



## **CIVIL WAR Reading Comprehension**

The Civil War was waged because 11 Southern states seceded (broke away and started their own government) from the Union and formed the Confederate States of America. The secession took place primarily because of a long-standing debate concerning states' rights, and more specifically the issue of slavery. As new territories became states, opponents of slavery and advocates of slavery often clashed over whether or not that state should allow slavery. After violence broke out in Kansas over the issue, and after Kansas entered the Union as a free state, Southerners began to believe that the new president, Abraham Lincoln, would take away their rights to make local decisions and would abolish slavery. Henceforth, Virginia, North and South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Tennessee, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, and Arkansas broke away from the Union and formed the Confederate States of America. Richmond, Virginia, was made its capital, and Jefferson Davis was made president. Kentucky, Maryland, Delaware, and Missouri were divided on the issue and were declared "Border States." On April 14, 1861, Congress declared war on the Confederate States of America for the purposes of preserving the Union.

The first shots of the Civil War were fired April 12, 1861, at Fort Sumter, South Carolina. Although there were no deaths reported that day, the shots at Fort Sumter signified the start of a long, bloody war that would become the most deadly in the history of the United States. Many major battles such as Bull Run I and II, Antietam, and Shiloh, among others, claimed tens of thousands of lives on both sides in 1861 and 1862. Neither the Union nor the Confederacy had the upper hand.

The turning point in the war, however, occurred on July 1, 1863, when Confederate and Union armies met at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. The battle that ensued was one of the bloodiest battles in American history. Eventually, Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia was driven away from Pennsylvania by Union General George Meade and his Army of the Potomac. The battle did much to cripple the Confederate army. Meanwhile, in the western battlegrounds, Union forces under Ulysses S. Grant had gained control of the Mississippi River and port of New Orleans, which effectively split the Confederacy in two.

Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia was further decimated after Ulysses S. Grant was made Commander of the Union Army. Grant waged dozens of surprise attacks against Lee's army in the wilderness of Virginia in 1864. Although the battles resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands of soldiers on the Union side, the Confederate Army was at the brink of collapse. Meanwhile, Union General William T. Sherman marched through Georgia and the Carolinas, destroying everything in his path. The march came to be known as "Sherman's March to the Sea."

Finally, after Union forces had invaded the Confederate capital of Richmond, the Confederate states surrendered on April 9, 1865, at Appomattox Court House, Virginia. The Union was preserved.

**1.) What does “secede” mean?**

- a.) To break away from
- b.) To join
- c.) To accomplish
- d.) To lose

**2.) Which of the following best describes why 11 Southern states seceded from the Union?**

- a.) Because the government wanted the states to make important decisions concerning slavery
- b.) Because the Southern states wanted the government to make important decisions concerning slavery
- c.) Because the Southern states did not want the government to make important decisions for them concerning slavery
- d.) Because the government did not want to make important decisions for the Southern states concerning slavery

**3.) Which of the following is true?**

- a.) Congress declared war before the first shots were fired at Fort Sumter.
- b.) The first shots fired at Fort Sumter occurred after Congress declared war.
- c.) Congress declared war after the first shots were fired at Fort Sumter.
- d.) Abraham Lincoln was president of the Confederacy.

**4.) Which of the following was NOT a state that seceded from the Union?**

- a.) Maryland
- b.) Virginia
- c.) North Carolina
- d.) Florida

**5.) What was the turning point of the Civil War?**

- a.) Shiloh
- b.) Appomattox Court House
- c.) Antietam
- d.) Gettysburg

**6.) What general was responsible for the retreat of General Lee and his Army of Northern Virginia at the Battle of Gettysburg?**

- a.) Ulysses S. Grant
- b.) William T. Sherman
- c.) George Meade
- d.) Jefferson Davis

**7.) Which of the following is not true?**

- a.) Gettysburg was the turning point of the Civil War.
- b.) Robert E. Lee's Army of the Potomac was forced out of Pennsylvania by General George Meade and the Army of the Potomac.
- c.) After Ulysses S. Grant was made Commander of the Union army, he staged a series of attacks in Georgia that decimated Lee's army.
- d.) William T. Sherman and his army destroyed much of Georgia.

**8.) After which event(s) did the Confederate States of America surrender?**

- a.) Gettysburg
- b.) The invasion of Richmond
- c.) Sherman's March to the Sea
- d.) The Wilderness attacks

**9.) What happened first?**

- a.) The invasion of Richmond
- b.) The surrender of the Confederacy
- c.) The Battle of Gettysburg
- d.) Sherman's March to the Sea

**10.) Why did Congress declare war on the Confederate States of America?**

- a.) To make the Southern states submit to the will of the north
- b.) To destroy Georgia
- c.) To invade Richmond
- d.) To preserve the Union