

**AP United States History**  
**Unit 5- The Nation Divided and Reunited**  
**Topic: The Civil War- Part 1 of 2**

**The Civil War– Phase One: A Conflict for Union**

Objective: Explain the various factors that contributed to the Union victory in the Civil War.

Part I: Both the Union and the Confederacy mobilized their economies and societies to wage the war even while facing considerable home front opposition.

The Civil War is the most consequential event in the history of the United States. It was a total war, quite literally the first of its kind in human history. The war was fought in over 1,000 American places. It featured the rise of such historic figures as Abraham Lincoln, Ulysses S. Grant, and William T. Sherman. The war was the bloodiest in American history. More Americans die during the Civil War than in all of the wars that our nation has fought in– combined. The cause for this conflict was the issue of the expansion of slavery into the western territories that the nation had acquired from the Mexican-American War (1846-1848). The conflict, which would end in a total Union victory, was fought in two distinct phases. In the first phase of the war, the Union fought to bring a quick end to the conflict and to bring the southern states back into the Union. When this effort proved unsuccessful, the second phase of the war became a conflict to bring about an end to the institution of slavery and a total war to destroy the ability of the South to continue to wage war.

**Phase One**

During the first phase of the conflict, the Union would begin the critical strategies which were important for it to gain a complete victory by the end of the war. The Union naval blockade of all of the major southern ports was critical to the success of the Union war effort. Union armies, particularly in the West (Tennessee, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, Missouri, Alabama, Kentucky, Georgia, Texas and in the fighting which occurred in the western territories) were extremely successful early in the war and began their effort of separating the western states of the Confederacy from those in the East. In the North, manufacturing, immigration, and an agricultural system based on the production of food staples rather than cash crops would also prove to be an essential ingredient to the success of the Union war effort. And, of course, having a strong central government with one political party– the Republicans, and with Abraham Lincoln in the presidency meant that the war effort could be prosecuted from a singular vision. In the beginning, the Union war effort was focused on the goal of bringing the southern states back into the Union and ending the conflict quickly. However, by the end of 1862, it had become apparent to all that the war would require all of the resources of the Union to achieve a complete victory and that this would ultimately come to mean the complete destruction of the Confederacy.

In the opening stages of the conflict, the Union navy executed a blockade of each of the major southern ports. The blockade prevented supplies from getting to southern ports to assist the Confederate war effort. It also kept the Confederacy from using its most potent economic weapon– cotton. Before the war, southern cotton was used in textile mills in the North and throughout Western Europe for the production of clothing and fabrics. But, thanks to a large harvest of cotton in 1860, the Union naval blockade, and the

fact that Great Britain, in particular, found new sources of cotton to use in its textile mills from both India and Egypt, the South was never able to use cotton as a bargaining chip for achieving foreign recognition from a major world power which could have helped it in its war effort (Remember, the American Revolution would not have been won had it not been for the assistance of the French.). The blockade simply starved the Southern economy for the entirety of the war and in the end, crippled the Confederate war effort.

In the West, Union armies began the process of securing a complete victory over the Confederacy by capturing critical forts, cities, and military objectives. Though the war in the East did not go as favorably for the Union cause during the first two years of the conflict, in the West, the Union won a series of critical victories under the leadership of Ulysses S. Grant. In early 1862, Grant's army won two victories, capturing both Fort Henry and Fort Donelson, which enabled him to move his army into the Confederate heartland near the confluence of the states of Alabama, Tennessee, and Mississippi. His goal was to capture Vicksburg, the Confederate military stronghold which held the key to controlling the Mississippi River. Capturing control of the Mississippi River was crucial for two reasons: first, it would allow the Union and not the Confederacy to have access to the most vital waterway on the North American continent and second, it would separate the western states of the Confederacy (Louisiana, Arkansas, and Texas) from those in the East.

Part II: Although the Confederacy showed military initiative and daring early in the war, the Union ultimately succeeded due to improvements in leadership and strategy, key victories, greater resources, and the wartime destruction of the South's infrastructure.

In the spring of 1862, Grant's Union army won a major victory in the Battle of Shiloh. Just as Grant began moving to capture the Confederate stronghold of Vicksburg, Mississippi, a Confederate army invaded Kentucky for the first time. The defeat of this major Confederate army in the West, at Perryville, Kentucky, in the fall of 1862, ended the first and final Confederate invasion of the Northern states in the West. It also enabled Grant to focus the efforts of his army on the capture of Vicksburg, plus, it would enable the victorious Union army in Kentucky to begin to move into Tennessee. In middle Tennessee, the Union army which had been victorious in Kentucky won another victory against a major Confederate army in the West in the Battle of Stones River as the year of 1862 came to a close. This victory would enable this Union army to also move further into the Confederate heartland. These early victories in the West were crucial for the Union to be able to achieve its goal of winning a complete victory against the Confederacy.

The chief factors for a Union victory in the Civil War came from the tremendous advantages that it enjoyed in the areas of manufacturing, population (thanks to immigration due to industrialization), and agriculture. Prior to the conflict, the North had already developed as an industrial society. Most of the nation's factories, industrial workers, and railroads were located in the North. By the end of the conflict, Northern factories were turning out an astounding number of uniforms, shoes, guns, cannons, bullets, wagons, and ships. The Northern advantage in population was staggering. In 1860, thanks to immigration, more than 22 million people lived in the North. In contrast, only 9 million people lived in the South and 4 million of them were African-American slaves. While the South was known for being an agrarian society, it was Northern farms—untouched by the war—which used the latest in engineering innovations to turn out staple crops of food. These farms turned out enough food to supply both a hungry and much larger population, and also the large armies in the field that were fighting for the Union cause.

Despite the Confederacy winning early victories in the East in Virginia during the Peninsula Campaign, and at both the Battles of First and Second Bull Run, it was the leadership of Lincoln and the Republican Party that would steer the Union toward victory. After a series of early Confederate victories, the Union army would blunt an invasion of the North in the Battle of Antietam, the bloodiest single day of war in American military history. This victory enabled Lincoln to issue the Emancipation Proclamation, which went into effect on January 1, 1863, and changed the nature of the conflict to one in which the end of slavery, as well as the complete victory of the Union were to become intertwined, twin, goals for the nation's war effort.

During the war, the Republican Party and Lincoln, without Southern opposition, of course, would use a strong central government to fashion a modern America. Lincoln and the Republicans would not only prosecute a victorious war effort, but they would also pass legislation which would establish the future Transcontinental Railroad System, effectively linking the East and the West, an act (Morrill Act) which would establish land-grant colleges and universities throughout the West to educate future generations of American children, and develop the Homestead Act which would begin the settlement and the modernization of the American West. In turn, it was Lincoln who became our first true modern President.

But, as 1863 dawned the end of the conflict was far from in sight. Two major Confederate armies remained in the field and the crucial objective of Vicksburg, Mississippi, still remained in Confederate hands. However, it would be the leadership of Lincoln (who would be overwhelmingly re-elected in 1864), crucial Union victories in 1863, and the introduction of the concept of total war by Grant and Sherman that would ultimately bring the war to a conclusion. And, it was the conclusion of the Civil War and a series of extremely important constitutional amendments that would bring the institution of slavery to an end, as well.