

CHAPTER 11

The Coming of the Civil War

1848-1861



CHAPTER FOCUS

By the 1850s, deep distrust divided Northerners and Southerners. Under the strain of conflict between North and South, the great web of law, compromise, and tradition that had held the United States together for over 70 years snapped. The nation broke apart and began its darkest and most painful trial: the Civil War.



The *Why Study History?* page at the end of this chapter explores the issue of states' rights versus the power of the federal government—the same issue that played a role in the outbreak of the Civil War.



VIEWING HISTORY

Abolitionists and pro-slavery forces clash in the "Battle of Hickory Point," about 25 miles outside of Lawrence, Kansas.

Government How did the nation attempt to compromise on the issue of slavery?



VIEWING HISTORY The bloodiest battle of the Civil War was fought in July 1863, in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. **Geography** What was the significance of the Union victory at Gettysburg?

African American
regimental flag

1865

- Civil War ends
- Thirteenth Amendment ends slavery



1868

Turning Point:
Fourteenth Amendment
(p. 386)

1870
Fifteenth
Amendment

1877
Reconstruction
ends

Johnson

Grant

Hayes

1865

1870

1875

1867

Russia sells Alaska to
the United States

1871

Britain legalizes
labor unions

1873

Slave markets are abolished
in Zanzibar



1852

Uncle Tom's Cabin published

1857

Cannibals All! published

1860

110,000 factories in the North; 20,000 in the South

1861

Civil War begins

1850**1855****1860****1865**

1 Two Nations?

SECTION PREVIEW

Objectives

- 1** Summarize historians' views on whether the Civil War could have been avoided.
- 2** Describe the Northern and Southern views on slavery, including the views of Harriet Beecher Stowe.
- 3** Identify the differences between the North and South.
- 4** **Key Terms** Define: Union; prejudice; obsolete.

Main Idea

In the 1850s growing numbers of Americans were convinced that the North and South were moving in different directions. Each side saw the other as a threat to the American way of life.

Reading Strategy

Organizing Information As you read this section, create a chart comparing and contrasting the North's and South's views on slavery, as well as the level of economic development in the two regions.

Starting in 1861, states of the North clashed with states of the South in a brutal conflict that Americans call the Civil War. The outcome of the war would determine whether the **Union**, as the unified nation was called, would continue to exist or whether the country would be permanently split into two nations.

The causes of the Civil War were many and complex, and have been debated by historians for decades. This section describes some of the growing cultural and economic differences between the North and South in the decade before the outbreak of war.

Historians and the Civil War

Some historians have suggested that the Civil War could have been avoided. If the United States had elected better leaders and established stronger political institutions, they believe, wild-eyed extremists on both sides would never have been able to force the nation into war. This view is based on the belief that Americans of the mid-1800s were fairly similar and therefore could have settled their differences.

Whether in Alabama, Oregon, Indiana, or Massachusetts, according to this belief, Americans agreed in their support of democracy and free enterprise. Likewise, in earlier chapters you have read about Americans' general commitment to democratic government, social equality, and a market economy.

Other historians—especially more recent ones—do not accept the idea that American society was similar everywhere. They tend to emphasize differences, including differences between geographic regions, racial groups, and social classes. Although these historians do not claim that the events of the Civil War had to have happened the way they did, they do believe that some kind of major conflict was bound to occur. In this section you will read more about growing regional differences.

The Case Against Slavery

Many Americans during the early 1800s noticed contrasts between North and South. They said that the two great sections amounted to distinct nations within the United States.



Harriet
Becher
Stowe's
novel
Uncle Tom's
Cabin offered
antislavery
forces new
encourage-
ment in
resisting the
slavery
system.

The key difference between North and South, and the difference to which all the other differences were connected in some way, was slavery.

By the 1850s many white Northerners had come to believe that slavery violated the basic principles not only of the United States, but also of the Christian religion. Most white opponents of slavery were members of the democratic Protestant

faiths that had been on the rise since the Second Great Awakening. The members of these faiths believed that all humans had the right to choose their own destiny and follow God's laws.

Slavery's white opponents did not necessarily believe that blacks and whites were equal. Many, in fact, were deeply prejudiced against African Americans. (A **prejudice** is an unreasonable, usually unfavorable opinion of another group that is not based on fact.) Nevertheless, for these people slavery was simply an evil that could not be tolerated. Without question, the most popular statement about the impact of slavery was a novel by Harriet Beecher Stowe.

Harriet Beecher Stowe

AMERICAN BIOGRAPHY

"If I could use my pen as you can, I would write something that would make

this whole nation feel what an accursed thing slavery is," wrote Harriet Beecher Stowe's sister. Born in Connecticut in 1811 and part of the well-known Beecher family, Stowe would become one of the best-known writers of the antislavery movement.

Uncle Tom's Cabin Stowe took her sister's advice and published a novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, in 1852. The book became an instant best-seller and sold millions of copies in the United States and abroad.

The story is set in the pre-Civil War South. In the novel, a slave named Eliza Harris escapes from her home on Shelby plantation in Kentucky when her child is about to be sold. As Eliza heads north, she eludes the hired slave

catchers and finds help along the Underground Railroad. Another slave, Uncle Tom, is "sold down the river" and is eventually killed by his brutal master, Simon Legree.[†]

Stowe did not depend only on the sharp contrast between a kind slave and his cruel master to make her case against slavery. She also tried to show that slavery was opposed to beliefs that many Northerners cherished: the importance of women and the ideal of the family. In the novel, the neat, orderly world of Uncle Tom's cabin, formed around his happy family, comes to a tragic end when Uncle Tom's owner has to sell him. Eventually Uncle Tom falls into the hands of another slaveholder, Simon Legree.

By contrast with the saintly Uncle Tom, Simon Legree is everything Stowe's audience in the North feared and despised: an unmarried, anti-Christian, heavy-drinking brute who cares only about satisfying his desires and his greed. Not only does he brutalize the enslaved women of his plantation, but in the end he beats Uncle Tom to death with a whip. It was not a mistake that Stowe made Legree a Northerner who lived in the South. She wanted to show that slavery could corrupt even those born outside the system.

To contrast these stark images of the immoral effects of slavery, Stowe wrote powerful scenes in which northern women influence their husbands to do what is right. For example, in one scene set in a house in Ohio, a wife persuades her husband, a senator, to permit some escaped slaves to continue their journey to Canada. When her husband tries to argue with her, she replies:

"I don't know anything about politics, but I can read my Bible; and there I see that I must feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and comfort the desolate; and that Bible I mean to follow."

Her husband points out that to help escaped slaves would involve breaking the law. But the wife steadily replies:

"Obeying God never brings on public evils. I know it can't. It's always safest, all round, to do as He bids us."

[†] Today, many readers are offended by Stowe's portraits of the enslaved Uncle Tom and his wife, Aunt Chloe. Stowe seems to us now to have been condescending and biased in describing these characters. In fact, "Uncle Tom" has become an insulting nickname for an African American man who passively accepts unequal status. Stowe, however, regarded Uncle Tom as a sympathetic character.



Harriet Beecher Stowe
(1811–1896)

Impact of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* Although a work of fiction, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had as powerful an effect in Stowe's time as Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* had in his. According to a family story, when Stowe met President Lincoln during the Civil War he said, "So this is the little lady who made this big war?"

Stowe's novel presented northern readers with a vivid picture of both slavery and the South that they could adopt as accurate, even if it was in fact exaggerated. As they read *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, many Northerners became convinced that slavery would be the ruin of the United States. They worried about the impact of slavery not just on African Americans, but on whites and American society in general. Of this they were sure: they would never allow the United States to become a land of Simon Legrees. ■

Southern Views on Slavery

Southern intellectuals and politicians saw *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as a book of insulting lies. They admitted that some masters did treat enslaved people badly. But the South was hardly home to thousands of Legrees. White Southerners had their own exaggerated view of slavery: to them, plantation households were like large and happy families.

Southerners did more than protest northern insults. Many began to justify the institution of slavery and attack the evils they saw in the North. They claimed that most planters took a personal interest in the well-being of the enslaved people who labored for them, providing them with the basic necessities of life. Northern industrialists, on the other hand, took no personal responsibility for their workers. Nor did they care whether the meager wages they paid could buy decent food, clothing, and shelter. Most Southerners believed that northern business owners were motivated solely by profit.

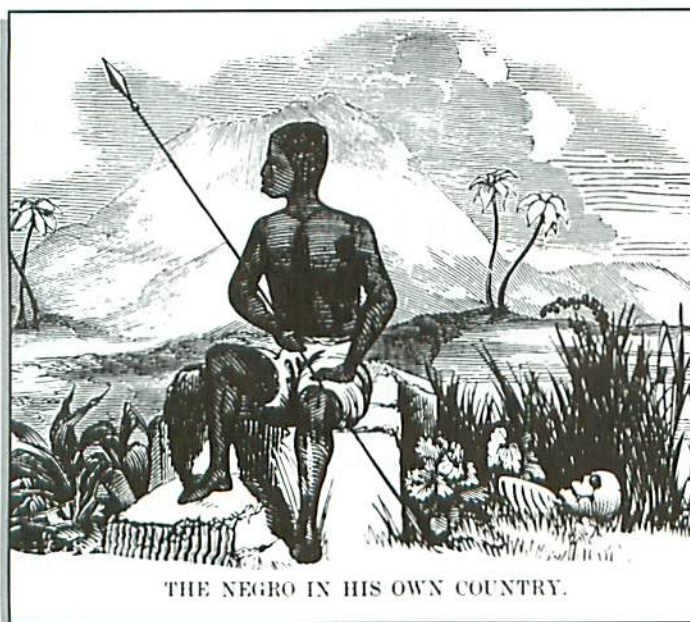
Perhaps the most direct statement of this point of view appeared in a book by George Fitzhugh published in 1857, titled *Cannibals All!* Attacking northern industrialists, whom he saw as no better than cannibals, Fitzhugh wrote:

"You, with the command over labor which your capital gives you, are a slave owner—a master, without the obligations of a master. They who work for you, who create your income, are slaves, without the rights of slaves. Slaves without a master!"

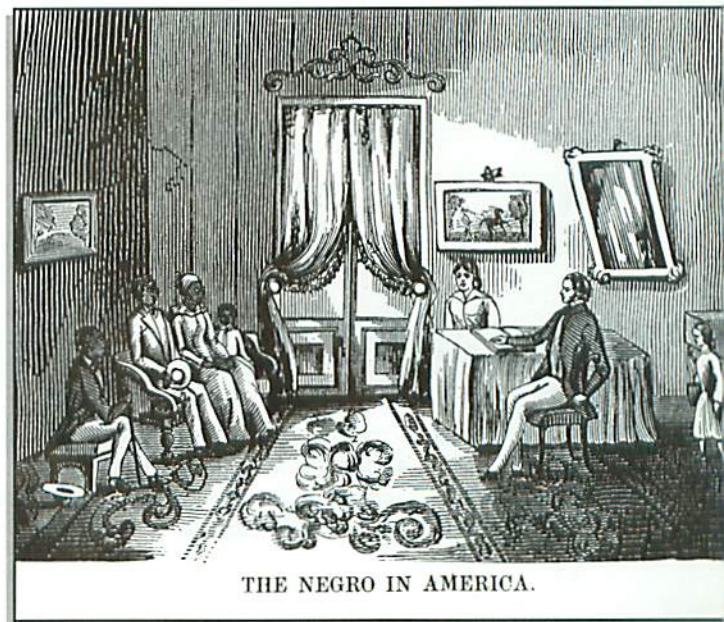
Outraged by antislavery Northerners who pretended to be better than Southerners, Fitzhugh exclaimed:

Main Idea CONNECTIONS

Describe southern views on slavery.



THE NEGRO IN HIS OWN COUNTRY.



THE NEGRO IN AMERICA.



Southern proslavery writers promoted the myth that slavery "raised Africans from savagery" and "civilized" them. These before-and-after pictures are from a pamphlet titled *Bible Defence of Slavery*.

Culture What other claims did proslavery activists make to justify slavery?



Advantages and Disadvantages of the North and South

	Northern States	Southern States
Population	21.5 million	9 million
Railroad Mileage	21.7 thousand miles	9 thousand miles
Manufacturing		
Number of Factories	110.1 thousand	20.6 thousand
Number of Workers	1.17 million	111 thousand
Value of Products	\$1.62 billion	\$155 million
Finance		
Bank Deposits	\$207 million	\$47 million
Specie	\$56 million	\$27 million
Agriculture		
Corn (bushels)	446 million	280 million
Wheat (bushels)	132 million	31 million
Oats (bushels)	150 million	20 million
Cotton (bales)	4 thousand	5 million
Tobacco (pounds)	229 million	199 million
Rice (pounds)	50 thousand	187 million
Livestock		
Horses	4.2 million	1.7 million
Donkeys and Mules	300 thousand	800 thousand
Milk Cows	5.7 million	2.7 million
Beef Cattle	6.6 million	7 million
Sheep	16 million	5 million
Swine	16.3 million	15.5 million

Highlight indicates advantage

Source: *The American Heritage Picture History of the Civil War*, edited by Richard M. Ketchum

Interpreting Tables As a war between the North and South threatened to erupt, a Northerner warned his southern friend, "You are bound to fail." **Economics** Which advantages would allow the North to raise a larger, better equipped army than the South?

“What is falsely called Free Society is a very recent invention. It proposes to make the weak, ignorant, and poor, free, by turning them loose in a world owned exclusively by the few . . . to get a living.”

White Southerners argued that they represented the true spirit of the American Revolution. They believed that their households possessed an order, a grace, and a sense of liberty that Northerners could not begin to understand. On this point Southerners were agreed: they were not about to let Northerners, whom they saw as haughty and self-righteous, tell them how to live.

Differences Between North and South

The differences between North and South were not simply a product of exaggerated fiction and propaganda. Hard facts also told the story. They showed that the North was becoming still more urban, still more industrial than the South. Its population, already more than twice as large as the South's, was becoming even larger and more diverse as Irish and German immigrants crowded into northern cities. By 1860, nine of the country's ten largest cities were located in the North.

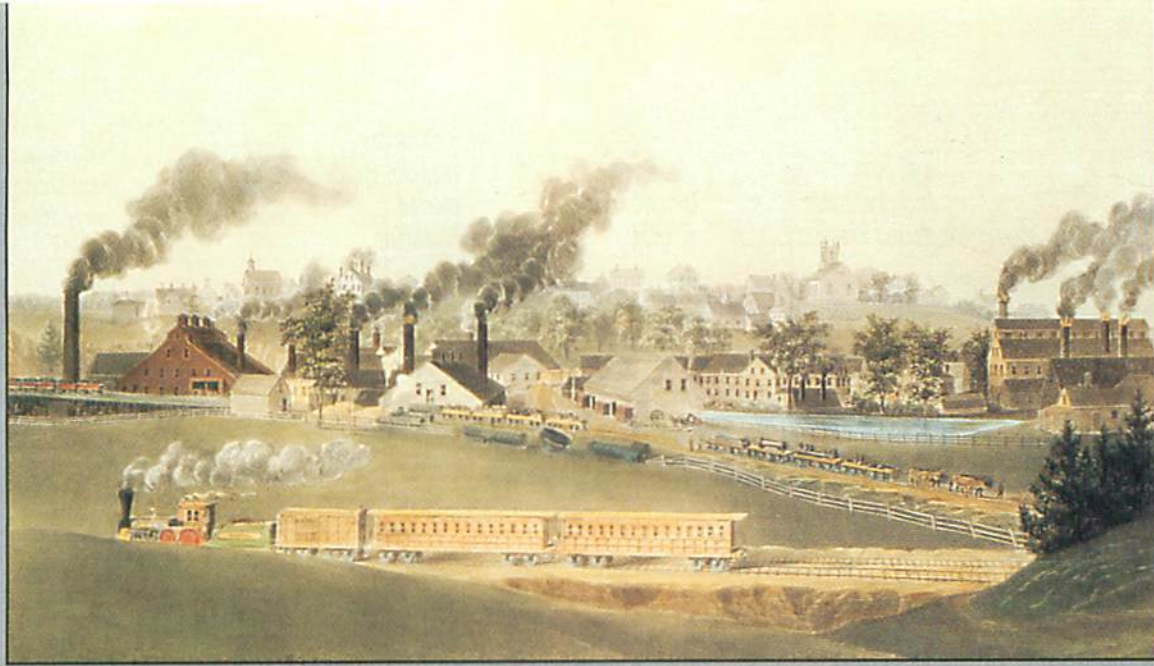
Like immigration, new technology had a heavier impact on the North than on the South. The biggest technological change was the appearance of railroads. The most efficient form of transportation the world had yet known, railroads made canals **obsolete**, or outdated, in a matter of years.

By 1840 more than 3,300 miles of track had been laid in the United States. African American and Irish immigrant workers added another 5,000 miles during the 1840s. It was in the 1850s, however, that the railroads truly came into their own. More than 20,000 miles of track were laid in that decade.

During this railroad boom, remote places suddenly became the centers of bustling trade. The small trading village of Chicago grew incredibly fast. Why? Because railroads helped make Chicago a central location through which people both to the east and to the west transported goods such as corn and wheat.

The railroads, however, had a positive effect primarily in the North. In 1860 the North had 70 percent of the railroad track in the United States. Railroads in the South did contribute to the growth of cities such as Atlanta, Georgia. But southern planters and farmers were still more likely to transport their crops by water than by rail.

Like the railroad, the telegraph magnified differences between North and South. This early form of electronic communication was invented



A train thunders past smoking metal forges in this late-1850s print of Bridgewater, Massachusetts. Though the North was still largely a land of farms, its landscape increasingly resembled this scene.
Economics How did the growth of railroads contribute to the growth of cities?

by Samuel F. B. Morse in 1844. The telegraph allowed people to send messages over wire by using a code of short and long pulses of electricity that represented the alphabet. Because telegraph wires were strung along the ever-growing network of railroad tracks, the communications revolution in the North advanced more quickly than in the South.

Railroads and improved communications nourished the booming industries of the North. In 1860 the North had 110,000 factories, compared to 20,000 in the South; it produced \$1.5 billion worth

of goods, compared to the South's \$155 million. In fact, in terms of numbers, the South outdid the North in only two notable ways: it had more enslaved people and it had more cotton.

Certainly, the North and the South in 1860 had much in common. They both cherished their democratic tradition. Even on the issue of the status of African Americans, whites in both the North and South displayed tremendous prejudice. But despite these similarities, they differed greatly in their beliefs about what American society should be.

SECTION 1 REVIEW

Comprehension

- 1. Key Terms** Define: (a) Union; (b) prejudice; (c) obsolete.
- 2. Summarizing the Main Idea** How did slavery affect the views that Northerners and Southerners had of each other?
- 3. Organizing Information** Create a chart listing the major economic contrasts between the North and South in 1860.

Critical Thinking

- 4. Analyzing Time Lines** Review the time line at the start of the section. What impact did *Uncle Tom's Cabin* have on northern views of slavery?

- 5. Drawing Inferences** Describe the two main views held by historians on the issue of whether the Civil War could have been avoided. What can you infer about each group's views of people's abilities to deal with differences?

Writing Activity

- 6. Writing an Expository Essay** Write an essay in which you describe Harriet Beecher Stowe's use of contrast in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to make her case against slavery.

1848
Zachary Taylor
elected President

1850
Compromise
of 1850

1852
Franklin Pierce
elected
President

1854
Kansas-
Nebraska Act

1854
Republican
party founded

1845

1850

1855

2 New Political Parties

SECTION PREVIEW

Objectives

- 1 Explain the effects of the Missouri Compromise, and how the Compromise of 1850 tried to deal with them.
- 2 Summarize the changes in political parties in the 1850s.
- 3 Describe the causes and effects of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, including its role in the creation of the Republican party.
- 4 **Key Terms** Define: Compromise of 1850; Fugitive Slave Act; states' rights; nativism; Kansas-Nebraska Act; popular sovereignty.

Main Idea

A compromise during the 1850s failed to end disagreement over slavery in the territories. Meanwhile, the existing political party system broke down as new political parties arose.

Reading Strategy

Organizing Information As you read this section, create a graphic organizer that lists the actions and ideas of Northerners and Southerners in two separate columns.

So what if there were differences between North and South? Perhaps the differences were bound to cause political conflict, but did they have to lead to a lengthy war that would kill hundreds of thousands of people? The answer to this question requires an understanding of politics in the 1850s. The war came *when* it did and *how* it did because politicians could not solve the question of slavery. The rest of this chapter explains that political breakdown.

Effects of the Missouri Compromise

Politicians might have been able to keep slavery from tearing the nation apart if Americans had not settled new lands to the west of the Mississippi. This newly acquired land forced an old question back into politics: whether or not slavery would be allowed in the territories.

Congress had made its first attempt to address this question with the Missouri Compromise of 1820. In the short run, the

compromise maintained the balance in the Senate between slave and free states so that neither North nor South would have more power.[†] It also sought to address the long-term issue of westward expansion by stating that newly formed states north of 36° 30' N latitude would be free states. The compromise did not, however, settle the issue of whether slavery would be legal while the lands to the west were still territories.

After the Mexican War, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of 1848 gave the United States a large piece of land that had been part of Mexico. Because much of this new territory was south of the line set by the Missouri Compromise, Northerners feared that it would eventually be divided into several slave states. This would give the South a majority vote in the Senate and perhaps in the Electoral College. The best way to prevent the creation

[†]Balance in the Senate was especially important to the southern states which were already outnumbered in the House because of the North's larger population.