CHAPTER 20

Girding for War: The North and the South, 1861–1865

# Focus Questions

1. What did Lincoln do that provoked South Carolina to bombard Fort Sumter, and what did Lincoln do immediately following the attack?

2. Which states were Border States and how did they influence Lincoln’s statements and actions?

3. At the outbreak of war, what advantages did the South have and what advantages did the North have?

4. Why did the South believe they would be able to enlist foreign intervention and why were they unable to do so?

5. What incidents threatened peaceful relations between the Union and Britain?

6. How did the war impact the economy in the North and the economy in the South?

# Chapter Themes

**Theme:** The North effectively brought to bear its long-term advantages of industrial might and human resources to wage a devastating total war against the South. The war helped organize and modernize northern society, while the South, despite heroic efforts, was economically and socially crushed.

**Theme:** Lincoln’s skillful political leadership helped keep the crucial Border States in the Union and maintain northern morale, while his effective diplomacy kept Britain and France from aiding the Confederacy.

chapter summary

South Carolina’s firing on Fort Sumter aroused the North for war. Lincoln’s call for troops to suppress the rebellion drove four upper South states into the Confederacy. Lincoln used an effective combination of political persuasion and force to keep the deeply divided Border States in the Union.

The Confederacy enjoyed initial advantages of upper-class European support, military leadership, and a defensive position on its own soil. The North enjoyed the advantages of lower-class European support, industrial and population resources, and political leadership.

The British upper classes sympathized with the South and abetted Confederate naval efforts. But effective diplomacy and Union military success thwarted those efforts and kept Britain, as well as France, neutral in the war.

Lincoln’s political leadership proved effective in mobilizing the North for war, despite political opposition and resistance to his infringement on civil liberties. The North eventually mobilized its larger troop resources for war and ultimately turned to an unpopular and unfair draft system.

Northern economic and financial strengths enabled it to gain an advantage over the less-industrialized South. The changes in society opened new opportunities for women, who had contributed significantly to the war effort in both the North and South. Since most of the war was waged on Southern soil, the South was left devastated by the war.

# developing the chapter: suggested lecture or discussion topics

* Analyze the Sumter crisis and the secession of the upper South. The focus might be on Lincoln’s success in maneuvering South Carolina into firing the first shot, thereby arousing the North for a war it had previously been reluctant to fight.

REFERENCE: Richard Current, *Lincoln and the First Shot* (1963).

* Explain the various internal political conflicts in the North, focusing on Copperheadism and the 1864 campaign. Point out how crucial it was for Lincoln to achieve military success to overcome such opposition, since any political settlement would have meant recognition of the Confederacy.

REFERENCE: James A. Rawley, *The Politics of Union* (1974).

* Examine Lincoln the wartime leader and Lincoln the martyr and hero. Contrast the many contemporary criticisms of his leadership with those qualities that now constitute his greatness.

REFERENCE: David H. Donald, *Lincoln* (1995).

* Explain the role of women both on the home front and in such new areas as battlefield nursing. Compare and contrast the situations and ideologies of northern and southern women.

REFERENCES: Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber, eds., *Divided Houses* (1992); Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (1996).

# for further interest: additional class topics

* Identify the significance of the Border States to both the North and the South, and examine how they influenced decisions of the Union and the Confederacy. (See boxed quote on page 424.)
* Discuss different interpretations of the Civil War. Point out how its meaning has varied according to changes in North-South and black-white relations.
* Focus on the might-have-beens that could have resulted in a Confederate victory. Specifically examine the need for the South to secure foreign intervention. If the South had been able to quickly realize the failure of King Cotton, what could it have done instead to procure foreign recognition and/or intervention?
* Discuss the effects of the Civil War on the home front, North and South, including ways the war affected women. (See boxed quote on page 434.)

# character sketches

## Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865)

Born in a log cabin in Kentucky, Lincoln, who would become our sixteenth president, had only vague but fond memories of his mother, Nancy, who died when he was nine. His father was a stocky, heavyset, hard-drinking frontier drifter. Lincoln became estranged from him and did not attend his final illness or funeral, even though he was only seventy miles away at the time.

The story that Lincoln’s one true love was the beautiful Ann Rutledge rests solely on the report of his law partner William Herndon following Lincoln’s death, thirty years after the supposed romance. Lincoln did know Ann Rutledge, but he never mentioned her, and Mary Todd Lincoln emphatically denied the Herndon story.

His natural melancholy was much deepened by the deaths of his children, especially eleven-year-old Willie in 1862. He thought a good deal about the afterlife, and at his wife’s instigation, brought spiritualist mediums into the White House and attended séances to communicate with the dead.

**Quote:** “The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present.… As our case is new, so we must think anew, and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves, and then we shall save our country.” (Message to Congress, 1862)

REFERENCE: David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln* (1995).

## Elizabeth Blackwell (1821–1910)

Blackwell was the first American female physician and a pioneer in developing medical knowledge and health care for women and children.

Blackwell was born in Bristol, England, into a family of twelve children. Her father, a charming sugar refiner and social reformer, believed in women’s rights and was a great influence on Elizabeth. He died when she was eleven, shortly after the family immigrated to America.

She was turned down by many medical schools before being accepted by Geneva College—though the acceptance was initially considered a joke by the male students.

After graduation from Geneva and further study in England, she opened a clinic on Bleecker Street in New York and began treating poor women. In 1868, she opened her own women’s medical college. She later wrote extensively on “the human element in sex,” and attempted to combat ignorance and prejudice concerning women’s sexuality.

**Quote:** “The idea of acquiring a doctor’s degree gradually assumed the aspect of a great moral struggle, and the moral fight possessed great attraction for me.” (Memoir, 1879)

REFERENCE: Dorothy Clarke Wilson, *Lone Woman: The Story of Elizabeth Blackwell* (1970).

## Clara Barton (1821–1912)

Barton was the Civil War nurse who founded and led the American Red Cross for twenty-three years.

Born in Massachusetts of old Yankee stock, Barton was close to her family, including her older brother David, whom she nursed through a two-year illness. Shy and lonely, she attempted schoolteaching, but gave it up to become a clerk in the U.S. Patent Office in Washington—one of the first female federal employees.

When she saw the lack of medical facilities after the Battle of Bull Run, she organized her friends to provide first aid, using her own house as a storeroom. Scorned at first, she eventually won the respect of military officers and men.

She suffered a nervous breakdown after the war and went to Europe for relief, where she learned of the newly formed Red Cross in Switzerland. She returned to the United States and waged a long, difficult campaign to found the American branch of the organization in 1881.

**Quote:** “The paths of charity are over the roadways of ashes, and he who would tread them must be prepared to meet opposition, misconstruction, jealousy, and calumny. Let his work be that of angels, still it will not satisfy all.” (Speech, 1887)

REFERENCE: Stephen B. Oates, *A Woman of Valor: Clara Barton and the Civil War* (1995).

# questions for class discussion

1. How justified were Lincoln’s wartime abridgments of civil liberties and his treatment of the Copperheads?

2. What were the advantages of the South during the Civil War? What were the advantages of the North? What advantage proved most important to each side? What were the disadvantages of each side? Which disadvantage proved most troublesome to each side?

3. To what degree did Britain get involved in the American Civil War? Assess the importance of that degree of involvement to the North and to the South. Review key events involving the British (cotton, grain, Trent affair, Alabama, and Laird rams). (See boxed quotes on page 429 and page 430.)

4. How did the American Civil War reshape the Americas? What did European powers do in the Americas during the American Civil War?

5. How was the impact of the Civil War different for the soldiers and civilians of the North and South?

6. Did the results of the Civil War justify its cost? Does the answer to that question depend partly on whether you are a Northerner or a Southerner, black or white?

7. What made Lincoln a great president? Was it primarily his political leadership or his personal qualities and character?

# CONTENDING VOICES: HORACE GREELEY VS. ABRAHAM LINCOLN

**Questions for Class Discussion**

1. What did Horace Greeley want President Lincoln to do and why?

2. How did Lincoln respond to Greeley’s criticism?

# makers of america: BILLY YANK AND JOHNNY REB

## Questions for Class Discussion

. How were troops in the Union and in the Confederacy different from their European counterparts of this era? Why can troops on both sides of the American Civil War be called citizen-soldiers?

. Focus on the ordinary soldiers, North and South. Point out the differences (for example, in supplies) as well as the similarities in the experiences of Billy Yank and Johnny Reb.

3. How did veterans of both sides in the Civil War embrace a reconciliationist narrative over the war by the 1880s?