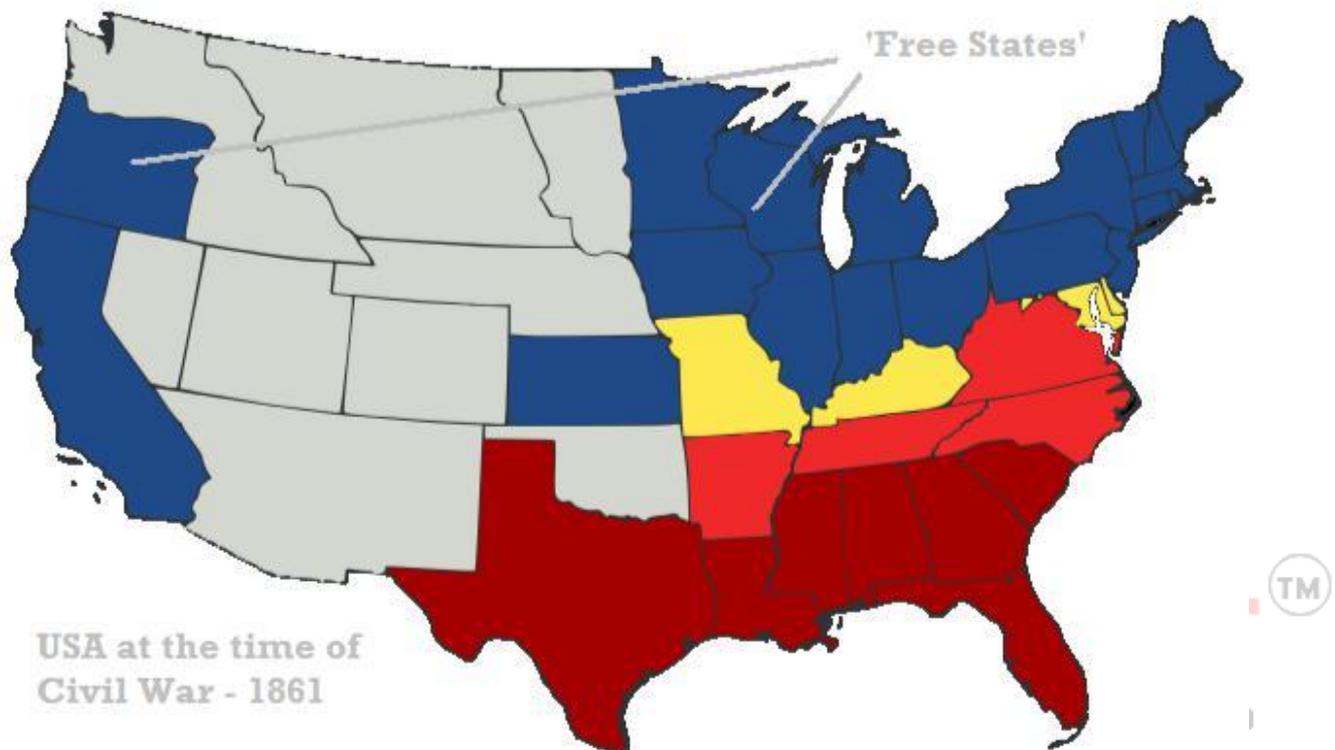


The American Civil War (1861-1865): How Did Abraham Lincoln Change History?

In this post, we discuss the causes, course, and significance of the American Civil War (1861-1865). We will also see how Abraham Lincoln made a difference in history, in spite of the opposition he faced.

The American Civil War: The Background



When American won Independence from England in 1776, there were 13 colonies which formed a federal government. Colonies expanded from east coast to west forming 34 states by 1861. There were difference between states in the north and states in the south – which resulted in the American Civil War.

Causes of the American Civil War

Difference in the attitude towards slavery can be seen as the root cause of American Civil War. This had repercussions in the economic and political sphere too. The factors which led to the outbreak of the Civil War in America can be consolidated as below.

1. Economic Disparity between Northern and Southern States

- Northern states were industrialized while southern states were primarily agricultural. Northern states wanted tax on imports from Britain while southern states wanted tax-free trade with Britain.

2. Issue with the attitude towards slavery

- Industrialized northern states preferred paid laborers while agricultural southern states which had large plantations were dependent on slave labor.
- Slavery was abolished in northern states in 1804 and they became 'free states'.

3. Movement for the abolition of slavery

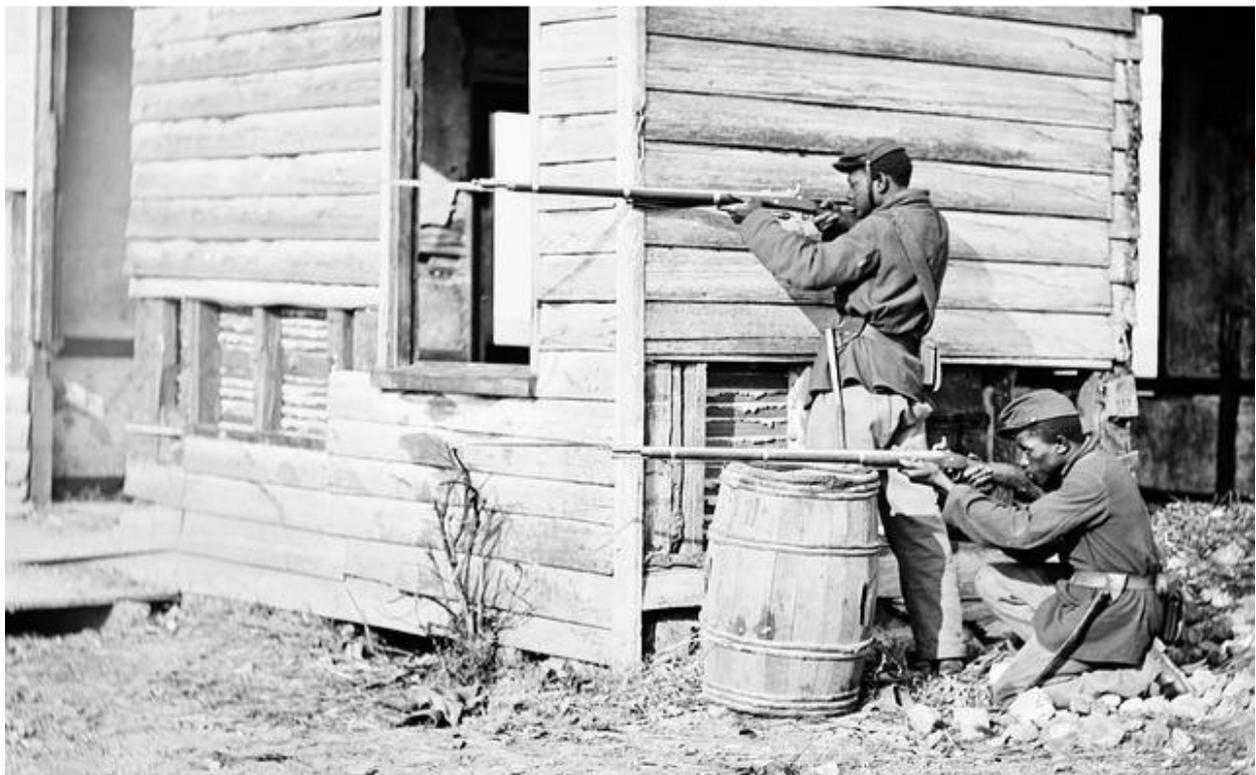
- A strong movement for the abolition of slavery began in the north. It called for the **repeal of the controversial Fugitive Slave Act of 1850** (this act had mandated the return of run-away slaves to their masters).

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4. The fear of reforms by Abraham Lincoln and Republican party

- The immediate cause of the civil war was the American Presidential election in which the **Republican Party** candidate, **Abraham Lincoln**, won (1860).
- While Abraham Lincoln stood for freedom of slaves, the **Democratic** candidate **Stephan Arnold Douglas** wanted slavery to continue.

Course of the American Civil War



- Seven southern states declared their secession from the Union and established a Southern government – the **Confederate States of America** on February 9, 1861.
- The Confederacy adopted its own Constitution. **Jefferson Davis** was its President.
- War broke out in April 1861 when the Confederates attacked a U.S. fortress (Fort Sumter) at South Carolina.
- 4 more states joined confederacy, making the total number of states 11.

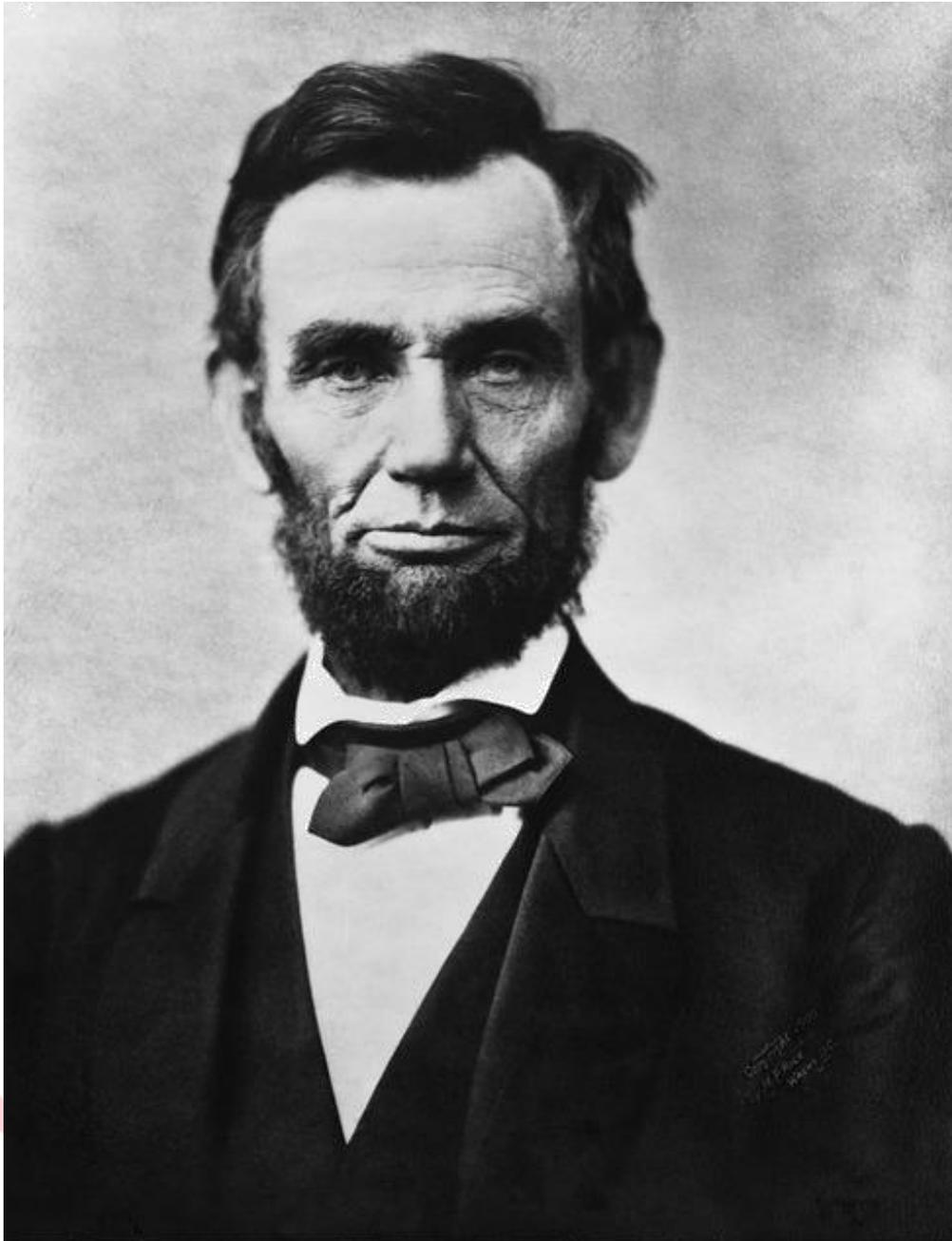
- In September 1862, Lincoln issued the **Proclamation of Emancipation**, which freed millions of slaves.
- In the Gettysburg battle, almost 50,000 soldiers were killed.
- Lincoln gave the famous Gettysburg Address – where he set before the nation the task of preserving the Union and democracy. His vision was a government of the people, by the people and for the people.
- The war ended with the surrender of all the Confederate armies and the collapse of Confederate government in 1865. General Lee surrendered his Confederate army to General Ulysses S Grant.

Significance of the American Civil War

1. The war put an end to the institution of slavery.
2. The war abolished the secession of states for all times to come.
3. In the economic sphere, the war led to the growth of large scale manufacturing industries.
4. More area came under cultivation – particularly in the west regions on North America.
5. Use of more machines – which enhanced production.
6. Regulation of banking system ((National Banking Act) and use of paper currency contributed to the growth of nation wide business.
7. New weapons were used.
8. Improvement in transport and communication
9. Inspiration to other countries – to abolish slavery.
10. While the Revolution of 1776-1783 created the United States, the Civil War of 1861-1865 determined what kind of nation it would be.

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How did Abraham Lincoln make a difference in history?



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- Abraham Lincoln was born in a humble background in 1809, in the state of Kentucky.
 - His mother died when he was nine years old.
 - He became a distinguished lawyer and great orator.
 - In 1847 he was elected to the Congress.
 - In 1860, Lincoln was elected as the 16th President of the USA as a Republican Candidate.
 - Lincoln played a **great role in keeping USA united**.
 - He refused to give southern states the right to secede from the Union.
 - His greatest contribution to humanity was the **abolition of slavery**.
 - After the civil war, citizens of all states of USA were granted citizenship and equal rights.
 - It was Abraham Lincoln who gave the famous principle of democracy – ie. government of the people, by the people and for the people.