

Year 2:

Unit 1

"A New Birth of Freedom" - The Civil War (1848 - 1865): Introduction

Unit Purpose: Why This Unit?

In this unit, we emerge where scholars left off in Year 1: on the precipice of civil war. In Year 1, scholars learned about the emerging divide between North and South. With the passage of the Missouri Compromise, sectionalism emerged as a key issue in American society. And with the rise of social movements, and abolitionism in particular, it became clear that a growing number of Americans were prepared to challenge the nearly 200-year-old system of slavery. This unit picks up with this theme of sectional divide. Beginning with the Mexican-American War and the Compromise of 1850, scholars will trace how sectionalism threatened the stability and unity of the nation. Scholars will understand how the rise of new leaders — abolitionists like Frederick Douglass and politicians like Abraham Lincoln — worsened this sectionalism, and more importantly, eventually brought about the end of the institution of slavery in the United States.

The Civil War is perhaps the most momentous event in American history. When the war broke out in April of 1861, many Americans expected the war to be short. Instead, four bloody years followed and devastated the nation, touching the lives of American men and women on and off the battlefield. A war at first to preserve the Union, with the passage of the Emancipation Proclamation and the victory of the Battle of Gettysburg, the meaning of the war transformed into a crusade to end slavery. The survival of the United States was at risk, and the nation's ability to realize the ideals of liberty, equality, and justice depended on the war's outcome.

Unit 1 Learning Goals

Essential Question

If you are successful in this unit, your scholars will be able to answer the Unit 1 Essential Question: *Why did Americans wage the Civil War?*

Big Ideas

The Big Ideas, outlined below, help answer the Unit 1 Essential Question and reflect the key ideas scholars must master by the end of this unit. As you teach Unit 1, connect every lesson back to the Big Idea(s) that the lesson helps illustrate. The Unit 1 Big Ideas were adapted from the UCLA National History Standards United States Era 4 and United States Era 5.

- **Big Idea 1: Sectional tensions between the North and South over political ideologies about slavery erupted by 1850, leading to the Civil War.**
 - By 1850, the North and the South had developed distinct economies; the North had developed an industrial economy, while the South depended heavily on plantation slave labor. As a result, two distinct and often clashing societies emerged.
 - Many Americans believed that the United States waged war to expand slavery into Texas. When the Mexican-American War ended, the United States gained new territory, threatening the balance between slave and free states established by the Missouri Compromise.
 - Following the Compromise of 1850, American abolitionists grew stronger in their anti-slavery convictions, accelerating their fight to end slavery.
 - Despite the Compromise of 1850, new conflicts emerged during the 1850s that threatened the unity of the United States and deepened the national sectional divide.
 - Following the election of 1860, the Southern states seceded from the Union, scared that the new government led by Republican Abraham Lincoln threatened their slave-holding interests.
- **Big Idea 2: After a long and deadly clash, the Union, armed with powerful resources and a strong commander in chief, ultimately overpowered the Confederacy, whose inferior resources hindered its military power.**
 - Throughout the Civil War, the courageous and tactful leadership of Abraham Lincoln ultimately guided the Union to victory.
 - New innovations in military technology had a detrimental impact on Americans, making the war deadlier than any war before it. While the war was bloody on both sides, superior technology and infrastructure in the North ultimately led to a Union victory.
 - On the home front, Americans mobilized to support the war effort. In the Union, especially, civilians used all of the resources at their disposal.
 - The Battle of Gettysburg was a key turning point in the war. On the battlefield, Union military leaders stopped the advancement northward of the Confederate Army.
 - Both the North and the South lost countless lives to the Civil War, which remains the conflict with the greatest number of American deaths even today.
- **Big Idea 3: The Union cause for the Civil War evolved over the course of the war, from a war to save the Union to a war to end slavery.**
 - When President Lincoln was elected president, he opposed the spread of slavery, but he did not support full abolition. Thus, when the Civil War began, his priority was to restore the Union.

- President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, freeing slaves in rebel states and encouraging soldiers to fight a war to end slavery.
- Abraham Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address" helped give meaning and purpose to the Emancipation Proclamation, encouraging all soldiers that their sacrifices were in honor of a larger, more noble good.
- Confederate soldiers fought to protect slavery and the rights of Southern states. In the Union, at first, only white soldiers fought in the war to preserve the Union. By 1863, however, African American soldiers joined the Union Army, fighting now to end slavery.
- The 13th Amendment solidified the meaning of the war, indicating a victory of Union ideals and ending slavery once and for all.

Key Terms

The following people, places, and events are foundational to understanding the Big Ideas of this unit. As these words are introduced in each lesson, add them to your word wall and hold scholars accountable for using them in discussion and writing throughout the unit.

- The Union
- The Confederacy
- Abraham Lincoln
- Manifest destiny
- The Mexican-American War
- Sectionalism
- The Compromise of 1850
- John Brown
- Harriet Tubman
- Harriet Beecher Stowe
- Frederick Douglass
- The Dred Scott decision
- The Republican Party
- Southern secession
- Fort Sumter
- The home front (North vs. South)
- The Emancipation Proclamation
- The Battle of Gettysburg
- The 13th Amendment
- Appomattox Court House

Geography

The following places are foundational to understanding the geographical context of the unit. As you teach Unit 1, continually reference maps in class not only to build scholar fluency with geography, but also to develop scholars' geographic reasoning skills as they grapple with the Big Ideas of the unit.

- **Major cotton-producing states, 1850:** North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas
- **Major industrial centers, 1850:** Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; New York City, New York; Boston, Massachusetts
- **The Mexican-American War:** Mexico, Texas, the Rio Grande, the Nueces River, and the Gulf of Mexico
- **The states of the Union and the Confederacy**
- **Major battle sites of the Civil War:** Fort Sumter, the Battle of Bull Run, the Battle of Antietam, the Battle of Gettysburg, Sherman's March to the Sea (Savannah), and Appomattox Court House

Intellectual Preparation

Class Materials Once you have internalized the Big Ideas of the unit, to be successful, you must study all scholar documents and materials before you teach the first lesson:

- All documents in the [Unit 1 Sourcebook](#)
- All scholar and teacher materials in the [Unit 1 Workbook](#)

Additional Resources The resources below provide additional historical background for the content covered in Unit 1:

- Review the following timelines: "National Expansion and Reform, 1815–1860" and "Civil War and Reconstruction, 1861–1877" on the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History* website.
- Read the essays "The Road to War," "The American Civil War," and "African Americans and Emancipation" on the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History* website.
- Read "Teaching Slavery" and "Why Did the South Secede?" from Chapters 8–9 of [Teaching What Really Happened](#) by James Loewen.
- Watch the video "America and the Civil War" on the History Channel.

*To access these readings and more free American History content and resources, create an account on the Gilder Lehrman Institute website.

Unit 1 Lesson Sequence

Essential Question: Why did Americans wage the Civil War?

The first three lessons set the stage for the rising sectional tensions over slavery between the North and the South. While Lesson 1 introduces scholars to the broad impact of the Civil War, Lessons 2 and 3 demonstrate how national expansion triggered increased divisions among Americans and how the nation tried to deal with these sectional tensions. By the end of these

lessons, scholars will be prepared to examine how Americans responded to compromise and why sectional tensions continued to deepen.

Lesson 1: The Significance of the Civil War (Source Analysis)

- **Central Question:** Why was the Civil War significant in American history?

Lesson 2: Manifest Destiny and the Mexican-American War (Source Analysis)

- **Central Question:** Why did the United States declare war on Mexico?

Lesson 3: The Compromise of 1850 (Simulation)

- **Central Question:** Why did Congress pass the Compromise of 1850?

Lessons 4 through 8 develop scholars' understanding of the deepening sectional divide over slavery between the North and the South. Lessons 4 through 6 illustrate how Americans responded to congressional compromises and explains why many Americans refused to accept any compromise over slavery. These lessons build up to Lessons 7 and 8 and Southern secession. By the end of Lesson 8, scholars will be able to explain how sectional tensions over slavery ultimately led to the secession of the South and laid the groundwork for the Civil War.

Lesson 4: Abolition in the 1850s (Jigsaw)

- **Central Question:** How did abolitionists influence national opinions about slavery?

Lesson 5: Sectional Tensions Rise (Source Analysis)

- **Central Question:** To what extent was the Compromise of 1850 successful?

Lesson 6: The Rise of Abraham Lincoln (Source Analysis)

- **Central Question:** Why did Abraham Lincoln rise to become the leader of the new Republican party?

Lessons 7–8: Southern Secession (Source Analysis, Exit Ticket Revision)

- **Central Question:** Why did the South secede?

Lessons 9 through 11 introduce scholars to both the experiences of Americans during the Civil War and why the meaning of the war began to evolve from a war to save the Union to a war to end slavery by 1863. While Lesson 9 focuses especially on the horrors of the Civil War for Americans, Lesson 10 illustrates this evolving meaning of the war for the Union. Lesson 11 unites both of these ideas to explain how, by adopting the abolition of slavery as its “cause,” the Union changed the tide of the war at Gettysburg.

Lesson 9: The Civil War (Jigsaw)

- **Central Question:** How did different groups of Americans experience the Civil War?

Lesson 10: The Emancipation Proclamation (Source Analysis)

- **Central Question:** Why did President Lincoln issue the Emancipation Proclamation?

Lesson 11: Gettysburg (Source Analysis)

- **Central Question:** Why was the Battle of Gettysburg a turning point in the Civil War?

Lessons 12 through 14 illustrate the consequences of the previous lessons and how this shift in the focus of the war gave the Union a restored momentum, leading to a Union victory and the permanent abolition of slavery. Lessons 12 and 13 explain why the passage of the 13th Amendment was essential both for the rights and dignity of African Americans, but also to the fate of the Union cause. Scholars will understand by the end of Lesson 13 the instrumental role Lincoln, as well as many senators and congressmen, played in passing the amendment. By the end of Lesson 14, scholars should be able to explain how all three Big Ideas of Unit 1 ultimately contributed to a Union victory in the Civil War.

Lessons 12–14: Lincoln and the 13th Amendment (Video Analysis, Exit Ticket Revision)

- **Central Question:** Why did Lincoln fight to pass the 13th Amendment before the end of the Civil War?

Lesson 15: The End of the War (Source Analysis)

- **Central Question:** Why did the Union win the Civil War?