost. On April 9, 1865, Robert E. Lee surrendered to Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Courthouse. Although some fighting continued afterwards, this effectively ended the war. Two weeks later, the largest and last major surrender of the war took place when General Joseph Johnston surrendered his Confederate army to General William T. Sherman at a farm house in Durham, North Carolina, known as the Bennett Place.

Looking back, it is not hard to understand why the Union ultimately won the war. The North had a much larger population. As a result, the Union army had more men and the Union had more labor to produce war supplies and keep the economy running during the conflict. The North also possessed more railroads. Railroads allowed the Union to move supplies more efficiently and quicker than the Confederates in most cases. Finally, the northern economy had much more industry. Its factories allowed the Union to produce weapons, ammunition, clothes, blankets, and other supplies much easier and in greater number than the South. Although southerners possessed a fiery determination to defend their homeland and way of life, in the end, they could not overcome the North's advantages long enough to win.