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**curriculum
connections**

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Politics

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Introduction

Civil War forms part of the **Curriculum Connections** series. Each of the six volumes of the set covers a particular aspect of the conflict: **Home Front and the Economy; Behind the Fighting; Weapons, Tactics, and Strategy; Politics; Battles and Campaigns; and People.**

About this set

Each volume in *Civil War* features illustrated chapters, providing in-depth information about each subject. The chapters are all listed in the contents pages of each book. Each volume can be studied to provide a comprehensive understanding of all aspects of the conflict. However, each chapter may also be studied independently.

Within each chapter there are two key aids to learning that are to be found in color sidebars located in the margins of each page:

Curriculum Context sidebars indicate to the reader that a subject has a particular relevance to certain key state and national history guidelines and curricula. They highlight essential information or suggest useful ways for students to consider a subject or to include it in their studies.

Glossary sidebars define key words within the text.

At the end of the book, a summary **Glossary** lists the key terms defined in the volume. There is also a list of further print and Web-based resources and a full volume index.

Fully captioned illustrations play an important role throughout the set, including photographs and explanatory maps.

About this book

Politics provides the political context that both caused the war and influenced its progress; it also considers the Reconstruction period after the war, and the differing visions of the future development of the defeated states in the South.

The war began with the secession of the Southern states in 1861, following the election of Republican Abraham Lincoln as U.S. president. The roots of the conflict, however, had been growing throughout the 19th century. The expansion of the United States had raised questions about whether or not new states would or would not allow slavery. This book describes the **abolition** campaign against slavery, the series of political compromises that initially preserved the Union, and how the tensions eventually led to war.

It was not until Lincoln issued the **Emancipation** Proclamation in 1862, however, that the conflict became explicitly a war about slavery. Previously, many in the Confederacy argued that the war was necessary to assert states' rights over those of the federal government. Lincoln himself, meanwhile, emphasized that the aim of the war was simply to preserve the Union.

Throughout the war, politics continued as normal in the North and the South. This book contains articles that examine both governments and their policies, the role of state governors, and the many different views expressed about the war and its conduct. The divergence of views continued after the war, during the Reconstruction period in the South. The achievements of Reconstruction, and its eventual failure, are also fully explored.



Abolition

From the 1830s people began campaigning actively to end slavery throughout the United States (it was already illegal in the Northern states). The so-called abolition movement eventually brought the issue of slavery to the forefront of American politics.

Curriculum Context

Cotton was a labor-intensive crop; slavery kept down the costs of hiring the large workforce needed for its cultivation.

Curriculum Context

Many curricula focus on the abolition movement as a major current in 19th-century American society; you may be asked to describe significant moments in its history.

Slavery had been abolished in all the states north of Maryland by 1804, and importing slaves was prohibited throughout the United States in 1807, although slave smuggling continued until the 1860s. In the early 1800s, however, growing demand for cotton made slavery very profitable, and talk of abolition ceased to be heard in the South. As slavery and cotton cultivation spread to new Southern states, slaveholders defended slavery as a “positive good”: for the economy, for society, and even for the slaves themselves. This disappointed opponents of slavery, who fought for its **immediate** abolition by law.

The beginning of the abolition movement in the United States dates to 1831, when a Bostonian named William Lloyd Garrison began publishing the *Liberator*, a newspaper devoted to ending slavery. In 1833 he and others founded the American Anti-Slavery Society, which spread through the North. A religious revival, the Second Great Awakening, which preached perfectionism, influenced Garrison and his followers. They believed that, in order to become morally perfect, society must eliminate evils such as slavery.

Moral tactics

Most abolitionists relied on moral tactics in their crusade. Abolitionist groups published and distributed a stream of antislavery material, sponsored lectures, and tried to persuade others to join them. African Americans played a crucial role. Foremost among them was Frederick Douglass, an ex-slave who was an

eloquent spokesman for abolition. Douglass's 1845 autobiography was one of the most important documents of the movement. The abolitionists' tactic of placing nonviolent pressure on slaveholders was called "moral suasion" (persuasion). Abolitionists met with intense hostility not just from Southerners but also from some Northerners, who viewed them as fanatics.

Abolitionists in Congress

By the 1850s a few abolitionists in Congress, such as Charles Sumner and Thaddeus Stevens, were opposing legislation like the **Fugitive** Slave Law of 1850, which allowed slave owners to detain runaway slaves in free states and territories. They were joined by a group called the Free Soilers, who opposed the geographical expansion of slavery, mainly for economic reasons. The small but influential Free Soil Party, set up in 1848, brought the antislavery issue into mainstream politics. In 1854 Free Soilers came together with others to form the Republican Party, attracting many abolitionists.

Radical action

By the 1850s some abolitionists thought that a slave rebellion, or a civil war between the free states and the slave states, was the only solution to the problem. In 1856 John Brown, an antislavery zealot, and several of his followers murdered five proslavery settlers in Kansas, which had become a battleground between pro- and antislavery forces. In 1859 they seized a federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, to distribute the weapons to slaves and ignite a rebellion. Brown was executed by the state of Virginia, but he became a symbol, and his actions hastened the coming of the Civil War.

Curriculum Context

Students might be asked to discuss the contribution of Frederick Douglass and other former slaves to the promotion of abolition.

Curriculum Context

Some curricula examine the evolution of the Republican Party in the 1850s.

Wendell Phillips, a radical abolitionist, makes an antislavery speech at a rally in Boston in April 1851.



Curriculum Context

Students may be asked to describe the impact of the Thirteenth Amendment on life for African Americans.

The end of slavery

War finally came after the election of Abraham Lincoln, a Republican, to the presidency in 1860. Most abolitionists saw it as their chance to strike the death blow against slavery. However, Lincoln was worried about the consequences of moving against slavery. He waited until after the strategic Union victory at Antietam in September 1862 to issue the Emancipation Proclamation—to be finally effective from January 1, 1863—which gave freedom to all slaves held in areas still in rebellion. The proclamation had little practical effect until the surrender of the Confederacy in 1865. Then the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution completed the abolition of slavery in the United States.

Historians still debate the success of the abolition movement. Most agree that, overall, the Union armies and the Free Soilers in Congress did more to destroy slavery than the abolitionists. However, scholars also credit abolitionists with raising public awareness of the evils of slavery. They argue that their crusade encouraged Northerners to endure the sacrifices of the Civil War by transforming a war to prevent secession into a struggle for human freedom.

Moderates and Radicals

By the early 1840s William Lloyd Garrison and other abolitionists were becoming frustrated by the movement's lack of progress. Abolitionists had attracted much attention, but had made little headway in persuading slaveholders to free their slaves. Garrison began to denounce the United States' government, saying that it was hopelessly corrupted by the protections given to slavery in the Constitution. He urged his followers to quit voting or supporting the political system. He also

denounced churches for not condemning slavery strongly enough. Eventually Garrison even called for the Northern states to **secede** from the Union rather than continue in a partnership with slave states. At about the same time, he embraced the emerging women's rights movement. This act finally resulted in a split in the movement between the radicals like him and more moderate abolitionists, who set up a new rival organization, the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society.

Black Codes

The Black Codes were repressive legal restrictions that governed the behavior and status of blacks in the defeated Confederate states. They were introduced immediately after the war, but were suspended by Congress in 1866.

At the end of the war the defeated states of the Confederacy reentered the Union on condition they swore allegiance to the United States and abolished slavery. However, it soon became clear that the new Southern state governments were determined to preserve as many of the trappings of slavery as possible, as the Black Codes showed. The codes preserved many prewar restrictions on free blacks. The name was not new. Before the Civil War the term usually referred to laws regulating free blacks; those governing slaves were known as **slave codes**. After the Civil War, the word “slave” fell into disrepute, even in the South, even though slavery was still seen by whites as socially desirable and economically essential.

Rights and restrictions

The new laws gave ex-slaves some basic rights. They could own property; they could sue and be sued in courts of law. All the Southern states accepted the testimony of blacks in legal cases in which they were involved; six states accepted it in all cases. Marriages between blacks, including common-law marriages, were legally recognized.

In other areas, the Black Codes denied more rights than they granted. The restrictions varied from state to state, but some were common. In most states, blacks were forbidden to bear arms or meet in unsupervised groups. They were required to enter into annual **labor contracts** and were liable to criminal punishment if

Curriculum Context

Students studying the **Reconstruction era** might be asked to understand the restrictions placed on the rights and opportunities of **freedmen**.

Labor contracts

Annual contracts were used as a way to deny African Americans freedom to change jobs at will.

they broke them, instead of being subject to civil penalties, as whites were. Blacks suffered harsher punishments than whites for the same offenses. Although blacks could own property, their freedom to buy was limited. In Mississippi they were not allowed to own farmland, and in South Carolina they were forbidden to buy city lots. Local laws in Louisiana made it almost impossible for blacks to live in towns.

Curriculum Context

You might be asked to describe the provisions of the Fourteenth Amendment and the political forces that supported it and opposed it.

Fourteenth Amendment

In 1866 the Black Codes were suspended by federal officials. The Fourteenth Amendment was added to the Constitution in 1868, making discriminatory legislation unconstitutional by granting citizenship to blacks and guaranteeing them equality. After Reconstruction ended in 1877, the laws of many Southern states eroded black rights, resulting in the **segregation** and disenfranchisement of African Americans. The so-called “Jim Crow” laws were legally approved by the Supreme Court in May 1896, which ruled that the provision of “separate but equal” facilities for African Americans satisfied Fourteenth Amendment guarantees.

Northern Reaction

Many people saw the Black Codes as slavery in a different guise. Opposition to the regulations was particularly strong in the North, partly because many Northerners believed in equal rights for blacks, but also partly because the victors in the Civil War wanted to see the defeated Confederate states suffer. Many people agreed with Thaddeus Stevens, the radical Republican congressman, when he declared: “I am for negro suffrage in every rebel state. If it be just, it should not be denied; if it be necessary, it should be adopted; if it be a punishment to traitors, they deserve it.”

The first postwar U.S. Congress set up a joint committee for Reconstruction, which, having excluded Southern members, decided that the states of the old Confederacy needed more than restoration—according to Stevens, “the whole fabric of southern society must be changed.” As an immediate consequence, the Black Codes were suspended in 1866. Later Congress enacted Reconstruction Acts in 1867 and 1868, setting up **military rule** in the South and establishing conditions for readmission to the Union for 10 Southern states.