



9.5 History

The question of slavery

WARM-UP

- 1 **DISCUSS.** The institution of slavery began before the birth of the United States as a nation. What do you know about its origins?

The political situation in America was tense because of the growing gap between the North and the South. While the North was industrialised, the economy of the South was still based on the vast plantations of tobacco and cotton, and on slavery. The white population constantly increased as immigrants continued to arrive from Europe – though they tended to settle in the North, while in the South there were about 3,500,000 black slaves.

The question of slavery became urgent when several northern states adopted emancipation, while the international demand for cotton meant the economy of the South continued to rely on slave labour. Northern abolitionists, who included writers, intellectuals and religious associations, began to organise themselves into the Republican Party, whose candidate, Abraham Lincoln (1809–65), won the presidential election in 1860.

Lincoln's victory changed the relationship between the American government and the institution of slavery. It led to South Carolina's withdrawal from the Union. Within two months, six other states joined South Carolina in forming an independent 'Confederacy'. War followed because Lincoln, supported by a majority of northerners, refused to concede that any American had the constitutional right to withdraw from the Union, and not certainly in response to a legitimately-won democratic election.



1 A group of captured Africans being taken to become slaves. Print, ca 1860.



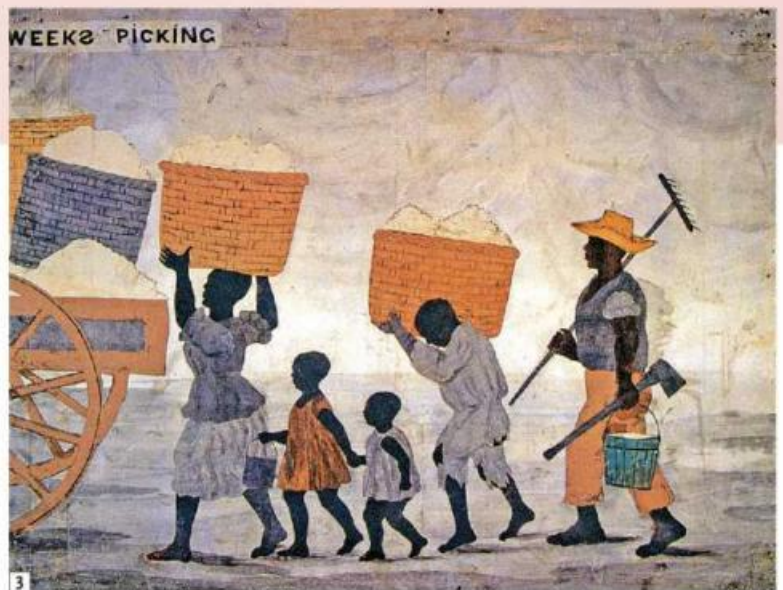
2 Slaves on an American cotton plantation, using a cotton gin. Library of Congress, Washington DC, US.

3 William Henry Brown, *Hauling the Whole Week's Picking*, 1842. Collage of a slave harvest crew near Vicksburg, Mississippi, US.

- 2 **FILL IN** the table to explain the differences between the North and the South in the United States in the 19th century.

North	South

- 3 **EXPLAIN.** What were the consequences of Lincoln's election?
- 4 **DISCUSS.** Do you know how the slaves lived on American plantations?





9.9 History

The American Civil War

WARM-UP

- 1** **LOOK** at the pictures (1–3). The American Civil War was the first war to be photographed intensively. Answer the following questions about each picture.
- 1 What can be seen on the ferry in picture 1?
 - 2 What can be seen in picture 2?
 - 3 Do you think the soldier in picture 3 fought for the North or for the South?



- 2** **READ** the Q&A text below.

The American Civil War broke out in 1861.

Q How long did the Civil War last?

A It lasted four years, ending in 1865, when the blue Northern troops, commanded by Ulysses Grant (1822–85), defeated the grey Confederates, led by Robert Lee (1807–70). Five days later, President Lincoln was assassinated by a Southern fanatic.

Q What was the most important consequence of the war?

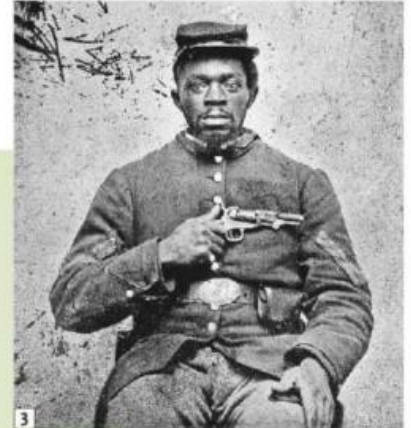
A After the Civil War, the abolition of slavery was sanctioned by the 13th Amendment to the Constitution. However, it did not grant the blacks equality and economic security. They were free but without money and a home. Some migrated to the industrial cities in the North; others remained with their old masters in the South, who, impoverished by the war, could not afford to pay wages but would share the crops with the workers and provide them with tools and a cabin.

Q What frightened the blacks?

A A wave of resentment and violence, embodied by the racist movement the 'Ku Klux Klan', terrorised the blacks and their families. The so-called 'black codes' were created; they segregated the blacks in schools, hospitals and transport.

Q What was the American dream?

A While the economy of the South had collapsed during the war, the Northern states had increased their output to supply military needs. Big fortunes were made, and great financial empires were created by men who rose from nothing, like John Rockefeller, who embodied a new version of the American dream: the myth



of the self-made man who went from 'rags to riches'.

Q Who founded the American Federation of Labour?

A The other side of the coin was that the majority of workers were exploited and did not have a share in the wealth and leisure. They soon organised themselves and founded the American Federation of Labor (AFL), which became the strongest group of trade unions.

Q What encouraged the expansion and settlement in the West?

A Expansion and settlement in the West were encouraged above all by the discovery of gold in California in 1848, which resulted in the 'gold rush'. Then the Homestead Act (1862) granted free soil to the first occupants.

Q What did the migration westwards lead to?

A This migration westwards had two main consequences: it led to the disappearance of the frontier, and to the extermination of the buffaloes, with the consequent starvation of the American Indians, who were subjugated, mass-deported or brutally exterminated. Cattlemen became the new Western symbols – the cowboys, so deeply rooted in American tradition.

1 Soldiers and artillery crossing a river on a ferry during the Civil War, photographed by Captain Andrew J. Russell, 1863.

2 The 'Sunken Road' at Antietam, Maryland, showing the aftermath of the bloodiest single-day battle in American history. Photographed by Alexander Gardner in 1862. Library of Congress, Washington DC, US.

3 An African-American soldier in the Union Army.

- 3** **IN PAIRS** cover the answers (A's) in the text. Take turns asking and answering the questions (Q's) using the information that you have read.