

Prompt:Evaluate the extent to which the Civil War fostered change in the United States economy in the period from 1861 to 1900.

Essay:

As the Civil War exploded in America and eventually died down, the United States' economy exploded as well. While the Northern economy thrived, the Southern economy quickly fell apart.

Before the Civil War, the United States was deeply divided along economic and social lines. The Southern economy was built on the institution of slavery, with large plantations relying on enslaved labor to produce cash crops like cotton, which was the primary export of the region and a key driver of its economy. In contrast, the North was rapidly industrializing, with factories, railroads, and wage labor forming the backbone of its economy. These regional differences not only shaped the economic systems of the United States but also fueled tensions that would eventually lead to the Civil War. The abolition of slavery during and after the war fundamentally disrupted the Southern economy, which had relied on free labor to sustain its agricultural dominance.

However, up in the North, the economy was prospering. Northern industry was booming. Supplies for the war had been consistently produced and were always constant when needed. Factory workers were employed, and factory owners were reeling in money. This, though, could prove to be an issue for the United States as a whole.

The opposing economies in America would create a major disaster. With the South losing the war, their homes were destroyed, families were starving, and lands were completely ruined. War expenses were a major issue, and even better, the South had just lost their main source of income—cotton. So who would pay these expenses when the South was completely out of money? Well, it seemed as if the prospering North would be fit. However, the Northern states were extremely unhappy about that idea. They had won the war and thus, should not be paying for the South who lost.

These conflicts would ultimately lead to the period of Reconstruction. The Civil War brought about a disastrous change in the United States in the period from 1861 to 1900. The decline of the South alongside the success of the North evidently resulted in a variety of conflicts that would destroy the American economy.

Feedback:

A. Thesis/Claim: 1 The entire first paragraph is considered the thesis. It establishes a line of reasoning about Northern economic growth and Southern economic decline during and after the war. The response earned 1 point for the thesis.

B. Contextualization: 1 The response provides a clear discussion of broader historical context in the second paragraph, describing the prewar economic divisions between the North and South. It explains how the Southern economy was reliant on slavery and agricultural exports, while the North was industrializing. This contextualization effectively situates the abolition of slavery and the economic impacts of the Civil War within the larger historical framework, earning the point for contextualization.

C. Evidence: 0 The discussion of cotton is generic but provides one piece of evidence. However, the lack of a second piece of evidence means the response earned no points for evidence.

D. Analysis and Reasoning: 1 The last paragraph is a restatement of the thesis and the prompt. However, the next-to-last paragraph provides a discussion of change over time, if unfocused, that is sufficient to have earned 1 point for analysis and reasoning.

Total Score: 3