



The Coming of the Civil War

Objectives

1. Describe the results of the election of 1860.
2. Explain why southern states seceded from the Union.
3. Summarize the events that led to the outbreak of the Civil War.

Prepare to Read

Reading Skill

Analyze Multiple Causes or Effects Many events in history have more than one cause, as the Civil War certainly did. Other events lead to more than one effect, which is also certainly true of the Civil War. As you read about this turning point in American history, look for causes with multiple effects and effects with multiple causes.

Vocabulary Builder

High-Use Words

accommodation, p. 501

isolate, p. 503

Key Term

civil war, p. 503

Background Knowledge John Brown's raid steadily increased tensions between North and South over slavery. In this section, you will learn how Abraham Lincoln's election as President created a crisis that shattered the nation and led to war.

The Nation Divides

As the election of 1860 drew near, Americans everywhere felt a sense of crisis. The long and bitter debate over slavery had left the nation seriously divided.

Election of 1860 The Republicans chose Abraham Lincoln as their presidential candidate. His criticisms of slavery during his debates with Douglas had made him popular in the North.

Southern Democrats wanted the party to support slavery in the territories. But northerners refused to do so. In the end, the party split in two. Northern Democrats chose Stephen Douglas as their candidate. Southern Democrats picked Vice President John Breckinridge of Kentucky.

Some southerners still hoped to heal the split between North and South. They formed the Constitutional Union Party and nominated John Bell of Tennessee. Bell promised to protect slavery *and* keep the nation together.

Stephen Douglas was sure that Lincoln would win the election. However, he believed that Democrats "must try to save the Union." He pleaded with southern voters to stay with the Union, no matter who was elected. However, when Douglas campaigned in the South, hostile southerners often pelted him with eggs and rotten fruit.

Main Idea

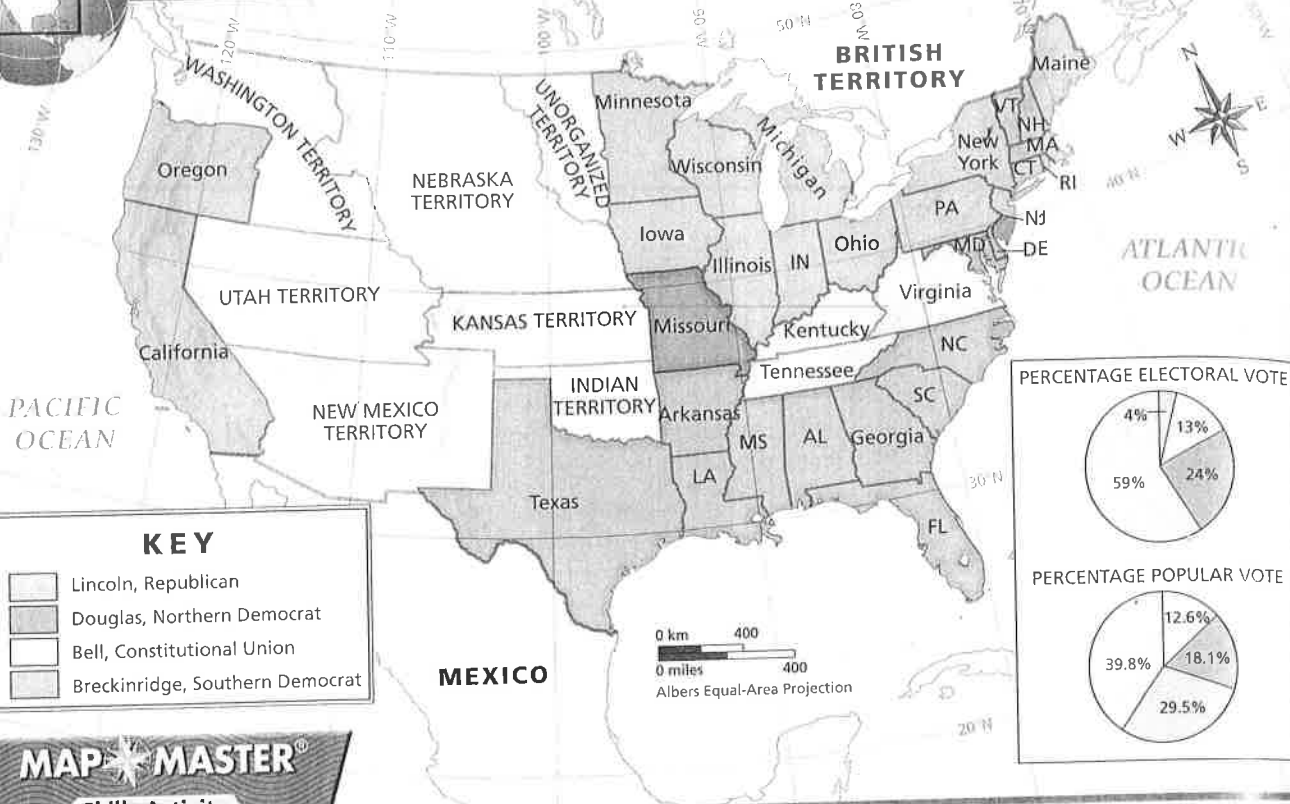
The election of 1860 led to the breakup of the Union.

Wood carving of Stephen Douglas



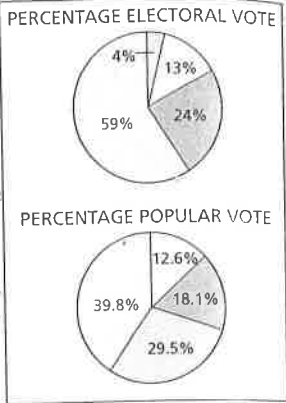


Election of 1860



KEY

- Lincoln, Republican
- Douglas, Northern Democrat
- Bell, Constitutional Union
- Breckinridge, Southern Democrat



MAP MASTER Skills Activity

Due to rising tensions between the North and South, the election of 1860 took place in an atmosphere of distrust and suspicion.

- (a) **Read a Map Key** What do the four colors on the map stand for? Which party won nearly all the northern states? Which party won nearly all the southern states?
- (b) **Draw Conclusions** How does the map show that sectionalism was important in the election?

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The election showed just how fragmented the nation had become. Lincoln won in every free state and Breckinridge in all the slave-holding states except four. Bell won Kentucky, Tennessee, and Virginia—all in the upper South. Douglas carried only Missouri. Although Lincoln got only 40 percent of the popular votes, he received enough electoral votes to win the election.

Southern States Secede Lincoln's election sent shock waves through the South. To many southerners, it seemed that the South no longer had a voice in the national government. They believed that the President and Congress were now set against their interests—especially slavery.

One Virginia newspaper expressed the feelings of many southerners. "A party founded on the single sentiment . . . of hatred of African slavery, is now the controlling power," it observed. "The honor, safety, and independence of the Southern people are to be found only in a Southern Confederacy."

South Carolina was the first southern state to secede from the Union. When news of Lincoln's election reached the state, the

legislature called for a special convention. On December 20, 1860, the convention passed a declaration that "the union now subsisting between South Carolina and the other states, under the name of the 'United States of America' is hereby dissolved."

The Confederate States of America With hope of accommodation all but gone, six more states followed South Carolina out of the Union. However, not all southerners favored secession. Tennessee Senator Andrew Johnson and Texas Governor Sam Houston were among those who opposed it. Yet, the voices of the moderates were overwhelmed. "People are wild," said one opponent of secession. "You might as well attempt to control a tornado as attempt to stop them."

In early February, leaders from the seven seceding states met in Montgomery, Alabama, to form a new nation that they called the Confederate States of America. By the time Lincoln took office in March, they had written a constitution and named former Mississippi Senator Jefferson Davis as their president.

Checkpoint Why did southern states secede from the Union?

The Civil War Begins

On March 4, 1861, Abraham Lincoln became President of a nation facing the greatest crisis in its history. In his inaugural address, he assured the seceded states that he meant them no harm. "I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery where it exists," he promised. But he also warned them about continuing on the course they had chosen:

"In your hands, my dissatisfied fellow countrymen, and not in mine, is the momentous issue of . . . war. The government will not assail [attack] you. . . . We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection."

—Abraham Lincoln, Inaugural Address, March 4, 1861

Lincoln's assurance of friendship was rejected. The seceding states took over post offices, forts, and other federal property within their borders. The new President had to decide how to respond.

Fort Sumter Lincoln's most urgent problem was Fort Sumter, located on an island in the harbor of Charleston, South Carolina. The fort's commander would not surrender it. South Carolina authorities decided to starve the fort's 100 troops into surrender. They had been cut off from supplies since late December and could not hold out much longer.

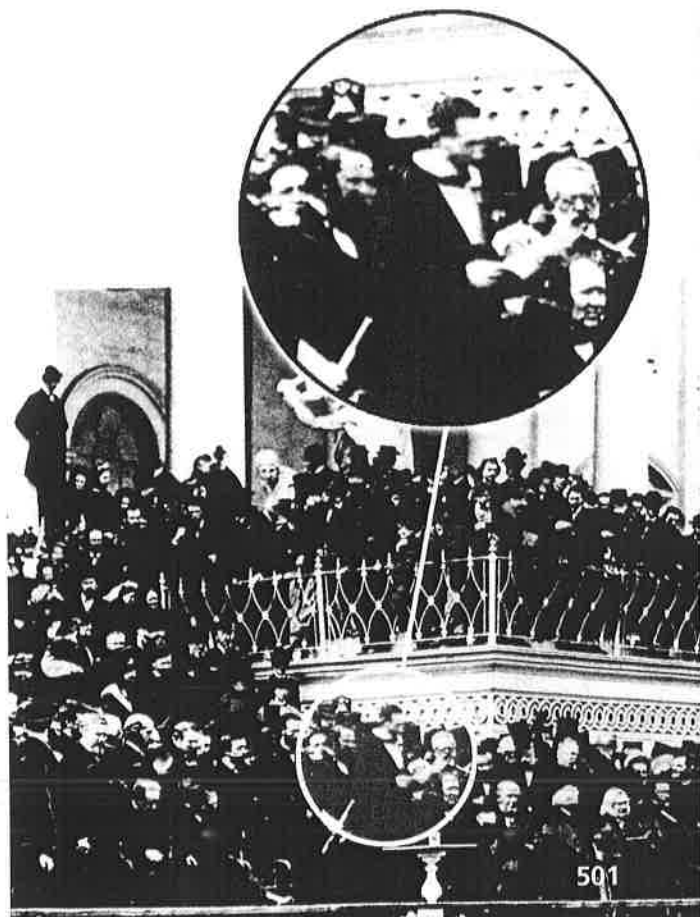
Abraham Lincoln speaks at his first inauguration

Vocabulary Builder

accommodation (ak kom moh DAY shuhn) *n.* adjustment; adaptation

Main Idea

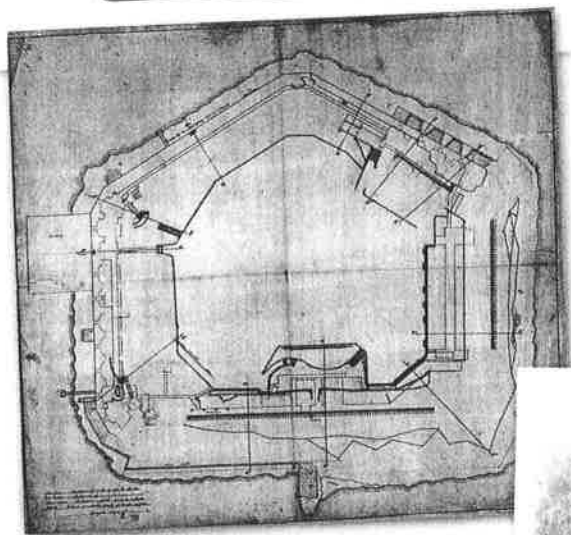
President Lincoln's assurances of friendship in his inaugural address were rejected by the South.



Attack on Fort Sumter

History Interactive Inside Fort Sumter

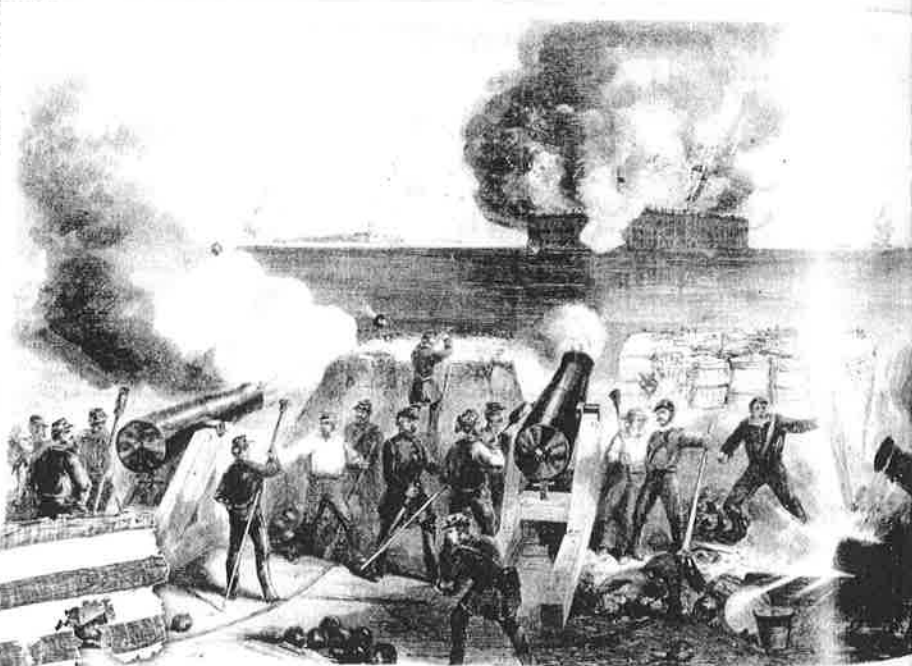
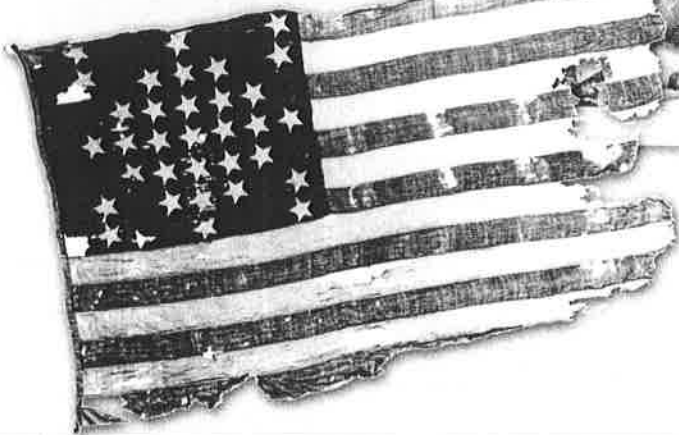
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◀ Blueprint of the Fort

This overhead diagram of the fort shows its pentagonal, or five-sided, shape. The square-shaped area on the left side of the diagram shows a small wharf. Prior to the Confederate attack, Union ships used this dock to unload supplies to the fort.

▼ American flag from Fort Sumter



▲ Confederate Troops Fire on the Fort

Confederate artillery pounded Fort Sumter for 34 hours. Fires raged out of control and threatened to ignite the fort's magazine, where many barrels of gunpowder were stored. Facing shortages of food and ammunition, the Union commander surrendered. The bloodiest of all American wars had begun.

Lincoln did not want to give up the fort. But he feared that sending troops might cause other states to secede. Therefore, he announced that he would send food to the fort, but that the supply ships would carry no troops or guns.

Confederate leaders decided to capture the fort while it was isolated. On April 12, Confederate artillery opened fire on the fort. After 34 hours, with the fort on fire, the U.S. troops surrendered.

Why War Came The Confederate attack on Fort Sumter marked the beginning of a long civil war. A civil war is a war between opposing groups of citizens of the same country.

The Civil War probably attracts more public interest today than any other event in American history. Americans continue to debate why the war took place and whether it could have been avoided.

In 1850, southerners might have been satisfied if they had been left alone. But by 1861, many Americans in both the North and the South had come to accept the idea that war could not be avoided. At stake was the nation's future. Four years later, a weary Lincoln looked back to the beginning of the conflict. He noted:

“Both parties [condemned] war, but one of them would *make* war rather than let the nation survive, and the other would *accept* war rather than let it perish, and the war came.”

—Abraham Lincoln, Second Inaugural Address, March 4, 1865

Checkpoint Why was Lincoln reluctant to give up Fort Sumter?

Looking Back and Ahead Confederate cannons had nearly destroyed Fort Sumter. To many, it seemed like a huge fireworks display. No one knew that the fireworks marked the beginning of a terrible war that would last four years.

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Comprehension and Critical Thinking

- (a) Recall** How did divisions among the Democrats help lead to the election of Republican Abraham Lincoln in 1860?
(b) Explain Problems What was the South's reaction to Lincoln's election? How did Lincoln try to reassure the South?
- (a) Identify** What event marked the start of war between the North and the South?

(b) Evaluate Information

Explain what Abraham Lincoln meant by the following remark: “Both parties [condemned] war, but one of them would *make* war rather than let the nation survive. . . .”

Reading Skill

- Analyze Multiple Causes or Effects** What were three effects of Lincoln's warning to the South?

Vocabulary Builder

- Write two definitions for the key term civil war. First, write a formal definition for your teacher. Second, write a definition in everyday English for a classmate.

Writing

- Based on what you have read in this section, write a thesis statement for an essay explaining why the election of Abraham Lincoln caused the South to secede.

Vocabulary Builder

isolate (i sah layt) v. to set apart; to separate



Analyze Multiple Causes or Effects

According to this section, what were two causes of the Civil War?