



# The Road to War

*The Civil War came about because people in two parts of our country—the North and the South—lived very different lives.*



## A Country Divided

**D**uring the early 1800s, the northern and southern parts of the United States became very different societies. Many Northerners were farmers, but the farms were small. There were also many factories and large cities in the North.

Life in the South was different. Unlike the North, the South had few large cities and factories. Southern farms were often very large. These large farms, called **plantations**, needed the help of many workers. Slaves had been brought from Africa to work on southern plantations until this trade was outlawed in 1808. By then, nearly one million slaves lived in the United States.

Slavery never became an important part of life in the North. Although some Northerners did own slaves, most did not. In the South, however, slavery was vital to the economy.

Slaves work on a Mississippi cotton plantation.

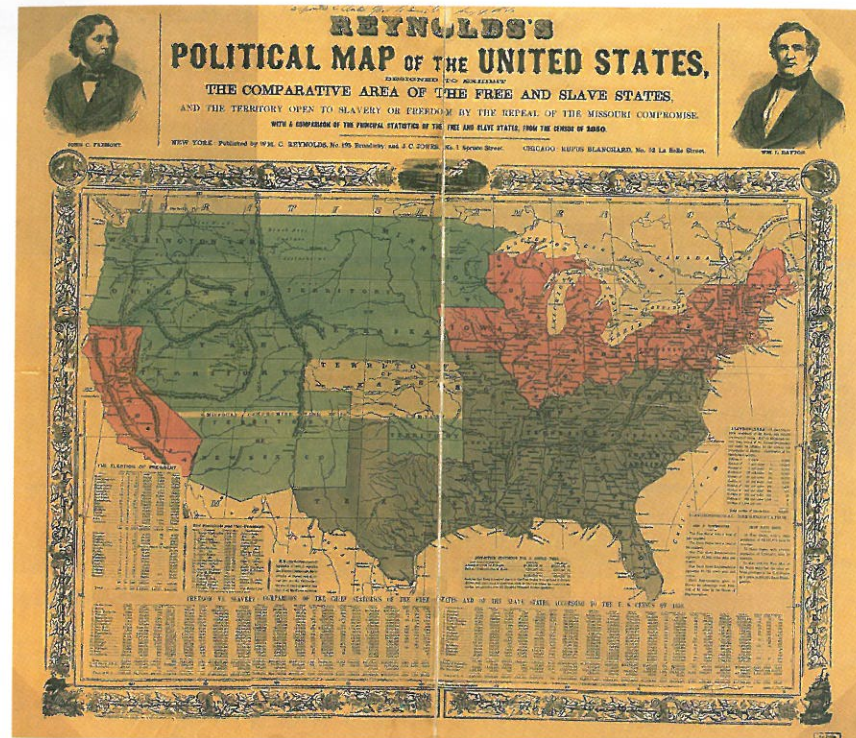


In 1837, a pro-slavery mob burned the office of an abolitionist newspaper in Illinois and killed its editor, Elijah Lovejoy.

## Struggle Over Slavery

Many people in the North felt slavery was wrong. Some Northerners acted on their beliefs. They started a movement to stop slavery. They were called **abolitionists** because they wanted to abolish, or end, slavery. In the South, people believed that it was their right to own slaves. They said that the government had no right to tell them what to do with their “property”—meaning their slaves.

To make matters worse, some western territories were asking Congress to become states. Would the new states be slave or free? In 1819, when the territory of Missouri applied to be a state, there was a great debate. The problem was solved when Maine, for years part of Massachusetts, asked to become a separate state. To keep a balance between slave and free states, Congress voted to admit Missouri as a slave state and Maine as a free state. Congress also decided where slavery would be legal in new territories. This agreement was known as the **Missouri Compromise**.



Map from 1856 showing slave states (brown), free states (red), and western territories (green)

### Compromise Fails

For a while, the Missouri Compromise kept the peace. When the United States gained the territories of California and New Mexico, the debate heated up again. Another compromise was needed. The Compromise of 1850 said that California would be a free state. It also said that voters in Utah and New Mexico would decide for themselves whether their states would be slave or free.

The Compromise of 1850 also included a new **Fugitive Slave Law**. Its purpose was to help southern slave owners recapture escaped slaves. Many Northerners were unhappy with this law. Before 1850, slaves who had escaped from the South and made it to the North were usually able to live in freedom. With the new law, these slaves could more easily be hunted down and returned to their masters.

### Lincoln Is Elected

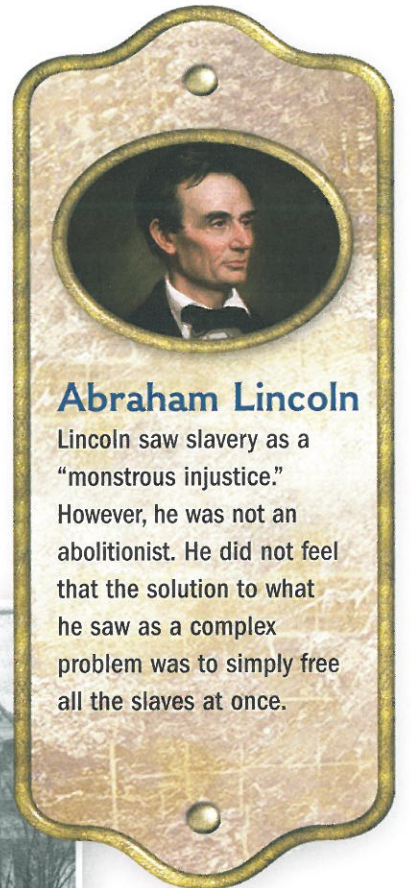
The tension between North and South grew even worse with the election of 1860. When a Northerner, Abraham Lincoln of Illinois, was elected President, people in the South were angry and fearful. They knew Lincoln did not want slavery to spread. This meant that the earlier balance between slave and free states would no longer exist.

Lincoln promised that he would not touch slavery where it already existed, but most Southerners did not believe him. Instead, seven states (South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas) voted to secede from—or leave—the United States. Later, North Carolina, Arkansas, Tennessee, and Virginia left as well.

Lincoln told the southern states that *under no condition* could they leave the Union. The South ignored him. They formed their own government, the Confederate States of America.



Lincoln's inauguration in 1861



#### Abraham Lincoln

Lincoln saw slavery as a "monstrous injustice." However, he was not an abolitionist. He did not feel that the solution to what he saw as a complex problem was to simply free all the slaves at once.

## War Comes

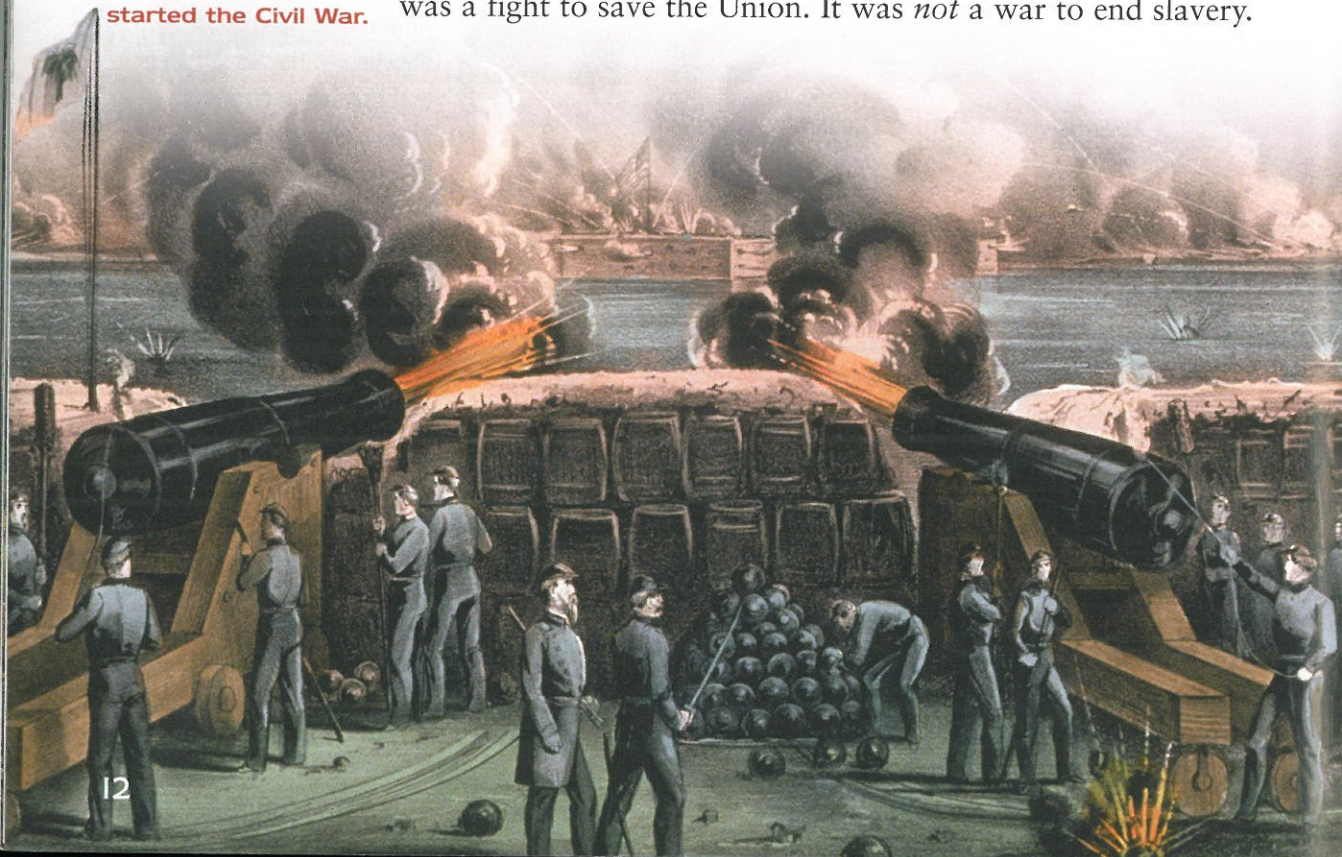
*President Lincoln promised that he would defend the United States against the Confederacy. On April 12, 1861, Confederates attacked Fort Sumter in South Carolina. The Civil War had begun.*

### Lincoln's Problems

Those first shots fired on Fort Sumter made it clear that there was no avoiding a war between North and South. Was the war about secession—leaving the Union—or slavery? This was a big problem for President Lincoln.

Most Northerners believed that the purpose of the war was to reunite the country. Lincoln himself said many times that this was a fight to save the Union. It was *not* a war to end slavery.

The South's attack on Fort Sumter started the Civil War.



Lincoln had a personal dislike for slavery. However, he believed that the Constitution did not allow the federal government to interfere with slavery. He also worried that soldiers in his army would refuse to fight if they thought the war was about slavery.

In the South, people believed the war was about protecting their way of life. They wanted things in the South to continue just as they had in the past. Of course, this meant keeping slavery. Another of Lincoln's problems was to keep loyal those slave states that had *not* left the Union. If the North was seen to be fighting a war to end slavery, border states such as Missouri and Kentucky might join the Confederates.

To add to Lincoln's problems, by the summer of 1862, the North seemed to be losing the war. Under able leaders like Robert E. Lee, the Confederates won great victories. Fewer and fewer men volunteered to fight for the Union. Worst of all, the public had begun to question Lincoln's ability to lead.



His victories made Robert E. Lee a hero to Southerners.

## Frederick Douglass Speaks Out

Northern abolitionists were angry that Lincoln refused to make the war about slavery. They felt that the war had given him the perfect opportunity to end this evil forever. Because Lincoln refused to take a stand on slavery, they tried to get Congress to pass laws that made it possible for slaves to join the northern war effort. They argued that freed slaves could help the North win the war.

Many people offered the President ideas about how to win the war. One of the strongest and clearest voices was that of Frederick Douglass. He was an escaped slave who had become a well-known speaker and abolitionist leader. Douglass argued to Lincoln that the slavery question was holding the North back from victory. If Lincoln did not abolish slavery, Douglass warned, the South would win the war and the nation would be forever divided.

During the war, the Union armies seized southern property, such as this plantation, which they used as a headquarters.

Douglass's advice to Lincoln was that he make slavery *the* issue of the war. He helped Lincoln see that when people believe in the rightness of their cause, they are willing to fight and die for it. Ending the evil of slavery, Douglass said, was a better cause than preserving the Union.

Lincoln now understood what he should do. Under the Constitution, he had no power to touch slavery. However, as commander in chief of the army, he could take away his enemies' property—including their slaves—in time of war. Lincoln would free only those slaves held in the states at war with the Union. He would encourage these former slaves to enlist in the Union armies. Here was a plan that would hurt the Confederacy, help the Union, and not violate the Constitution.



**Frederick Douglass**

Frederick Douglass was born into slavery in Maryland in 1818. Twenty years later, he escaped to freedom in the North and became involved in the antislavery movement.



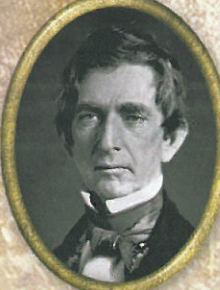
## Lincoln Makes a Decision

Lincoln thought about Douglass's advice all through the spring of 1862. Then he began writing. By July, Lincoln was ready to share his ideas with his cabinet, or group of chief advisers. Lincoln told them, "Gentleman, it appears that we must change our tactics or lose the game." He explained that they would have to free the slaves to win the war.

Lincoln's announcement shocked his cabinet. They could not believe that he would do such a thing. *Free the slaves?*

No President in history had ever taken such a big step. It was the cabinet's job to support the President and his policies. So, they listened as Lincoln read aloud a rough draft of his Emancipation Proclamation.

Lincoln's closest adviser, Secretary of State William H. Seward, said freeing the slaves was a good idea. He also thought that the President should wait to make his announcement until after the northern army won an important battle. Otherwise, people might think that Lincoln was freeing the slaves out of desperation. The President agreed.



### William H. Seward

William H. Seward of New York was a leader of the antislavery movement. He opposed the Compromise of 1850 and the Fugitive Slave Law. After Lincoln was elected President in 1860, Seward became his Secretary of State and one of his closest advisers.

Two months later, the Confederate army invaded Maryland. On September 17, about 24,000 Union and Confederate soldiers were killed or wounded at the battle of Antietam. Afterwards, the Confederates retreated back into Virginia. Lincoln had the victory he was waiting for. On September 22, 1862, the President read the Emancipation Proclamation to the public for the first time. He told the country it would go into effect in 100 days (January 1, 1863).

Lincoln reads the Emancipation Proclamation to his cabinet. William Seward is seated in front of the table.





## A Closer Look

*The Emancipation Proclamation reads like a legal contract, something you would hear in a courtroom. It is filled with words like whereof, thenceforward, and aforesaid. What did it mean?*



### Who Was Freed?

It is important to be clear about what the Emancipation Proclamation did *not* mean. It did not end slavery. What the Emancipation Proclamation did was free all slaves living in a state that was rebelling against the United States. This meant Arkansas, Texas, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and parts of Louisiana and Virginia. The Emancipation Proclamation did not free slaves in states that had not joined the Confederates—Maryland, Delaware, Kentucky, and Missouri. It also did not free slaves in parts of the South that were now back under Union control, such as Tennessee and West Virginia.

Fleeing to the Union lines in 1862, these runaway slaves crossed a river in Virginia.



### Why Didn't Lincoln End Slavery?

The answer to this question lies in understanding Lincoln as a leader and as a person. As President, Lincoln's most important goal was to win the war and restore the Union. He worried that freeing slaves in states that were loyal to the Union might cause these states to secede.

As a person, Lincoln clearly believed that slavery was wrong. As a lawyer, he understood the Constitution limited his power to end slavery. Lincoln wrote, "I am naturally antislavery. If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong. I cannot remember when I did not so think and feel. And yet I never understood that the Presidency conferred upon me an unrestricted right to act officially upon this judgment and feeling."



Lincoln visited the Union camp at Antietam a few weeks after the battle.

*"abstain from all violence... labor faithfully for reasonable wages"*

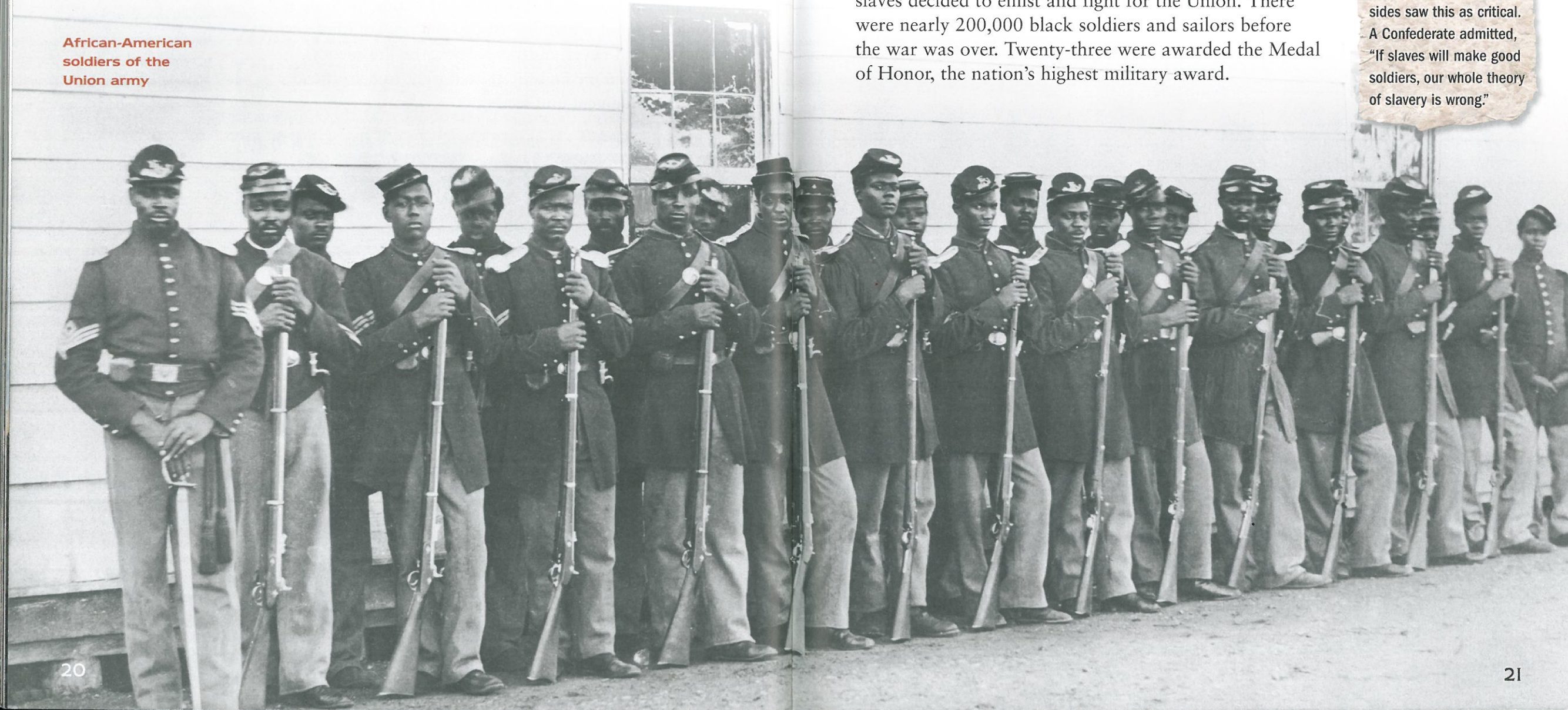
Lincoln forbade the freed slaves from using violence against their former masters, except in self-defense. He also urged them to remain with their masters and work for fair wages.

## North and South React

Many Northerners praised Lincoln for his decision to free the slaves. However, some abolitionists attacked him for not going far enough. They argued that the President should have taken this opportunity to end slavery in *all* parts of the country.

Southerners were outraged by the Emancipation Proclamation. They accused the President of trying to start a slave revolt. This had always been one of the South's worst fears.

African-American soldiers of the Union army



They also were angered by Lincoln's attempt to take away what they saw as their property. Southerners vowed they would release no slaves unless the Union army marched in and forced them to do so.

Fortunately, many southern slaves decided to take matters into their own hands. Rather than wait for their freedom, these slaves escaped to the protection of nearby Union army camps. As Lincoln had hoped, thousands of former slaves decided to enlist and fight for the Union. There were nearly 200,000 black soldiers and sailors before the war was over. Twenty-three were awarded the Medal of Honor, the nation's highest military award.

*"persons of suitable condition, will be received into the armed service of the United States"*

Lincoln invited all freed male slaves to enlist and help win the war. Both sides saw this as critical. A Confederate admitted, "If slaves will make good soldiers, our whole theory of slavery is wrong."

## A New Birth of Freedom

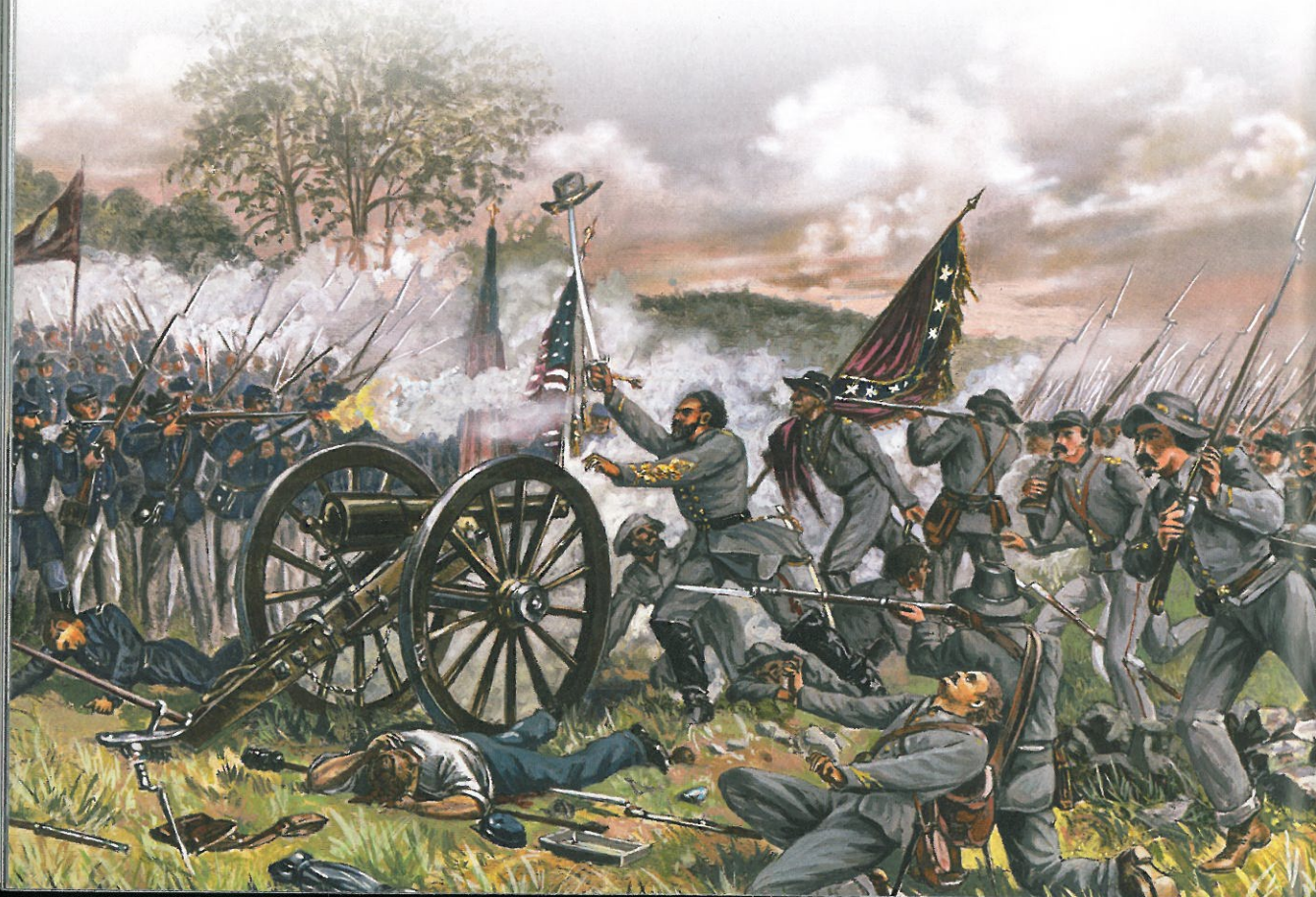
*The Emancipation Proclamation became official on January 1, 1863. Terrible fighting continued in the months that followed.*



### The Battle of Gettysburg

**Pickett's Charge at the battle of Gettysburg**

Once again, Confederate forces invaded the North. On July 1, they met the Union army near Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Over the next three days, the two sides fought the greatest battle of the war.



**Confederate dead at Gettysburg gathered for burial**

The first two days ended with neither side in control. On the third day, Confederate commander Robert E. Lee took a huge risk. He ordered 15,000 Confederates under the command of General George Pickett to charge the center of the Union army. Pickett's Charge failed to break the Union lines. Only half of the Confederates made it back. The next day, Lee ordered a retreat. Gettysburg was a major victory for the North. It marked a turning point in the war.

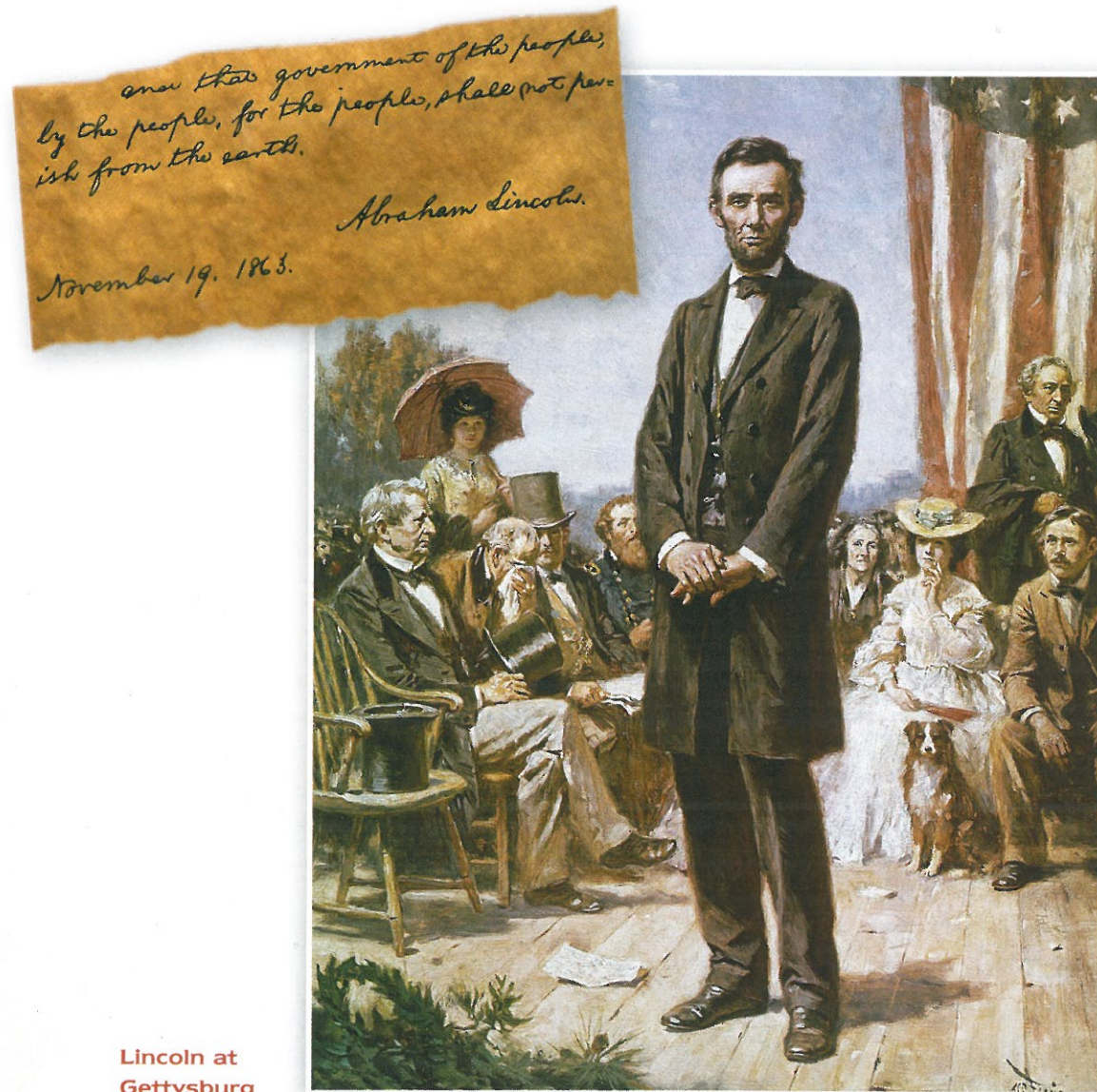
In November, a cemetery for the Union soldiers who died at Gettysburg was going to be dedicated. President Lincoln was invited to say a few words at the dedication ceremony. In this speech, now known as the Gettysburg Address, Lincoln revealed that he had changed his mind about the purpose of the war. The speech also made clear his dedication to equality.



## The Gettysburg Address

At Gettysburg on November 19, a well-known speaker named Edward Everett gave the main address. He talked for two hours. Then President Lincoln spoke for just about two minutes. Afterwards, Everett wrote Lincoln a note, praising the President's speech: "I should be glad, if I could flatter myself that I came as near to the central idea of the occasion, in two hours, as you did in two minutes."

Portion of the  
Gettysburg  
Address in  
Lincoln's  
handwriting



Lincoln at  
Gettysburg

Abraham Lincoln at Gettysburg was not the same man who once had said that he would never interfere with a man's right to own slaves. The Civil War had changed him. His primary goal now was to complete the "unfinished work" in the struggle for equality.

During his short speech, Lincoln praised those who had died at Gettysburg to preserve the Union. Then he went further. He said that Americans must finish the work the dead had begun. They must give America "a new birth of freedom." Lincoln never used the words *slave* or *slavery* in his speech. Still, the nation would have to solve its racial problems before it could have the freedom and equality promised in the Declaration of Independence.

Lincoln surrounded  
by the crowd that  
had just listened  
to him speak at  
Gettysburg



# An End to Slavery

*The battle of Gettysburg was the turning point of the Civil War.*



## Surrender at Appomattox

Shortly after Lincoln gave his Gettysburg Address, the Union army began a destructive march south across Georgia and north through the Carolinas. By April 1865, the Confederacy's hopes of winning the war had ended.

The Civil War left much of the South in ruins.



On April 9, Confederate commander Robert E. Lee surrendered to Union commander Ulysses S. Grant. That very day, Lincoln began planning how to bring the Confederacy back into the Union. He wanted to begin to heal the nation's wounds as quickly as possible.

Tragically, Lincoln would never see his plans carried through. Five days after the surrender at Appomattox, Lincoln was shot while he and his wife were at a theater in Washington, D.C. He died the next day. Across the country and around the world, people mourned the death of a great leader.

Two months after Lincoln's death, Major General Gordon Granger of the Union army led his troops into the city of Galveston, Texas. On June 19, 1865, Granger officially proclaimed freedom for all slaves in Texas. The freed slaves gathered in celebration. Thousands of people jammed the streets of Galveston. There was singing, dancing, and weeping as the men, women, and children rejoiced in their freedom. To this day, the event, called **Juneteenth**, is celebrated in various parts of the United States.

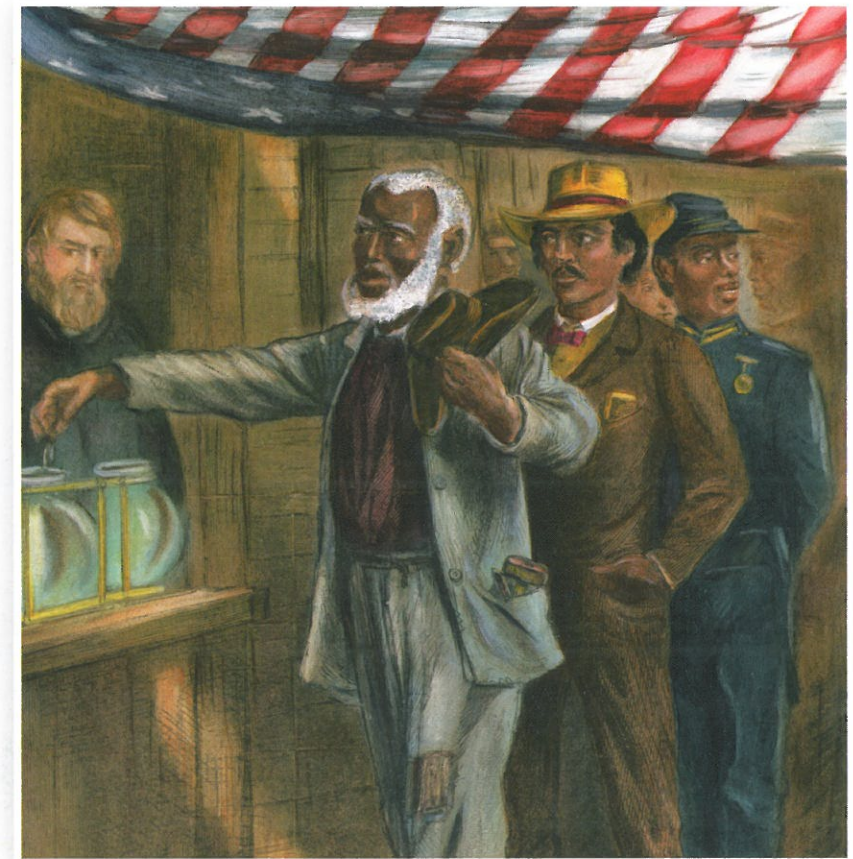


Former slaves hear the news of the Emancipation Proclamation.

## Civil Rights Amendments

True freedom and equality for African Americans would be terribly slow in coming. Shortly before Lincoln's death, Congress passed the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution. This amendment made slavery illegal in the United States and all its territories. It became law in December 1865.

**These freed African Americans were living in a southern town shortly after the Civil War.**



**African Americans vote for the first time following the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment.**

The Thirteenth Amendment was not enough. In the South, newly freed slaves were being denied their rights of American citizenship. For example, they were not permitted to vote or hold public office. They were not allowed to live where they wanted to live. They were not permitted to educate their children the way they wanted to educate them. In 1868, Congress took action again. The Fourteenth Amendment was meant to guarantee that all American citizens, no matter what their color, were entitled to all the rights of U.S. citizens.

Two years later, Congress was forced to step in once again. Southern states were preventing African Americans from voting. The Fifteenth Amendment said that no citizens could be kept from voting because of their color or because they were once slaves.