



## 3

## THE END OF SLAVERY IN THE AMERICAS

## THIS CHAPTER ASKS

How did slavery end in the Americas?  
 Why was there a civil war in the USA?  
 What part did Blacks play in the Civil War?  
 Were Blacks really free in the USA after the Civil War?

During the 19th century, slavery was ended throughout the Americas. Great Britain, the world's strongest power, took the lead by ending slavery in her Caribbean colonies after pressure from people like the famous MP, William Wilberforce, and the Black leader, Equiano. The slave trade was ended by the British in 1807 and slavery was abolished in the British Empire in 1833. In the Americas, Black freedom fighters such as Toussaint L'Ouverture in Haiti, played a key role in the struggle to end slavery. In the USA, however, it would take a civil war to end slavery. Why did this war come about?

## CAUSES OF THE CIVIL WAR

For years people in the Northern and Southern states had argued about many things.

## THE SITUATION WORSENS

In the mid-1850s, there was violence in Kansas and Nebraska as the North and the South poured men and weapons into the area to decide whether it would be a 'free' or 'slave' state.

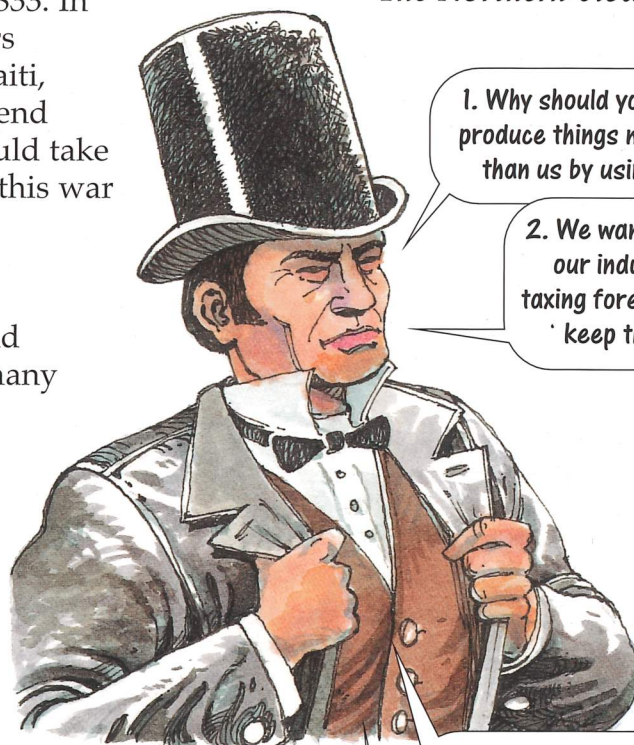
The Dred Scott Case, in 1857, made things worse. Scott was a slave who had lived for years in parts of America where Black people were free. **Abolitionists** wanted him to be freed and the case reached the USA's highest court – the Supreme Court. Unfortunately the judge said that Scott had no right to be in a court as he was 'an ordinary article of merchandise' – and could be taken anywhere by his owner. Southerners now argued they had a right to take slaves to the new lands in the West. If this was the case, the balance between 'free' and 'slave' states in **Congress** would be lost. Northerners were furious.

## NEW WORDS

**ABOLITIONISTS:** People in the Northern states who wanted to end slavery and formed a movement to achieve this.

**CONGRESS:** the law-making body or parliament of the USA.

## The Northern view



1. Why should you be able to produce things more cheaply than us by using slaves?

2. We want to protect our industries by taxing foreign goods to keep them out.

3. New lands are opening up in the West and slaves must not be taken there. We do not want more 'slave' states than free states.

4. We don't like returning escaped slaves. Abolitionists say slavery is wrong! You should free the Black people. Harriet Beecher Stowe's book, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, shows how cruel slavery is.



## SOURCE A



▲ Map showing the sides in the American Civil War, 1861–5.

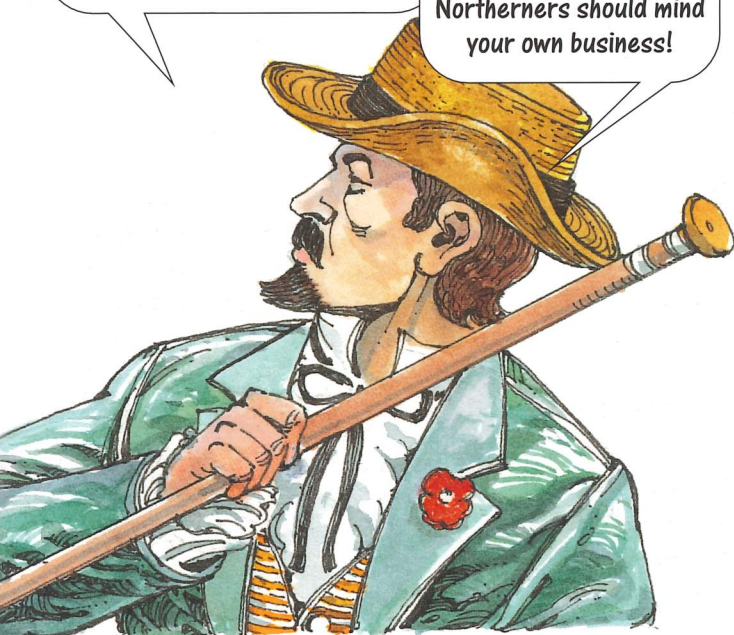
### The Southern view

1. You have industries – but we depend on farming. Cotton is vital and we need slaves to produce it. Your factory-workers are often low-paid and work in bad conditions. Isn't that a type of slavery?

2. Our cotton trade with other countries will suffer – if you tax their goods, they will tax ours.

3. If we agree to this you must accept the 'Fugitive Slaves Law' and return our escaped slaves.

4. Mrs Stowe and the Abolitionists are troublemakers! You Northerners should mind your own business!



## JOHN BROWN'S BODY LIES A MOULDERING IN THE GRAVE ...

Two years later, John Brown, a man who hated slavery, planned to invade the South to arm and free the slaves. During the earlier trouble in Kansas he had murdered five men because they believed in slavery. Brown was caught by the army and hanged, but his plan to arm the slaves frightened the South. As we have already seen, White Southerners were terrified of slave uprisings. To many Northerners, however, Brown was a hero. A famous song was written about him which claimed that while his body lay 'mouldering in the grave', 'his soul goes marching on'. To those who supported him the fight against slavery would not stop until it was ended and Black people were free.

For the South, the final straw came in 1860 when Abraham Lincoln was elected President of the USA. He had spoken against slavery and did not want to see it in the new lands of the West. The South feared Lincoln would try to force them to end slavery. For them the issue was 'States' Rights' – the freedom of different states to decide their own laws without control by the central government. They decided to leave the USA and form their own country – the Confederate States of America. Lincoln said they could not leave. War began in 1861.

**Q**

1. Design two posters to be produced in 1861. Make one show the Northern view on slavery; one the Southern view.

2. Look at the 'arguments' and the other information on these pages. How far do you agree with the view that it was slavery that led to the American Civil War?

- Show how arguments about slavery led to the war.
- Show what other areas of disagreement existed.





# What did Black people do in the war?

## THE CIVIL WAR 1861–65

The war was a very bloody conflict fought between the Union army of the North, which was fighting to keep the USA together, and the Confederate forces of the South. Despite the courage of its army and the brilliance of its commander, Robert E. Lee, the South lost the war. Lee surrendered in April 1865.

### BLACKS IN THE NORTH

Many Black people wanted to join the Union army but some generals felt it was wrong to use them against White people. Others believed Blacks would make poor soldiers. By 1863, however, Northern casualties were heavy and the number of White volunteers had fallen. Black regiments were created and soon proved their fighting skills and courage in battle.

However, they were kept separate from White regiments and their soldiers received less pay than White recruits. They had Black officers, but their main commanders were White men such as Colonel Robert Gould Shaw, leader of the 54th Massachusetts Volunteers, who in 1864 charged a heavily defended Confederate base called Fort Wagner. Gould and half of his Black soldiers were killed. This action, however, earned the admiration of many Northerners. In the late-20th century the story of the attack was told in the Hollywood film, *Glory*.

Southerners were furious that Blacks were being used against them, and often murdered any they had captured. One of the worst atrocities occurred at Fort Pillow, near the Mississippi, where a large number of Black soldiers were murdered by Southern soldiers after they had surrendered.

## NEW WORDS

**DRAFT:** the system whereby men were called up to fight in the armed forces.

## SOURCE A

The Northern army was more concerned about stealing than the freeing of poor slaves.

▲ *An anonymous slave commenting on the Civil War.*

## SOURCE B

I'm fighting for \$14 a month and the Union.

▲ *A Northern soldier's reply to a slave who said the North was fighting to end slavery.*

## SOURCE C



▲ *A Black Civil War regiment.*



About 179,000 Black soldiers served in the Union army and over 37,000 were killed. Black soldiers made up 12.5% of the Northern Army and 25% of the Northern navy. America's highest military decoration, the Congressional Medal of Honour, was introduced in the Civil War and 22 Black fighters received the award. Eventually their courage overcame racist attitudes in the North and they were paid the same wages as White soldiers.

Black people living in the North could not, however, be sure they were safe. When the number of White volunteers for the Union army fell, President Lincoln introduced 'the draft'. This was unpopular and many Whites, who felt the war was being fought for the benefit of Black people, turned against them. In cities like New York some Black people were shot down in the streets or lynched by mobs.

## BLACKS IN THE SOUTH

When Northern forces invaded, many slaves left the plantations and this led to a serious refugee problem. Some helped the Union army by building camps or doing other valuable work, such as aiding the wounded. Many Black people acted as guides or spies for the Union forces. One slave, Robert Smalls, together with some of his friends stole the Southern warship *Planter*, and handed it to the Union navy. Despite the help they gave the North, Southern Blacks were at times the victims of brutal treatment by racist Northern soldiers.

Some slaves, however, actually fought to defend the plantations against Union soldiers. At times they did this out of loyalty to their masters. Another reason was that they did not want to see the land ruined, which they hoped to gain a share of after the war.

## SOURCE D



**Q**

1. Look at **Sources A and B**. How useful are these as evidence to an historian trying to decide why the North fought in the Civil War?

2. 'The 54th Massachusetts Volunteers were defeated at Fort Wagner but this was really a great victory for Black Americans.'

Explain how this interpretation can be correct.

3. Explain the importance of the involvement of Black people in the American Civil War. Mention:

- The length of the war and the need for soldiers.
- The achievements of Black soldiers and sailors.
- Help given to the North by Black civilians.
- How Black achievements made them hope for better lives in the future.

The film character Forrest Gump was named after the Southern general, Nathan Bedford Forrest. He is still a hero in parts of the Southern states of America. But Forrest was a committed racist.

◀ **Northern racists in New York lynch a Black person in 1863.**