

## Power Notes: The Civil War & Reconstruction

**LEARNING OBJECTIVE:** *Understand the similarities and differences that existed between the ante-bellum North and South.*

- 1) Similarities: a) a shared history; b) interdependent economics; and c) both looked to the West for their future.
- 2) Differences: The North was manufacturing society based on free labor. The South was an agricultural society based on slave labor. The West tended toward family farms.
- 3) Northern working class opposed slavery for economic reasons. They did not want competition with slave labor. South supported slavery because: a) it was profitable and southern capital was heavily invested in slaves; b) slave ownership determined one's status in southern society; c) it was a method of race control; and e) it insured a reliable labor supply for the plantation economy.
- 4) The South wanted to spread slavery into the new territories and the North opposed this movement. The region that controlled the new territories would control the political, economic, and social power of the nation.

**Importance:** The conflict over regionalism and slavery led to the Civil War.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVE:** *Understand the events that illustrate the conflicts between the North and the South from the Compromise of 1850.*

- 1) Prior to 1850 the following events had occurred: The Missouri Compromise (1820); Abolitionists turn militant (1830s); the nullification crisis of 1832; the question of Texas, 1836-45; and the Wilmot Proviso (1846).
- 2) The Compromise of 1850: a) California came into the Union as a free state; b) The rest of the Mexican cession was organized by popular sovereignty; c) the slave trade was abolished in Washington, DC; and, d) a stronger fugitive slave law was enacted.
- 3) Uncle Tom's Cabin (1852) reinforced regional stereotypes.
- 4) The Gadsden Purchase (1853). Northern Senators turned down 9,000 square miles of Mexican territory to prevent the spread of slavery.
- 5) The Ostend Manifesto (1854). Northerners saw the desire of some members of the Pierce administration to take Cuba as part of a southern slave conspiracy.
- 6) The Kansas-Nebraska Act (1854). A mini-civil war over whether Kansas should be slave or free ("Bleeding Kansas") kept bitterness over slavery high.
- 7) The breakdown of political parties (1850's). The debate over slavery caused the parties to become sectional. Increased immigration caused the Whig party to lose strength in the North. Northern, anti-slavery Democrats, joined with anti-slavery Whigs and the anti-Catholic American party to form the Republican Party. Southern Whigs joined the Democratic Party and the Whig party disappeared.
- 8) The Brooks-Sumner Affair (1856). This Senate fight made it easier for both sides to form ugly stereotypes of each other.
- 9) The Dred Scott decision (1857). Made compromise over slavery in the territories impossible since it invalidated closing any territory to slavery.
- 10) John Brown's Raid (1859). Brown became a martyr in the North and made the South fearful of the North's intentions toward slavery.
- 11) The election of Lincoln to the Presidency (1860). Republicans had run on a platform of forbidding any future expansion of slavery. Lincoln received no Southern electoral votes--the South correctly understood that Lincoln's election was the beginning of the end for the "Southern way of life."
- 12) The South seceded to preserve its social and economic systems which were based on black slave labor. By February 22, 1861, seven Southern states had organized The Confederate States of America. The North objected to Southern secession because it threatened the survival of the republic. The Civil War began on April 12, 1861 when Lincoln maneuvered South Carolina into firing on the U.S. troops in Fort Sumter located on an island in Charleston's harbor.

**Importance:** The events listed above illustrate how mistrust and division grew in the United States between the South and the North, and how slavery was the fundamental cause of that division.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVE: *Understand the military aspects of the Civil War.***

- 1) The North's industrial base and greater manpower gave it a tremendous advantage. The Union Army outnumbered the Confederate Army 5 to 2.
- 2) The South made three major errors: a) it had a romantic concept of war and did not adequately prepare for a war of attrition; b) it put its faith in "King Cotton" to win European support; and c) it adopted a defensive policy which allowed the North to take the initiative in battle.
- 3) The successful Northern military strategy: a) divided the South along the Mississippi River; b) penetrated the heart of the Confederacy through Georgia (Sherman's March to the Sea); c) captured the Confederate capital of Richmond; and d) blockaded the Confederate coast. The Battles of Gettysburg and Vicksburg, in July 1863, ensured Southern defeat. The South surrendered April 9, 1865. Lincoln was assassinated April 14, 1865.

**Importance:** The Civil War devastated the Southern economy and infrastructure. About 618,000 Americans died in the Civil War. Both sides were bitter toward the other side after the war.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVE: *Understand Northern racial views.***

- 1) Lincoln's racial views illustrate the ambivalence that many northerners had about slavery and blacks. For Lincoln, one belief--the value of the Union--was more important than another belief--the moral wrong of slavery.
- 2) The Emancipation Proclamation (September, 1862) was an attempt to end the war and keep European powers from supporting the Confederacy. By issuing the Proclamation, Lincoln changed the nature of the war. After January, 1863, in addition to being a war to preserve the Union, the Civil War also became a war of emancipation.

**Importance:** An understanding of Northern racial views is necessary to understand the treatment of African-Americans during and after the Civil War and Reconstruction era. The Civil War was not fought to "free the slaves." Slaves were freed as a consequence of the war, but that was not the reason the war started. The primary northern objective was the preservation of the Union.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVE: *Understand the goals and objectives of the different plans of reconstruction put forth by President Lincoln, President Johnson, and the "Radicals" in Congress.***

- 1) Conflicts: a) What role would the freedmen play in American society? b) How much power should ex-Confederates have in Southern and national politics? c) Which branch of the national government would be supreme?
- 2) Lincoln's plan of Reconstruction (December, 1863): 1/10 of the citizens of an ex-Confederate state must take an oath supporting the Constitution, and they must abolish slavery. Black participation in the new state governments was not mandated.
- 3) Wade-Davis Bill (July, 1864): Excluded ex-Confederates, required 50 percent of citizens to petition to form a new government. Blacks excluded. Vetoed by Lincoln and foreshadowed the conflict between Congress and President Andrew Johnson.
- 4) The Johnson Plan (May, 1865): Granted amnesty to former Confederates; the states had to nullify their ordinances of secession, ratify the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment, and repudiate their Confederate war debts. Johnson failed to enforce these provisions, yet he recognized the reconstructed Southern governments.
- 5) Military (Radical) Reconstruction (March, 1867): An attempt to punish the South, keep the Republicans in control of the national government, and make Congress the strongest branch of the government. The bill divided the South into 5 military districts, guaranteed black suffrage, and forced the Southern states to ratify the 14th amendment.

6) President Johnson was impeached and missed conviction by one vote. The issue was which branch, Congress or the President, would control the national government.

**Importance:** The conflict over how the South would be “reconstructed” after the Civil War illustrates American racial views during the period. The failure of Reconstruction to bring social and political equality to the freed slaves has long-term national consequences that Americans are still dealing with today.

***LEARNING OBJECTIVE: Understand the "Civil War amendments" to the Constitution.***

- 1) Thirteenth Amendment ended slavery.
- 2) Fourteenth Amendment made ex-slaves citizens, gave all citizens due process, punished states that did not let blacks vote, denied public office to U.S. officials who had served the Confederacy, and repudiated the Confederate war debt.
- 3) Fifteenth Amendment gave black males the vote.

**Importance:** The 14th Amendment expanded the Bill of Rights. The failure to enforce the 15th Amendment illustrates the lack of commitment to black political equality that existed during the era.

***LEARNING OBJECTIVE: Understand the Compromise of 1877.***

- 1) Neither 1876 presidential candidate, Democrat Samuel Tilden nor Republican Rutherford B. Hayes, had a majority in the electoral college. A commission awarded the presidency to Hayes on a straight party vote and the Democrats agreed not to contest the election if the North would end Reconstruction and give the South a transcontinental railroad.
- 2) The Civil War was a conflict between the North & South over which section would dominate the nation. When the northern Republicans realized that they could maintain economic and political control of the nation without the southern black vote, blacks were abandoned and Reconstruction ended.

**Importance:** The Compromise of 1877 acknowledged that black rights were not a priority for Americans, and it led to the legal segregation and disfranchisement of African-Americans.

***LEARNING OBJECTIVE: Understand the economy of the South after Reconstruction.***

- 1) The South’s economy was devastated by the Civil War. It took the region a century to regain economic and political parity with the rest of the country.

**Importance:** The poverty and rural nature of the South greatly influenced the values of the region.