Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

1. Describe some of the major actions taken both by abolitionists and by those opposed to abolition prior to the Civil War.
2. Recognize how the issue of slavery and the Civil War had a direct impact on the political arena and led to political disputes.
3. Note international events of importance during this era and describe their impact on the nation.
4. Describe the role immigration played in national politics and the party schisms that resulted.
5. Identify the reasons for the secession of the Confederate states and the numerous causes of the Civil War.
6. Identify the major battles of the Civil War and the influence each had on the current tide and/or the final outcome of the war.
7. For both the Union and Confederacy, identify key figures, objectives, advantages and disadvantages, and significant strategies and be able to discern which states composed the Border States and their importance within the conflict.
8. Describe the end of the War and its aftermath.

Unit Summary

Unit VIII is composed of Chapters 15 and 16. This unit focuses on America as sectional tensions continued to rise to the point where the issue of slavery could no longer be suppressed within a compromise. Thus, this unit outlines the bloody battles that composed the Civil War and decided the fate of a nation.

Chapter 15 provides an overview of the decade preceding the Civil War. While the impending crisis has been developing for many years, the crisis takes a life of its own during the 1850s. This chapter addresses the rising number of abolitionists in the North and the rising fears that enveloped the South. Great statesmen continued to try to avoid the crisis through legislation such as the Compromise of 1850, but as “Bleeding Kansas” clearly proved; slavery had become an issue on which neither side was willing to compromise. With the election of Lincoln, the South began to sever its ties with the Union.

Chapter 16 focuses on the Civil War – the biggest clash in America’s brief history. The ideals of the founders were no longer enough to keep the struggling Union together, and these controversies finally caused the first blood of the war to be shed in the South after the presidential election of an extremely unpopular Northern politician: Abraham Lincoln. During this conflict, more Americans died than at any other point in the nation’s history. The South was largely demolished, and the hopes for the American nation rested on the renewed understanding of what freedom really was.

Key Terms

1. Bleeding Kansas
2. Compromise of 1850
3. Confederate States of America
4. Constitutional Union Party
5. Copperheads
6. Dred Scott decision
7. Emancipation Proclamation
8. Fugitive Slave Law
9. Homestead Act
10. Kansas-Nebraska Act
11. Know-Nothings
12. Lecompton constitution
13. Legal Tender Act
14. Lincoln-Douglas debates
15. Morrill Land Grant Act
16. Morrill Tariff Act
17. National Bank Act
18. Panic of 1857
19. Peninsular campaign
20. Popular sovereignty
21. Republican Party
22. Thirteenth Amendment

Reading Assignment

Chapter 15: The Coming Crisis, the 1850s.
Chapter 16: The Civil War, 1861-1865
This unit is effectively the culmination of many issues dating back to the original founding of America. At this time there was a need for the rejuvenation of the national identity and desire for freedom, opportunity, and peace. The Civil War was a devastating conflict felt by the entire nation, but its outcome set the tone for the next evolution of the American nation.