

1) The North, the South, Slavery, & Sectionalism

Grade Level



Differences between the North and South had existed since before America was founded on July 4, 1776. The South's climate and geography were excellent for plantation agriculture, which required a lot of labor. In contrast, farms in the North were much smaller, requiring less labor. As a result, slavery had grown in the South while slowly being abolished in the North.

As the United States expanded west, sectional tensions between the North and the South grew. Northerners wanted more free states so the North would have more power in government, while Southerners wanted more slave states so the South would have more political power. As

more and more western states joined the Union, arguments and even violence between the North and the South increased over the issue of the expansion of slavery.

Then, in 1861, a Northern man named Abraham Lincoln was elected president. Lincoln opposed the expansion of slavery. The South viewed his election as a threat to slavery in the country, and Southern states began to secede from the United States as a result. Only five months after Lincoln's election, Southern troops fired on Union troops at Fort Sumter in South Carolina. This action started the deadliest war in American history – the Civil War.

2) Secession & the Confederate States of America

Grade Level



South Carolina was the first state to secede from the United States after Abraham Lincoln was elected president. Other Southern states soon followed. As Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, and others held their own conventions to vote on secession, many Texans began calling for Texas to hold its own secession convention.

Texas had grown close connections to the rest of the South. The majority of Anglo Texans were from Southern states, and the Texas economy was based plantation agriculture growing cotton using slave labor. Many in Texas believed that the best option for their state was to secede and join forces with the other Southern slave states, who wanted to establish their own country.

Sam Houston was governor of Texas in 1861. While Houston supported slavery, he strongly

opposed secession. He believed that seceding from the Union would be harmful to Texas and likely even cause a war. Houston tried to persuade his fellow Texans not to support secession, but he was not successful.

On February 1, 1861, the Texas secession convention voted to secede from the Union, and then to join the rest of the South in the Confederate States of America. The convention also required all state leaders to swear an oath of loyalty to the Confederacy. Governor Sam Houston refused to take the oath, and he was removed from office. Only sixteen years after annexation, Texas was no longer part of the United States.

3) The Civil War Across the United States

Grade Level



Most major battles in the Civil War took place far from Texas in eastern states like Virginia and Maryland. Some Texans took part in the Eastern Theater of the war, like John Bell Hood's famous "Texas Brigade." Hood's "Texas Brigade" fought in several significant eastern battles like Antietam and Gettysburg.

Most Texans who fought in the Civil War served closer to Texas, however. The majority of Texans served in the Western Theater in Kentucky, Tennessee, and Mississippi. The Eighth Texas Cavalry, known as "Terry's Texas Rangers," played an important role in significant battles in Tennessee and Georgia.

Some Texans also took part in the few military actions in the Trans-Mississippi Theater in

Louisiana, Texas, and New Mexico. Texans successfully defended their state's eastern border at the Battle of Sabine Pass and fought the Union at Texas' most important port at Galveston.

Approximately 60,000 to 70,000 Texans served in the Civil War. Most Texans served in the Confederate military, though some Texans who supported the Union joined the United States Army. Texas was able to avoid much of the destruction and the economic challenges that other Southern states experienced, because Texas was so far from the majority of the fighting. This allowed Texas and Texans to play a unique role in the Civil War.

4) The Civil War in Texas

Grade Level



Very little military action took place in Texas during the Civil War. The Union army was more focused on eastern states like Virginia where the majority of the Confederate Army was located. During the war, the Union made a few attempts at military actions in Texas, but had little success so far from the rest of its army and supplies in the east.

In 1861 and 1862, the Union unsuccessfully attempted to capture Corpus Christi. Then, on October 4, 1862, the Union briefly occupied Texas' largest port at Galveston, but the Texans were able to retake the city three months later and hold it for the rest of the war. Then, Texas forces successfully defended the state's eastern

border from Union invasion during the Battle of Sabine Pass in April, 1863.

Also in 1863, Texans prevented the Union from another attempted invasion called the "Texas Overland Expedition." Then, in 1864, the Union briefly occupied the Lower Rio Grande at Brownsville, before leaving the area to focus on the port at New Orleans, Louisiana instead.

Fights between the Union and Confederate armies were not the only instances of violence in Texas during the Civil War. From August to October 1862, Confederates attacked and killed thirty-six German Unionists who were trying to flee to Mexico. Then, in October 1862, Confederates killed forty-two north Texas Unionists in Gainesville.

5) The Texas Homefront

Grade Level



Because Texas was so far from the majority of the fighting, the state was able to play a unique role in the Civil War. Battles in other Southern states often destroyed a great deal of farmland, which disrupted the agricultural activities of those states. Texas was able to keep producing important crops like cotton and corn during the war, which helped feed and clothe the Confederate armies.

Additionally, the Union established a blockade of most major Southern ports during the war, meaning most of the South was unable to continue taking part in trade by sea. The Union also blockaded Texas ports, however, Texans were able to get around the blockade by moving Texan goods through Mexican ports.

Texas prisoners at state prisons made cloth for Confederate uniforms, and Texas slaves were forced to build fortifications on the coastline and camps for Union prisoners of war.

During the war, Texan women and families worked to keep farms and businesses running. They also often sent supplies to the troops who were fighting. Meanwhile, families from other Southern states often fled to Texas to escape the violence and destruction in their own states. Southern refugees poured into Texas during the war, often bringing their slaves with them to prevent the enslaved people from escaping to freedom with the Union army. As a result, the enslaved population of Texas increased significantly during the Civil War.

6) The End of the Civil War

Grade Level



On April 9, 1865, Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrendered to the Union. After four years of deadly fighting, the Civil War was over. The rest of the Confederacy soon surrendered as well. Initially, some military leaders in Texas did not accept the surrender, and took part in one final battle at Palmito Ranch on May 12, 1865.

Although the Civil War had effectively ended a month earlier, the Battle of Palmito Ranch, Texas, is considered the last battle of the Civil War.

The Civil War was the deadliest war in American history. More than 750,000 Americans died in the war, including nearly 15,000 Texans. Many Southern states were devastated by the war.

Two years before the war ended, President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation.

This law freed the enslaved people in the rebelling states, however, the United States could not actually enforce the law until after the Civil War ended in 1865. The U.S. army occupied the Southern states and enforced the Emancipation Proclamation, ensuring freedom for Black Southerners.

On June 19, 1865, U.S. troops landed in Galveston and officially announced the freedom of Black Texans. This date is now known and celebrated as Juneteenth. The United States was forever changed as a result of the Civil War. Now, the country faced the challenging task of how to heal and move forward.