

# AP US History

## Results of the Civil War

After four years of “total war” the America that had split in two in 1861 was now a very different place. The war had officially ended with Lee’s surrender at Appomattox Courthouse in April 9, 1865. Five days later, the man who had so eloquently spoken of the need to sacrifice for the Union cause at Gettysburg in 1863, had himself given “the last full measure of devotion” to the cause of “government of the people, by the people, and for the people.” And, four days after Lincoln’s assassination by Confederate actor John Wilkes Booth (whose accomplice attempted to murder Secretary of State Seward), the only remaining significant force of Confederate troops left also laid down its arms. The Union was saved...but at what cost?

- **618,000 dead from enemy fire or disease**
  - North: died from wounds = 110,070; died from disease = 249,458
  - South: died from wounds = ~94,000; died from disease = ~164,00
  - North wounded: 275,175; South wounded: ~100,000
- **Monetary cost of the war: \$15 billion**; plus the incalculable, intangible costs of dislocations, wasted energies, and burning hatred.
- **Democratic principles and ideals were preserved** and served to influence reform in other nations such as Great Britain (English Reform Bill of 1867)
- The destruction of the “peculiar institution” enabled blacks to begin to claim their rights to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness”
- A now united, emancipated and increasingly democratic union was “free to fulfill its destiny as the dominant republic of the hemisphere—and eventually the world”
- Widows and girlfriends left behind by their deceased partners temporarily increased the proportion of unmarried women; many in this group of “spinsters” sought new opportunities to make a living far beyond the traditional domestic roles previously prescribed for women
- Many **northern women** became fund-raisers, army nurses, members of the Sanitary Commission, served in administrative roles in patriotic organizations, and volunteer workers
- This **broadened the “women’s sphere” and led to more acceptance of what women could accomplish outside of the home**
- In the **South, women were forced to shoulder greater burdens on both large plantations and small farm**; this combined with the loss of their men (fathers, sons, brothers, husbands), the advance of Union troops, and the difficulty of controlling a slave labor force destroyed many southern women’s allegiance to the Confederate cause
- Southern women responded to these significant changes by forming associations to assist returning soldiers, becoming educators, establishing benevolent and reform societies or temperance organizations. Yet, even with a more visible presence, southern women were still expected to maintain their “proper place” in society.
- **Four million African Americans were liberated from slavery, but their status as equal citizens remained in question**; by 1865, most northern states still had not granted “free Negroes” equality under the law or the right to vote.
- Impact of war on northern working class whites was unclear; many suffered from high inflation (prices went up faster than wages) but hoped the crusade against slavery would be broadened into a movement to improve the lot of working people in general

- Because so many immigrants had fought and died for the Union cause (Irish, Germans, Italians, etc.), **nativist (anti-immigrant) sentiment was temporarily weakened, and tolerance increased for a time.**
- The Civil War decided that the **federal government was supreme over the states**; its Constitutional authority on matters that affected the “general welfare” was broadened
- The federal government maintained its structure with a strong central government, and states were not longer allowed to nullify federal laws, or secede; however, states still maintained responsibility for most functions of government.
- **Federal government powers were expanded** by the Union government w/o opposition from the South during the war, especially in the area of **economic policy**:
  - Rejecting the traditional virtual laissez-faire position, a program of active support for business and agriculture was enacted in 1862:
    - Congress passed a **high protective tariff**
    - approved a **homestead act** to encourage settlement of the West by providing free land to settlers
    - granted huge **tracts of land to railroad companies** to support the building of a transcontinental railroad
    - gave states **land to establish agricultural colleges**
  - Congress set up a **National Banking system**—member banks had to keep reserves and invest 1/3 of their capital in government securities; banks issued the first standardized and reliable **circulating paper money**
- **Government role under the Republicans shifted in relation to business**—from a ‘hands-off’ approach to a more activist state that promoted and subsidized efforts of the economically ambitious and industrious.
- Most pervasive impact on **northern society** was to encourage an **“organizational revolution”**
- Helped by govt policies, **businessmen** took advantage of new national markets created by military procurement (needed supplies for the troops) to **build the foundation for corporate America**
- Philanthropists developed more effective national associations such as the Sanitary and Christian Commissions that ministered to the physical and spiritual needs of the troops
- Efforts to care for the wounded influenced the development of the **modern hospital and the rise of nursing as a female profession**
- **The war**, according the Ralph Waldo Emerson, had **transformed the way Americans thought and acted**; Emerson abandoned his ideas of extreme individualism and hailed the need to accept social discipline and participate in organized, cooperative activity; these ideas characterized the general change in American thought and behavior patterns for generations to come
- **North won mainly because it was better than the South to organize, innovate, and “modernize.”**
- Because the North won, the nation as a whole was now poised to embrace the conception of progress (as it had done during the war) in science and technology, and in bringing together large numbers of men and women for common economic and social goals
- **Civil War** was thus a **catalyst for a great transformation in American society from an individualistic society of small producers into the more highly organized and “incorporated” America of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.**