

The 5 CAUSES of the Civil War

1. Sectionalism - Prior to the Civil War, the United States was not really united. Our country was more like two separate countries sharing the same land. The North had industry, large cities, a diverse population, and favored the politics of the Republican Party which supported the abolition of slavery. The South had an economy based on agriculture, a plantation lifestyle, the views of the Democratic Party, and the institution of slavery. Southerners were especially loyal to their section. They thought of themselves as citizens of their state 1st, as Southerners 2nd, and as US citizens 3rd. The intense feelings of sectionalism further divided the country into two separate sections- North and South.

2. Slavery - The South viewed slavery as a necessity to maintaining economic wealth. However, many people in the North viewed slavery as evil and unconstitutional. It was a Political issue as well. If there were more slave states in the U.S., then the South would have more power in Congress. If there were more free states in the U.S., then the North would have more power in Congress. Both Northerners and Southerners fought fiercely over the moral and political issue of slavery. If the U.S. had been founded without slavery, then the following causes of the Civil War may have never been issues.

3. States Rights - States' rights is the idea that each state had the right to determine whether or not to follow federal laws. Southerners supported states' rights. They believed that they had the right to own slaves and even secede, or leave the Union, if they desired. Southerners were also angry at Congress using its power to impose taxes on the South's agricultural products. They felt that any federal tax restricted the rights of the individual states. Northerners did not support states' rights. They believed the national government had final power. The federal government had the power to make laws that applied to all states, including imposing taxes.

4. Election of 1860 - When Republican Abraham Lincoln won the Election of 1860, Southerners believed that their rights would no longer be respected. The major issue was that Lincoln was elected President when his name was not even on the ballot in the South. Lincoln won all the northern states so he was elected President in 1860. This caused many southerners to believe it was time to leave the Union.

5. Secession - this is the BIGGEST cause of the Civil War. After Lincoln's election, eleven southern states eventually seceded from the Union and formed the Confederate States of America. Texas's lawmakers voted to secede by a vote of 166 to 8, and the people of Texas voted for secession by a margin of more than 3 to 1. Abraham Lincoln and other Northerners viewed Southern secession as an unconstitutional act. On April 12, 1861 Southern troops attacked Ft. Sumter, a Union garrison off the coast of South Carolina. No one was killed on either side during this first battle of the Civil War. It was a "bloodless opening to the bloodiest war in American history".