

1865: The End of the Civil War

A Reading A-Z Level Z Leveled Book
Word Count: 1,527

Connections

Writing and Art

Write a short essay from the perspective of a Northerner, a Southerner, or a slave. Include details about what life was like before, during, and after the Civil War. Research additional information, if needed.

Social Studies

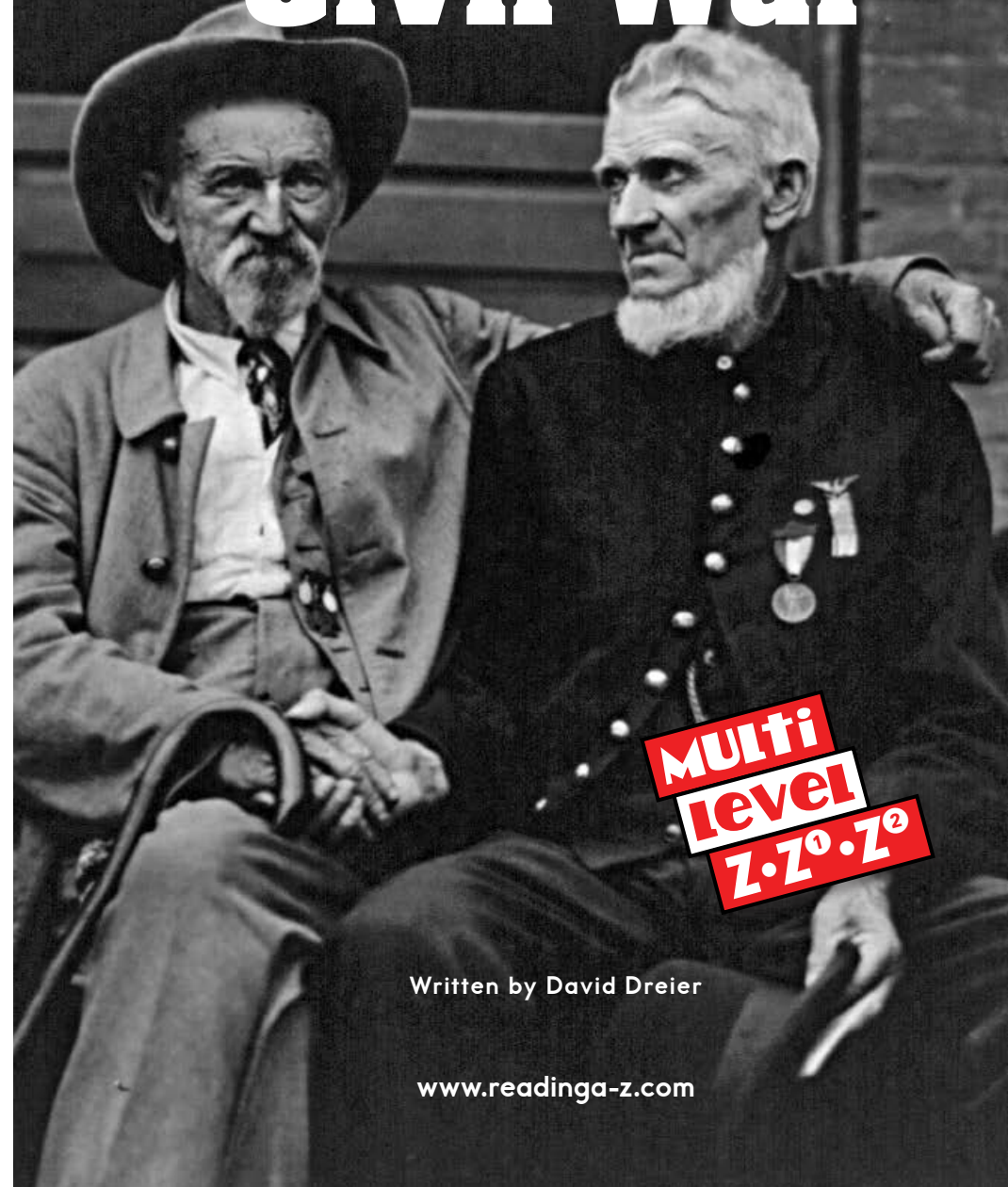
Choose one historical figure from the book. Create an informational poster about that person using facts from the text and additional resources, if needed. Be sure to cite your references.

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LEVELED BOOK • Z

1865: The End of the Civil War



Written by David Dreier

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Glossary

abolitionists (<i>n.</i>)	people who fought to make slavery illegal (p. 6)
amendment (<i>n.</i>)	a change or addition to a document or law, such as the U.S. Constitution (p. 10)
campaign (<i>n.</i>)	a planned series of actions designed to reach a certain goal (p. 10)
casualties (<i>n.</i>)	people injured, killed, or missing during a war or disaster (p. 11)
Confederate (<i>adj.</i>)	having to do with the Southern states that separated from the United States during the Civil War (p. 4)
Emancipation Proclamation (<i>n.</i>)	an order issued by President Lincoln in 1863 that freed all the slaves under Confederate authority (p. 8)
fugitive (<i>n.</i>)	a person who is running from something, usually legal authorities (p. 6)
indivisible (<i>adj.</i>)	unable to be separated (p. 15)
mourning (<i>n.</i>)	the act of expressing grief, especially for someone who has died (p. 13)
representatives (<i>n.</i>)	people chosen to speak, vote, or otherwise act on behalf of an individual or group (p. 6)
seceded (<i>v.</i>)	formally withdrew from membership in an organization (p. 7)
Union (<i>n.</i>)	the group of states that fought against the Confederacy during the American Civil War; the United States (p. 7)

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Focus Question

How did the Civil War change the United States?

Words to Know

abolitionists	fugitive
amendment	indivisible
campaign	mourning
casualties	representatives
Confederate	seceded
Emancipation	Union
Proclamation	

Front cover: Nearly fifty years after the Civil War, two veterans from opposite sides shake hands at Gettysburg in 1913.

Title page: Confederate cannons at Richmond, Virginia, 1865

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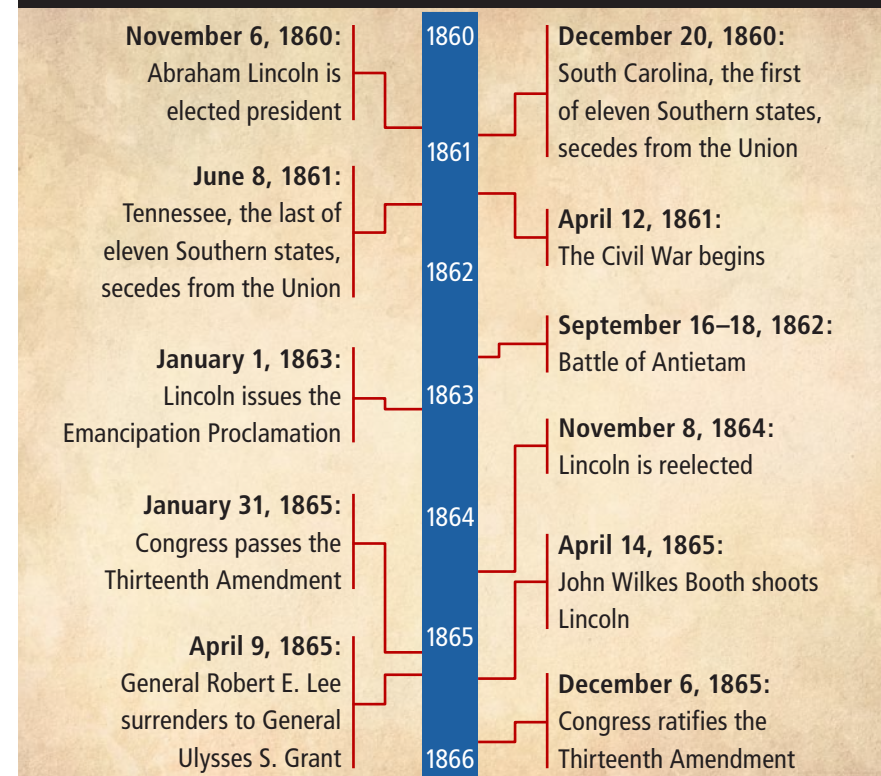
Correlation

LEVEL Z	
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Reading Recovery	N/A
DRA	50

Beyond freeing the slaves, the Civil War established the principle that the United States is an **indivisible** nation. States, whatever their feelings about their country, do not have the right to secede from the Union.

In the years since the Civil War, the nation has seen other times of great strain. Americans continue to be divided today on many issues, in many ways. Yet we remain one nation—the United States of America.

Civil War Timeline



Legacy of the Civil War

The end of the Civil War also began the next chapter in the history of the United States. By December 6, 1865, the Thirteenth Amendment had been ratified by enough states to become law. Two more amendments—the Fourteenth and Fifteenth—giving former slaves civil rights and voting rights, were passed within the next five years.



From Civil War to Civil Rights

After the war, the U.S. government protected the freed slaves under a system called Reconstruction. After Reconstruction ended in 1877, the Southern states found ways to get around the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. Black people sank back into a condition of domination by white people.

In the 1960s, black people finally obtained the rights supposedly guaranteed to them by the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. The enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 can be considered the final chapter of the Civil War.

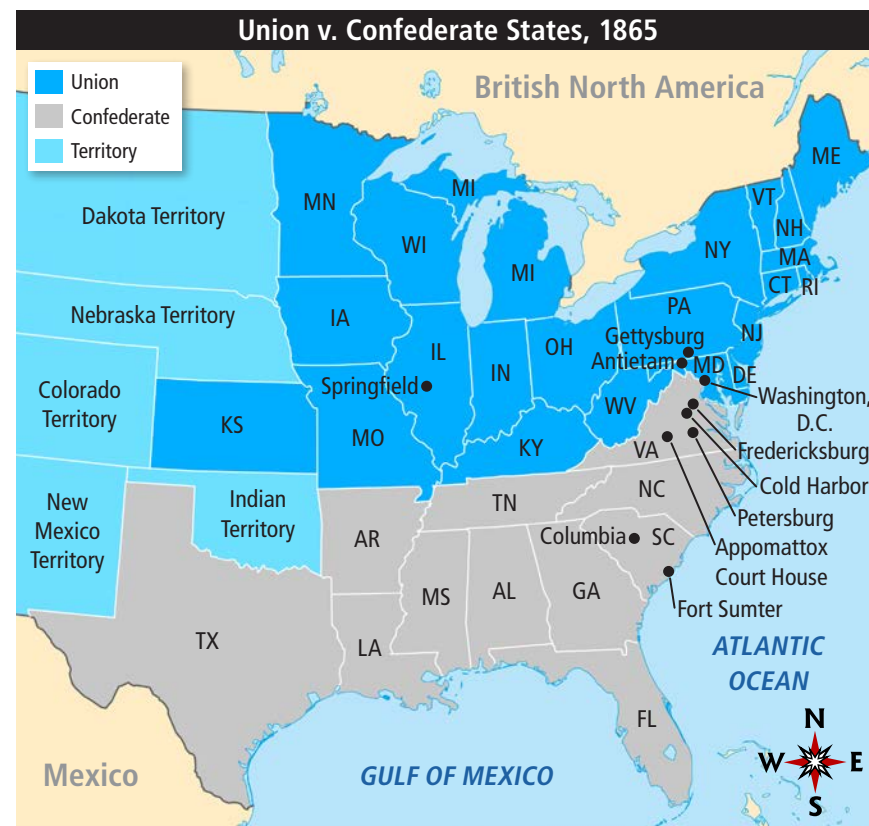


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The Lost Cause

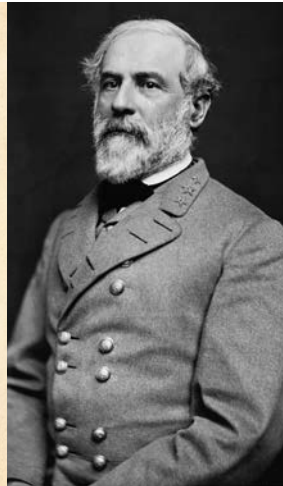
The end had come. It was early spring 1865, and General Robert E. Lee realized that his exhausted **Confederate** Army could do no more. Although Lee had said that he “would rather die a thousand deaths” than surrender, he now saw no choice. The South’s cause had been crushed.

On April 9, Lee put on a fresh uniform. He rode wearily on his horse to meet U.S. General Ulysses S. Grant at a private home in the town of Appomattox Court House, Virginia. He arrived at the house and sat down to wait.

Half an hour later, Grant made his appearance, clad in an old, muddy uniform. The two generals engaged in friendly conversation. Then they got down to the business of ending the war.

What Else Lee Surrendered

When the Civil War broke out, President Lincoln offered Robert E. Lee command of the Union armies. Lee declined, saying he could not fight against his beloved state of Virginia. After Lee departed to join the Confederacy, the U.S. government took his estate, Arlington. The grounds of the estate, located across the Potomac River from Washington, D.C., became Arlington National Cemetery.



The Killing of President Lincoln

The United States remained united. Yet the North’s joy over its victory in the war soon turned back to **mourning**. On April 14, 1865, John Wilkes Booth gained entrance to the Lincolns’ private box at Ford’s Theatre in Washington, D.C., as the president and his wife, Mary, sat watching a play. Booth fired a single shot into Lincoln’s head and then jumped down to the stage. The unconscious Lincoln was taken across the street to a private house. He died early the next morning.

Booth was an actor, fiercely opposed both to Lincoln and abolition. He was part of a group that sought revenge for the defeat of the Confederacy. They planned to kill not only Lincoln but also Vice President Andrew Johnson and Secretary of State William Seward. As it turned out, only Lincoln was killed, though Seward received serious knife wounds.

Union troops tracked Booth and another man to a farm in Virginia. Booth was shot to death. Others in his group were later tried for their crimes. Four men were found guilty and hanged.

Lincoln’s body was sent by a funeral train back to his home state of Illinois. Although gone, Lincoln lived long enough to achieve his main goals: saving the Union and ending slavery.

The South Surrenders

Before dawn on April 3, Lee fled Petersburg. He knew that staying there any longer would doom his army, but Union forces doggedly pursued Lee's retreat. Grant was determined that Lee would not escape. On April 6, Grant's army killed or wounded about eight thousand Confederate soldiers. Lee saw that surrender was the only reasonable option. After four bloody years, the Civil War was coming to an end.

Grant offered generous terms for the South's surrender. He allowed all Confederate soldiers to return home. He also agreed that Lee's troops could keep their horses and mules. Because Lee's men were nearly starving, Grant ordered food for thousands.

Other Confederate forces in the South had not yet given up the fight, but they all soon surrendered. On April 2, Confederate President Jefferson Davis fled the Confederate capital, Richmond. On May 10, he was captured and would spend two years in prison.

The Civil War was over.



This poster announces the end of the Civil War on April 9, 1865.

Slavery and the Union

In the decades leading up to the Civil War, the North and South were already divided. One important difference was slavery. The North was a region of growing industry and small farms, with large-scale agriculture playing a lesser part in the economy. Although slavery had existed in the North, all Northern states had outlawed the practice by 1804.

The South was a much different world, its economy built on cotton. Southern plantation owners had found that the cheapest way to plant and harvest cotton was with slave labor. By the mid-1800s, nearly four million slaves from Africa were in the Southern states. They toiled at many kinds of jobs, but most lived and worked on cotton plantations.



A South Carolina slave family poses together in 1862.

At the same time, Northern **abolitionists** were denouncing human bondage in the South. The **Fugitive** Slave Act of 1850 was a federal law that made a fugitive from one state a fugitive in every state. It required people in free states to return runaway slaves to their masters, yet some Northerners helped runaway slaves escape.

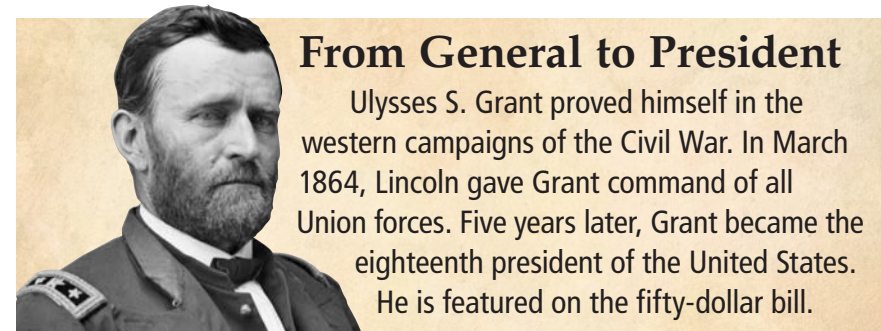
Still, the Civil War might never have happened if the United States had remained a small collection of states in the eastern part of the continent. Instead, during the 1800s, the nation was expanding into huge, newly acquired territories to the west. Those territories were becoming states, and Congress had to decide whether new states would allow slavery.

The Southern states wanted to keep a rough balance between slave states and free states. If free states outnumbered slave states, Southern **representatives** would be outnumbered in Congress, since the representatives from free states would not share the interests of the South and would likely vote against Southern representatives on various issues. That balance between slave and free states was maintained for several decades, but tensions between North and South were growing.

“They would enter houses and, in the presence of helpless women and children, pour turpentine on the beds and set them on fire. . . . The wretched people rushing from their homes were not allowed to keep even the few necessities they gathered up in their flight.” Throughout the burning city, LeConte recalled, “a quivering molten ocean seemed to fill the air and sky.”

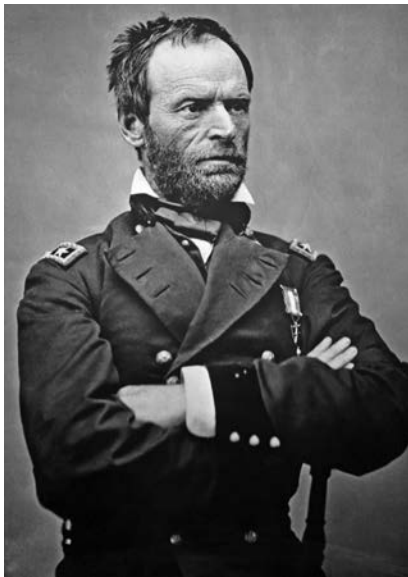
Meanwhile, to the north, Grant had been waging a grim and steady campaign against Lee. One horrible battle took place in mid-1864 at Cold Harbor, Virginia. Grant ordered an attack on Confederate lines that caused some seven thousand Union **casualties** in twenty minutes. One Union soldier later said, “This wasn’t war, but murder.”

Such bloodshed earned Grant the nickname “The Butcher.” Still, Grant was wearing down Lee’s army. By early 1865, he had Lee stopped in trenches outside of Petersburg, Virginia.



Instead, Lincoln won. Reelection gave him the strength to continue the war in order to reunite the country and end slavery. In January 1865, Congress passed the Thirteenth **Amendment**, an addition to the Constitution that ended slavery in the United States. Lincoln also finally had the generals he needed: Ulysses S. Grant and William Tecumseh Sherman. Those two commanders waged brutal war on the Confederacy in hopes of ending the war as swiftly as possible.

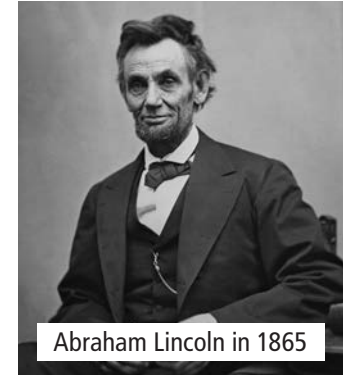
Sherman's **campaign** took him through the deep South. In late 1864, after burning much of Atlanta, his men marched across the state of Georgia. They tore up rail lines, destroyed bridges, and set fire to many homes.



General William Tecumseh Sherman
in 1865

In January 1865, Sherman's army turned northward into South Carolina. Emma LeConte, a seventeen-year-old girl in Columbia, South Carolina, described the nighttime burning of the city by Sherman's troops:

The country reached a breaking point with the U.S. presidential election of November 1860. To the South's dismay, Abraham Lincoln, candidate of the antislavery Republican Party, was elected president of the United States.



Abraham Lincoln in 1865

The Southern states feared that a Republican-led government would destroy their economy and put an end to their way of life. After the election, seven Southern states—South Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas—**seceded** from the **Union**. In February 1861, they officially formed the Confederate States of America, which they hoped would be a permanent nation separate from the United States.

The war began just two months later in Charleston, South Carolina. On April 12, 1861, after a Union commander refused to surrender the Union fort there, Confederate forces opened fire. Forced to choose sides, four other Southern states—Virginia, Arkansas, North Carolina, and Tennessee—also seceded and joined the Confederacy.

No one had any idea how terrible the war would be.

Waging Total War

In the first two years of the war, little went well for the Union. President Lincoln's generals failed him one after another. Still, a Union victory in 1862 made it possible for Lincoln to issue the **Emancipation Proclamation**, which granted freedom to slaves in the Confederacy. Freeing all the slaves, along with saving the Union, had become Lincoln's main goals for the war.

Although the North felt its cause was just, Union losses were horrible. In one battle, a Union survivor recalled that "... men fell like leaves in autumn. It seems miraculous that any of us escaped at all."

The cries of the wounded, another man said, were "weird, unearthly, terrible to hear and bear."

The Human Costs of the War

The Civil War was the deadliest war in U.S. history. At least 620,000 Americans, both Union and Confederate, died in the four-year conflict. The numbers of casualties—those killed, wounded, or missing—in some battles were staggering. The casualties in the one-day battle of Antietam, Maryland, in 1862 totaled nearly 23,000. To date, it remains the single bloodiest day in U.S. history.

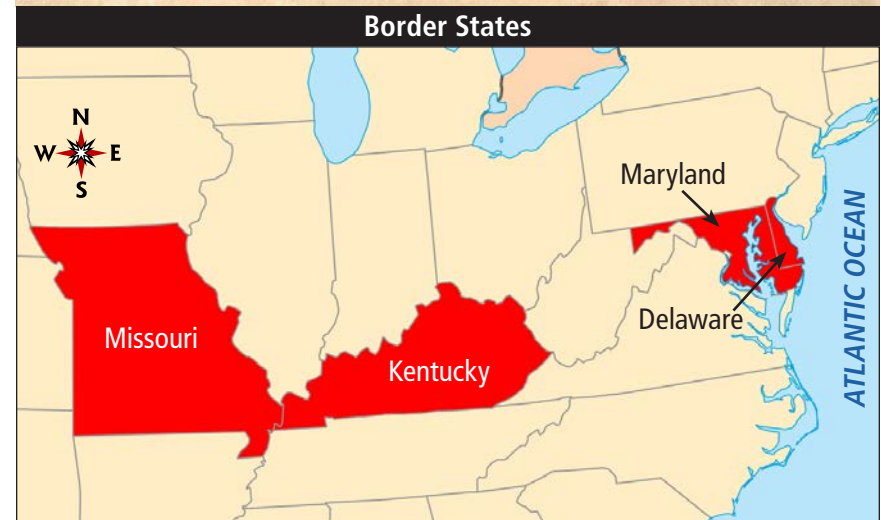
Yet in those days before modern medicine, it was diseases and infections that caused two-thirds of Civil War deaths. Battlefield surgeons routinely—though unknowingly—spread infections with unsterile instruments.

Freedom for Some

The Emancipation Proclamation freed many slaves, but not all of them. On the first day of January 1863, it granted freedom to all slaves in "enemy territory." This allowed slaves in Confederate areas to fight for the Union—soldiers whom the North badly needed. It also redefined the war by making it a crusade against slavery.

Yet the proclamation did not pertain to slaves in the border states of Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri. Why not?

These border states, though slaveholding, never seceded from the Union. Lincoln was concerned that freeing slaves in these states would persuade the states to leave the Union and join the Confederacy. The country's remaining slaves would have to wait two more years to be free.



As the war dragged on, Northern feeling against the fighting grew. Unlike Republicans, Democrats called for an end to battle and a negotiated end to the war. The 1864 election would determine the whole direction of the war—and Lincoln believed he would lose.