

*Both the North and the South had strengths and weaknesses that helped determine their military strategies.*

## Two Very Different Sides

### *What were the goals and strategies of the North and the South?*

The war divided many families. Neither side imagined, however, that the four years of fighting would lead to so much suffering. By the end of the war, 600,000 Americans had lost their lives. Many thousands more were wounded in battle.

### Division in the Border States

For most states, choosing sides in the Civil War was easy. The **border states** of Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri, however, were bitterly divided. Slavery existed in all four states, though it was generally not as widespread as in the Confederate states. All four of these states had ties to both the North and the South.

The border states remained vital to the **strategy** of the Union. Missouri could control parts of the Mississippi River and major routes to the West. Kentucky controlled the Ohio River. Delaware was close to the key Union city of Philadelphia. Maryland, perhaps the most important of the border states, was close to Richmond, the Confederate capital. Most significantly, Washington, D.C., lay within the state. If Maryland seceded, the North's capital would be surrounded.

President Lincoln worked tirelessly to keep the four border states in the Union. In September 1861, he wrote:

"I think to lose Kentucky is nearly the same as to lose the whole game. . . . We would as well consent to separation at once, including the surrender of this capitol."

—from *Abraham Lincoln: His Speeches and Writings*

In the end, Lincoln was successful. Still, many border state residents supported the Confederacy. The president had to work hard to restrain these opponents of the war.

### Strengths and Weaknesses

When the war began, each side had advantages and disadvantages compared to the other. How each side used its strengths and weaknesses would determine the war's outcome.

The North had a larger population and more resources than the South. The South had other advantages, such as excellent military leaders and a strong fighting spirit. Also, because most of the war was fought in the South, the Confederacy knew the land and had the will to defend it.

### The Goals of War

Each side had different goals in fighting the Civil War. The Confederacy wanted to be an independent nation. To do this, it did not have to invade the North or destroy the Union army. It just needed to fight hard enough and long enough to convince Northerners that the war was not worth its cost.

In **contrast**, the North wanted to restore the Union. Its forces had to invade the South and force the breakaway states to give up their quest for independence. Although slavery helped drive a wedge between Northerners and Southerners, President Lincoln's original aim was not to defeat slavery. He wrote in 1862:

"If I could save the Union without freeing *any* slave I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing *all* the slaves I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone I would also do that."

—from *Abraham Lincoln: His Speeches and Writings*

### Confederate Strategies

The Confederacy's basic strategy was to conduct a defensive war. This meant that it would hold as much territory as possible. Southerners felt that if they showed determination to be independent, Northerners would tire of the war.

The South also tried to win the support of Britain and France, whose economies suffered when the war disrupted the export of Southern cotton. Southerners hoped the British and French might pressure the North to end the war.

### Union Strategies

The North's war plan came from General Winfield Scott, hero of the war with Mexico. He knew that the North would have to defeat the South completely.

To do this, Scott proposed the so-called Anaconda Plan, which took its name from a type of snake that squeezes its prey to death. First, the Union would blockade, or close, Southern ports. This strategy would keep supplies from reaching the Confederacy and prevent the South from exporting its cotton crop. Second, the North would seek to gain control of the Mississippi River. This would split the Confederacy in two and cut Southern supply lines. Another goal of the Union forces was the capture of Richmond, Virginia—the Confederate capital.

**Explaining** Why did the South use a defensive strategy?

## Americans Against Americans

### ***What was war like for the soldiers of the North and the South?***

The Civil War was more than a war between the states. It turned brother against brother and neighbor against neighbor. Kentucky senator John Crittenden had two sons who became generals. One fought for the Confederacy, the other for the Union. Even President Lincoln's wife, Mary Todd Lincoln, had relatives in the Confederate army.

Men of all ages rushed to enlist (in • LIHST) in, or join, the Union or Confederate army. Some did so out of patriotism. Others thought they would be called cowards if they did not serve. Still others were looking for excitement. The sister of William Stone of Louisiana wrote that her brother was eager:

"to be off to Virginia [to join the Confederate army]. He so fears that the fighting will be over before he can get there."

—from *Brokenburn: The Journal of Kate Stone*

Though the average Civil War soldier was in his mid-20s, many recruits on both sides were hardly adults. Tens of thousands of soldiers were under 18. Some were younger than 14. To get into the army, many teenagers ran away from home or lied about their ages.

Although teenage boys were accepted into service, one group of men was not allowed to fight in the early days of the war. The Union refused at first to let free African Americans enlist. Union leaders worried that white troops would not accept African American soldiers.

Later in the war, the Union army changed this policy. The Confederacy refused to consider having African Americans fight until the war's final, desperate days. They did not want to give enslaved people weapons.

## High Hopes

When the war began, each side expected a quick victory. Northerners could not imagine the Confederates holding out for long against the Union's greater resources. Confederates believed that the North could never subdue the fighting spirit of the South. Both sides were wrong. In the end, the war lasted far longer than most Americans could have guessed.

## Who Were the Soldiers?

Soldiers came from every region of the country and all walks of life. Most came from farms. Almost half of the North's troops and more than 60 percent of the South's had owned or worked on farms.

By the summer of 1861, the Confederate army had about 112,000 soldiers. They were sometimes called Rebels. The Union had about 187,000 soldiers, also known as Yankees. By the end of the war, about 900,000 men fought for the Confederacy and about 2.1 million men for the Union. The Union army included just under 200,000 African Americans. About 10,000 Mexican Americans served in the war.

## A Soldier's Life

Soldiers of the North and the South described what they saw and how they felt in letters to family and friends. Many wrote about their boredom, discomfort, sickness, fear, and horror.

Most of the time the soldiers lived in camps. Camp life had its pleasant moments of songs, stories, letters from home, and baseball games. At other times, a soldier's life was a dull routine of drills, bad food, marches, and rain.

Between battles, soldiers on both sides sometimes forgot they were enemies. A private described his wartime experiences:

"A part of Co [company] K and some of the enemy came together and stacked arms and talked for a long time. Our men cooked coffee and treated them and [afterward] . . . each one took up his position again and they began to fire at each other again, but not as hard as before."

—from *The Life of Billy Yank*

## The Horrors of War

In spite of fleeting moments of calm, the reality of war was always close by. Thousands of casualties overwhelmed medical facilities. After the Battle of Shiloh, the wounded lay in the rain for more than 24 hours waiting for treatment. A soldier recalled, "Many had died there, and others were in the last agonies as we passed. Their groans and cries were heartrending."

Faced with these terrible realities, many men deserted. About one of every eleven Union soldiers and one of every eight Confederates ran away because of fear, hunger, or sickness.

**Comparing and Contrasting** How did the expectations of the war compare with the reality for both sides?

## LESSON 1 REVIEW

### Review Vocabulary

1. Use the following terms in sentences about the Civil War that demonstrate your understanding of the terms.

a. border state

b. enlist

### Answer the Guiding Questions

2. **Contrasting** How was the North's strategy different from the South's?

3. **Comparing and Contrasting** Compare and contrast attitudes in the Union and the Confederacy about enlisting African American soldiers.

4. **Evaluating** What was the goal of the Anaconda Plan?

5. **PERSONAL WRITING** You are a young Southern or Northern man in 1861. You have left home to join the army. Write a letter to your family explaining your reasons for joining the Union or Confederate army.