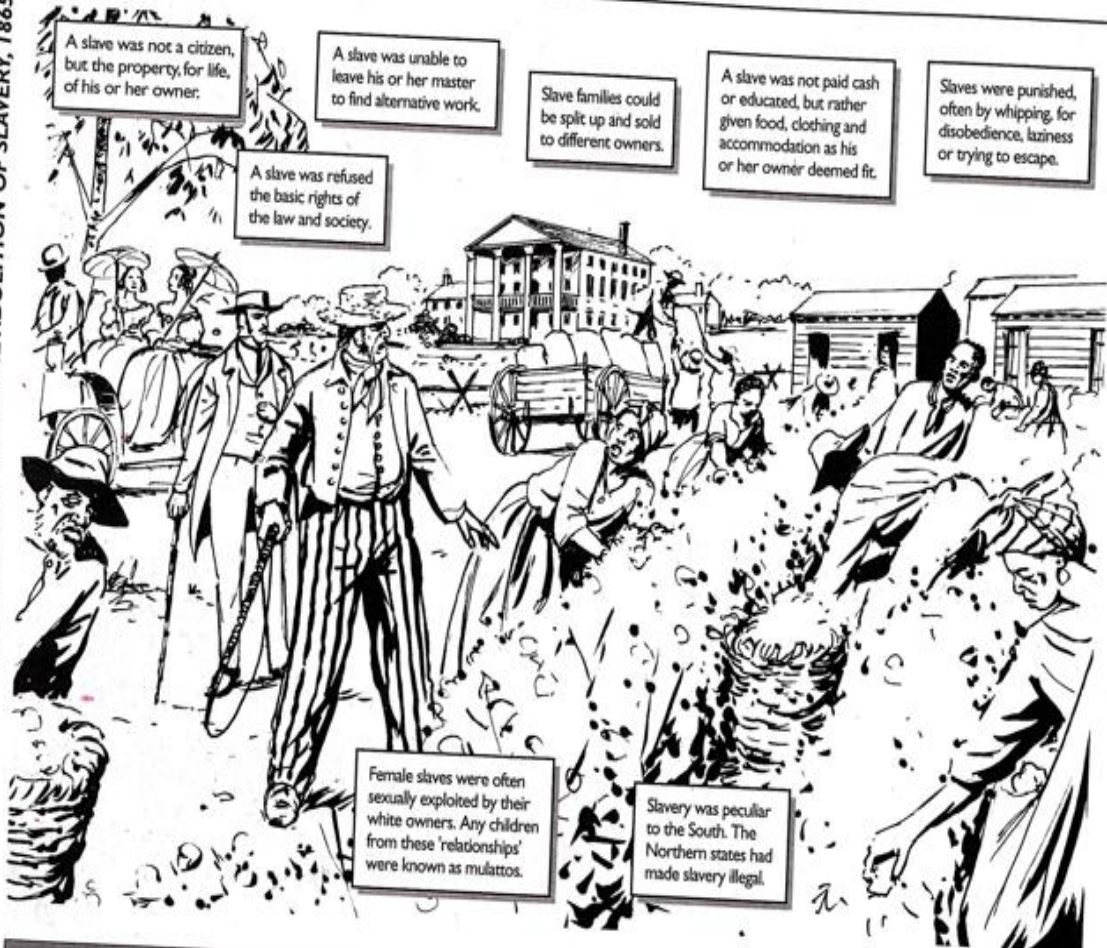


A What was slavery?

1A Slaves were property

WERE BLACK AMERICANS REALLY MADE FREE AND EQUAL BY THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY, 1865-1915?



FOCUS ROUTE

Use the following questions as a basis for making notes on pages 6-7.

- 1 Why was the abolition of slavery likely to create problems for white Southerners?
- 2 Why would it be difficult for freed slaves to adjust to a free life?

Traditionally, Southern society was based on the ownership of slaves; its **PECULIAR INSTITUTION**. The economy of the South relied on cotton and tobacco, both labour-intensive in their cultivation. As long as cotton and tobacco could be sold at a profit there was little incentive to diversify into industrial production, or to find alternatives to slave labour. As capital was tied up in slave ownership, slaves became a measure of wealth, and a sign of status. The large plantation owners, with 500 or more slaves, were the social and political elite of the South (although most slaves were owned by small farm holders).

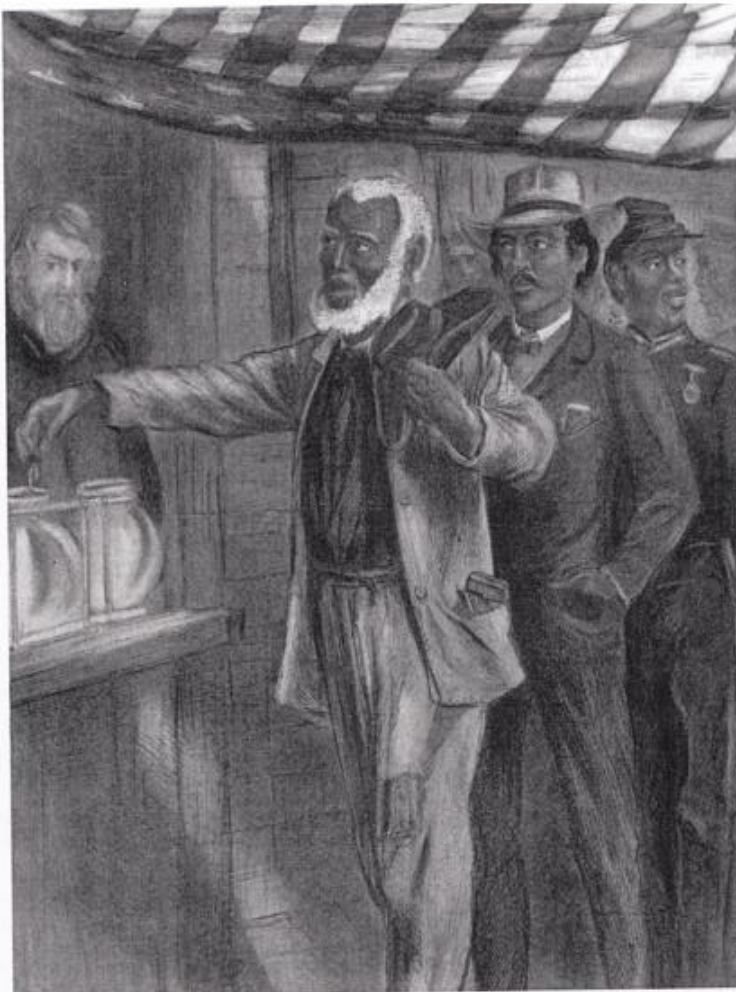
The South did not need or welcome immigrants, as the North did, as long as they had unwaged slaves to exploit. Around 4 million slaves lived in the South (out of a total American population in 1860 of 31 million) and were controlled not only by force, by their lack of civil rights, their lack of education, and their lack of access to wealth, but also by attitudes. The paternalistic and superior attitudes of white Southerners meant that slaves were portrayed as childlike, dependent, and inferior. Their colour and African heritage, arriving in the USA by force not choice, meant they were regarded as inferior to any white person, however poor or ill-educated they were.

What were the reactions to emancipation?

SOURCE 1.2 A fugitive slave, whose daughter had been taken from him and sold years before

Now, no more of dat ... Dey can't sell my wife and child any more. Bless de Lord.

SOURCE 1.3 *The First Vote*, by Alfred R. Waud, *Harper's Weekly*, 16 November 1867. This painting shows the key black voters who, for the first time, could exert black political power: the artisan with his tools, the successful town dweller and the soldier



SOURCE 1.4 Two members of the Ku Klux Klan in their disguises, *Harper's Weekly*, 19 December 1868



THE KU KLUX KLAN

The Klan used their frightening disguise, intimidation, beatings and lynching to oppose equality for black people. They became known and feared after 1865 in the South, but their organisation was eventually weakened by federal government prosecutions. It was revived in 1915 and grew considerably in the 1920s.

ACTIVITY

Use Sources 1.2–1.4 to answer the following questions.

- 1 What hopes might slaves have of their new freedom?
- 2 What problems might they have in turning these hopes into a reality?

DISCUSS

- 1 If you were a newly freed slave what would you want for yourself?
- 2 If you were a newly freed slave what would you expect the government to do for you?
- 3 If you were a newly freed slave how would you a) hope and b) fear that people might behave towards you?

FOCUS ROUTE

As you work through Section B:

- Make a list of the problems that resulted from the abolition of slavery.
- Make notes on why it would be difficult to solve these problems.

SOURCE 1.5 An influential Radical Republican senator, Thaddeus Stevens, in a speech given on 18 December 1865

We have turned, or are about to turn loose four million slaves without a hut to shelter them or a cent in their pockets. The infernal laws of slavery have prevented them from acquiring an education, understanding the common laws of contract, or of managing the ordinary business of life. This Congress is bound to provide for them until they can take care of themselves. If we do not furnish them with homesteads, and hedge them around with protective laws; if we leave them to the legislation of their late masters, we had better have left them in bondage.

TALKING POINT

What does Lincoln's biography (below) tell you about the standards expected of an American president?

B What problems resulted from the abolition of slavery?

In his second Inaugural Address in March 1865, President Lincoln recognised that the Civil War had led to much pain for everyone:

'...With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds ...'

The UNION victory confirmed the abolition of slavery, but binding the wounds created by abolition would not be achieved painlessly, given that slavery had been the social and economic basis of the Southern states for more than one hundred years.

SOURCE 1.6 A former slave, Frederick Douglass, writing in the magazine, *The Atlantic Monthly*, December 1865

Slavery ... has steadily exerted an influence upon all around it favourable to its own continuance ... Custom, manners, morals, religion, are all on its side everywhere in the South; and when you add the ignorance and servility of the ex-slave to the intelligence and accustomed authority of the master, you have the conditions, not out of which slavery will grow again, but under which it is impossible for the federal government to wholly destroy it, unless the federal government be armed with despotic powers ... The true way, and the easiest, is to make our government entirely consistent with itself, and give to every loyal citizen the elective franchise – a right and power which will be ever present, and will form a wall of fire for his protection.

DISCUSS

'If you were the President in 1865 ...'

Discuss with a partner or a small group what a president would have to do to create real freedom and equality for the emancipated slaves.

- What problems would a president face?
- What would different sections of society need?
- What would be the priorities?
- What would be the most difficult things to change?



Abraham Lincoln (1809-65)

This photo shows the Lincoln Memorial in the centre of Washington DC. The statue of Lincoln within looks towards the memorial to George Washington and to the Capitol, where Congress meets. This photograph was taken on the day of the March to Washington, in 1963, organised by Martin Luther King to demand a Civil Rights Act. It was the day of his famous 'I have a Dream' speech (see Chapter 12).

Lincoln demonstrated the American ideal that anything was possible. Born into poverty in a Kentucky log cabin in 1809, largely self-taught and experienced at hard physical work, he managed to be elected to the legislature of Illinois and to become a lawyer by the age of 27. He became a Congressman ten years later. Although he detested slavery he did not, at that stage, want to abolish it across the nation. By 1856, he had joined the Republican Party and so impressed them that he won the party nomination and the presidential election in 1860. He was admired for his common sense, caution and sincerity, and took the nation into a civil war only when there was no alternative. By 1861, he believed that it was impossible to have a nation that was half free and half slave. At the end of the Civil War his ideas were victorious, but before he had the opportunity to reunite the nation he was assassinated by a Confederate soldier, John Wilkes Booth, only five days after the surrender of the South. His ideas, his actions and his words at Gettysburg and in his Inaugural Addresses have meant that he is regarded as one of America's greatest presidents.

FOCUS ROUTE

- 1 List the purposes of Reconstruction.
- 2 In what ways did the federal government try to help freed slaves?
- 3 Which of their actions was most important?

C How did a slave become a citizen?

The end of the Civil War gave the federal government the opportunity to do more than merely end slavery. It could make freed slaves into equal citizens. The Radical Republicans, who were in the majority in Congress, were determined to make emancipation a reality by amending the Constitution and translating freedom into citizenship; even if it meant opposing the new president, Andrew Johnson. Reconstruction was the name given to the federal government's attempt to aid the freed slaves, who were uneducated, unskilled, and without the ownership of property, land, or savings. Reconstruction began in 1865 and lasted for twelve years.

■ IB Making slaves into citizens – using the law and the Constitution

| Year | Presidents | Acts and Amendments | Agencies |
|---------|---|---|--|
| 1863 | | Emancipation Proclamation | |
| 1865 | Vice-President Andrew Johnson became president after the assassination of Lincoln. | Thirteenth Amendment – abolished slavery everywhere in the USA, and gave Congress power to ensure this through legislation. | Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands (the Freedmen's Bureau) – this was a federal agency which lasted for four years, supplied food, medical services and schools to freedmen, and also negotiated work contracts between them and their former masters. It was an example of social welfare by the state. |
| 1866 | | Civil Rights Act – as a response to the BLACK CODES of some Southern states (laws designed to limit the rights and freedom of former slaves) this Act granted citizenship to anyone born in the USA (except Native Americans). Fourteenth Amendment – a four-part amendment which: a) confirmed the rights to citizenship; b) forbade STATES from abridging the 'privileges and immunities' of citizens; c) forbade states from depriving any person of life, liberty or property without 'due process of law'; d) forbade states from denying citizens the 'equal protection of the laws'. | |
| 1868 | U. S. Grant (Republican) becomes president. | | |
| 1870 | | Fifteenth Amendment – forbade states from denying anyone the right to vote 'on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude', but left states free to restrict SUFFRAGE on other grounds such as illiteracy or poverty. | |
| 1870-71 | | Enforcement Acts and Ku Klux Klan Act – these were passed in response to increased violence in the South against freedmen. It became a federal criminal offence for an individual to restrict the civil and political rights of others. In order to control the Ku Klux Klan martial law could be enforced and habeas corpus (the right to trial) suspended. | |
| 1872 | Presidential election – U.S. Grant re-elected | | |
| 1875 | | Civil Rights Act – a law to guarantee black Americans equal accommodation in public places, but lacked powers of enforcement. | |
| 1876 | The disputed results of the presidential election led to political negotiation. In return for Democratic support for the Republican candidate, Rutherford B. Hayes, the Democrats, who now controlled the South, were able to obtain the end of military control there. It was the effective end of the Reconstruction period and of federal protection for freed slaves. | | |

FOCUS ROUTE

- 1 Why did so many freedmen continue to do the same work after abolition?
- 2 Was legal action enough to make slaves into citizens? Make a list of the evidence from Section D which suggests:
 - a) that it was
 - b) that it was not.

TALKING POINTS

- 1 Why was the violence of the Ku Klux Klan so powerful in slowing progress to real equality?
- 2 What does violence do to people; both to those who suffer from it, and those who initiate it (think of fear, aggression, intimidation, disrespect for others' differences)?

D Was legal action enough to make slaves into citizens?

The abolition of slavery had been long desired by slaves, but when abolition came suddenly, it left both North and South, and the government, unprepared for the reality of how to release people from servitude into self-sufficiency. The devastation and distress caused by the Civil War also meant that at first life was slow to change in the South.

For the new ex-slave citizens there was deep pleasure at being able to live with their families, to enjoy their communities, to make choices about employment and residence, and to be formally educated for the first time. However, servitude had left most freedmen with few, if any, savings and therefore they were unable to purchase land or acquire many possessions. They could travel to work in the industries of the North, but most had little choice but to remain as paid labourers or to become sharecroppers working on the land as before.

Over time some freedmen did succeed in saving enough money to buy their own land, even becoming businessmen or using their education to become politicians and professionals. However, for many freedmen and their families, the effect of generations of intimidation was insidious and encouraged passive behaviour. Southern white society, which had owned black workers as property and controlled them by force, could not easily forget habits of superiority. The rise of the Ku Klux Klan (see page 7) was a continuation of such attitudes towards non-white people. It made the creation of equal citizens, regardless of their colour, more difficult to achieve.

Being a sharecropper (see Source 1.7) meant that a family rented land, and received a house, tools and sometimes seed. In return they gave the landlord (usually a white farmer) one half, or as much as two-thirds, of the crop. Most sharecroppers, needing clothes and other supplies, had to borrow against their first crop, relied on credit, and so fell into debt easily. This system kept the black cotton producers in an inferior position. Its attraction was the short-term benefit to both groups, but the reliance on cotton led to problems when prices were low (for example, the fall in cotton prices in the 1870s). The shortage of money for investment also restricted diversification into grain and livestock production.

SOURCE 1.7 A black sharecropper family outside their house, with a formally dressed white landlord in the background



■ IC The situation after the abolition of slavery

11

WERE BLACK AMERICANS REALLY MADE FREE AND EQUAL BY THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY, 1865–1915?

STRENGTHS

- Freedom guaranteed by presidential proclamation, by law and by Constitutional Amendments
- The overwhelming desire of slaves to be free and to enjoy their freedom
- Ex-slaves acquired legal rights as equal citizens
- The Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands provided support by setting up schools, supplying work, clothes and food
- Military rule in the rebel Southern states and the desire of Radical Republicans in Congress to ensure the rights of freedmen
- Solidarity of the Afro-American culture, through the blending of different African ethnic groups and languages, continued after emancipation
- Abolition was thought to be morally right by most of the USA

WEAKNESSES

- Slaves had been refused education by most of their owners before emancipation, and were consequently disadvantaged
- There was no redistribution of confiscated Southern lands so most freedmen had no economic AUTONOMY, and many could only work as paid labourers or sharecroppers
- Entrenched attitudes about white supremacy and stereotypical images of lazy, 'childlike' blacks prevented the value of black Americans being realised
- The traumatic experience of Civil War and the speed of abolition hampered the development of equality
- The implementation of new laws was difficult for the small, federal government bureaucracy

OPPORTUNITIES

- The enthusiasm and political power of Radical Republicans who supported abolition
- Political power through suffrage resulted in large numbers of black voters in some Southern states being willing to elect black Congressmen and Senators
- Marriages between freed people allowed the creation of socially acceptable family groups, with, for the first time, their own surnames and identity
- The continuing strength of the Christian Church as a focus for black communities
- The right to travel, to find and choose work
- The right to the benefits of work, including being paid and using that money freely

THREATS

- The traditional attitude of many Southern whites that black people were inferior and always would be
- Violence and intimidation through groups like the Ku Klux Klan
- Social structure in the South still valued land ownership above the artisan, the entrepreneur and the industrialist
- Due to economic recession after 1873 many people in the North were more focused on their immediate problems than the racial integration problems of the South
- Competition for unskilled work between freedmen and white labourers

ACTIVITY

Study Chart IC and answer the following questions.

- Work in pairs. Identify what you think were the two most significant elements in each section of Chart IC.
 - Join another pair and compare your conclusions. Justify your choices, but try to reach agreement.
- Which was the greater:
 - the strengths or the weaknesses of abolition?
 - the opportunities created by abolition or the threats facing freedmen?
- Look at Sources I.8 to I.11. Which parts of Chart IC do they support?
- Why was the abolition of slavery such a problematic issue:
 - for individuals
 - for American society?

SOURCE I.8 Letter written in 1865 by Jourdan Anderson to his former master in Tennessee who wanted Jourdan to return to work for him. However, Jourdan was now being paid \$25 a month, his children were being educated, and he and his wife Mandy were comfortable with their new life, so Jourdan set out conditions for his return (in F. M. Binder and D. M. Reimers, *The Way We Live*, Vol. II, 4th edn, 2000, pp.17–18)

... we have concluded to test your sincerity by asking you to send us our wages for the time we served you ... I served you faithfully for thirty-two years, and Mandy twenty years ... our earnings would amount to \$11,680. Add to this the interest for the time our wages have been kept back, and deduct what you paid for our clothing, and three doctor's visits for me, and pulling a tooth for Mandy, and the balance will show what we are in justice entitled to ... We trust the good Maker has opened your eyes to the wrongs which you and your fathers have done to me and my fathers, in making us toil for you for generations without recompense. Here, I draw my wages every Saturday night; but in Tennessee there never was any pay-day for the Negroes any more than for horses and cows ... please state if there would be safety for my Milly and Jane ... both good-looking girls. You know how it was with poor Matilda and Catherine. I would rather stay here and starve – and die, if it came to that – than have my girls brought to shame by the violence and wickedness of their young masters ...

value of non-slaves in determining congressional representation. Add a new state, though, and that meant two more senators.

This mattered because a sectional balance was evolving in Congress between north and south, free and slave. When Missouri applied for admission to the Union in 1820, as a slave state, a deal had to be done. The first part of the deal was that any future slave state had to be south of Missouri, thereby limiting the number of slave states that could be admitted. The second part of the deal was that the northern part of Massachusetts would be admitted as a separate, free, state, to balance the numbers – this was Maine. This was known as the Missouri Compromise.

The causes of the American Civil War

There is an episode of *The Simpsons* in which Apu, the Indian shopkeeper, is forced to take a citizenship test. He is asked about the causes of the American Civil War. He begins to explain the nuanced complexity of the issue and is interrupted and advised to give a shorter answer – 'Just say slavery'. Slavery was certainly the major cause of the American Civil War, but why slavery caused such a conflict is quite complicated.

Since the Missouri Compromise, new states had been admitted to the USA very carefully to avoid upsetting the North/South (free/slave) sectional balance. The annexation of much more territory from Mexico in 1848 looked set to cause problems; the discovery of gold in California made careful management of the new territory impossible. The area around San Francisco Bay became very popular for free immigrants in the 'Gold Rush' of 1849 and California was admitted as a large free state, upsetting the balance. In 1854 the Kansas-Nebraska Act established those two future states as territories, with the issue of slavery to be decided by popular sovereignty – that is, the people of the territories would vote on the issue. This was significant as neither of these territories was south of Missouri: the Missouri Compromise was over. The period from 1854–61 was known in Kansas as 'Bleeding Kansas', because of the violence and bloodshed that occurred between the pro- and anti-slavery factions there; this particular conflict was only stopped by the outbreak of the wider Civil War.

Sectional tension

Meanwhile the cultural battle lines were being drawn. Northern dislike of slavery had become active disgust, and northerners were disrupting the institution in an attack that was both cultural and economic. Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, depicting a slave so cowed by his status that he was driven to accepting it, stirred up northern anger. There was a period of religious enthusiasm known as the Second Great Awakening, which directly attacked slavery in religious terms. Resistance movements such as the 'underground railroad', by which slaves were smuggled into free territories where they gained freedom, became effective enough to attract legal challenges.

In the North the anti-slavery movement comprised industrialists seeking to advantage their preferred form of economic activity over plantation agriculture, recent immigrants and those inspired by religious messages. In the South,



Key term

manifest destiny: the idea that America was and is fated to dominate the continent of North America, the western hemisphere and the world. It drove expansion in the 19th century – see Figure 0.4.

meanwhile, affection grew for the 'peculiar institution' of slavery, even among those who were not themselves slave owners. 'Peculiar' in this sense means 'defining'. The South was slavery, and if the North did not like slavery, it seemed, then it did not like the South. Passions were stirred on both sides. In 1854, in response to the Kansas-Nebraska Act, a new political party – the Republican Party – was formed. It was pledged to oppose the expansion of slavery, and channelled the widespread anxiety in the North that (southern) slave owners were running the national government for their own ends. The Republican Party's vision was of small independent businesses, farms, entrepreneurs, people able to make their own opportunities in an economy in which all individuals could benefit from the fruits of their own labour.

In the 1860 presidential election, a former Whig named Abraham Lincoln was able to win the presidency for the Republican Party. He won the election by sweeping the free states, which, although he won less than half the national popular vote, gave him a majority in the Electoral College that decides the presidency. His name was not even on the ballot paper in most southern states: his free-state majority was based in the North. One month before the election, Lincoln's Democratic Party opponent Stephen A Douglas had conceded defeat and begun a tour of the South, the purpose of which was to try to persuade southerners not to leave the Union when Lincoln won.

Secession and war

The election of 1860 confirmed the South's worst fears. A candidate who was openly opposed to the expansion of slavery had won without any support from the southern section of the country. There was nobody left to negotiate a compromise. Secession – leaving the Union – seemed to be the only option. This was in place in seven of the eleven states that would go on to form the Confederate States of America before Lincoln had even been inaugurated. In April 1861 the Confederacy, as it was known, attacked the federal garrison of Fort Sumter in South Carolina. The Civil War had begun. The reasons for the Civil War are summarised in Figure 0.5.

The American Civil War

Why did the North win? It was more industrialised. The South recognised the need for European support, but President Lincoln was able to prevent this from coming to pass. The North, unlike the South, was able to enlist its working classes in its army – until March 1865, in desperation, southern politicians had little stomach for the mass arming of slaves, which would have been a recognition that their entire racial theory was wrong, as well as giving weapons to those whom they had oppressed. Both sides exhausted themselves but the damage was worse for the side that was the poorer, which was the South. It's also noteworthy that the vast majority of the fighting happened in the southern states. Virginia, Tennessee and Mississippi were particularly devastated. Of the states that had remained loyal to the Union only Missouri and Kentucky, both slaveholding states on the border, were subject to repeated fighting.

Introduction

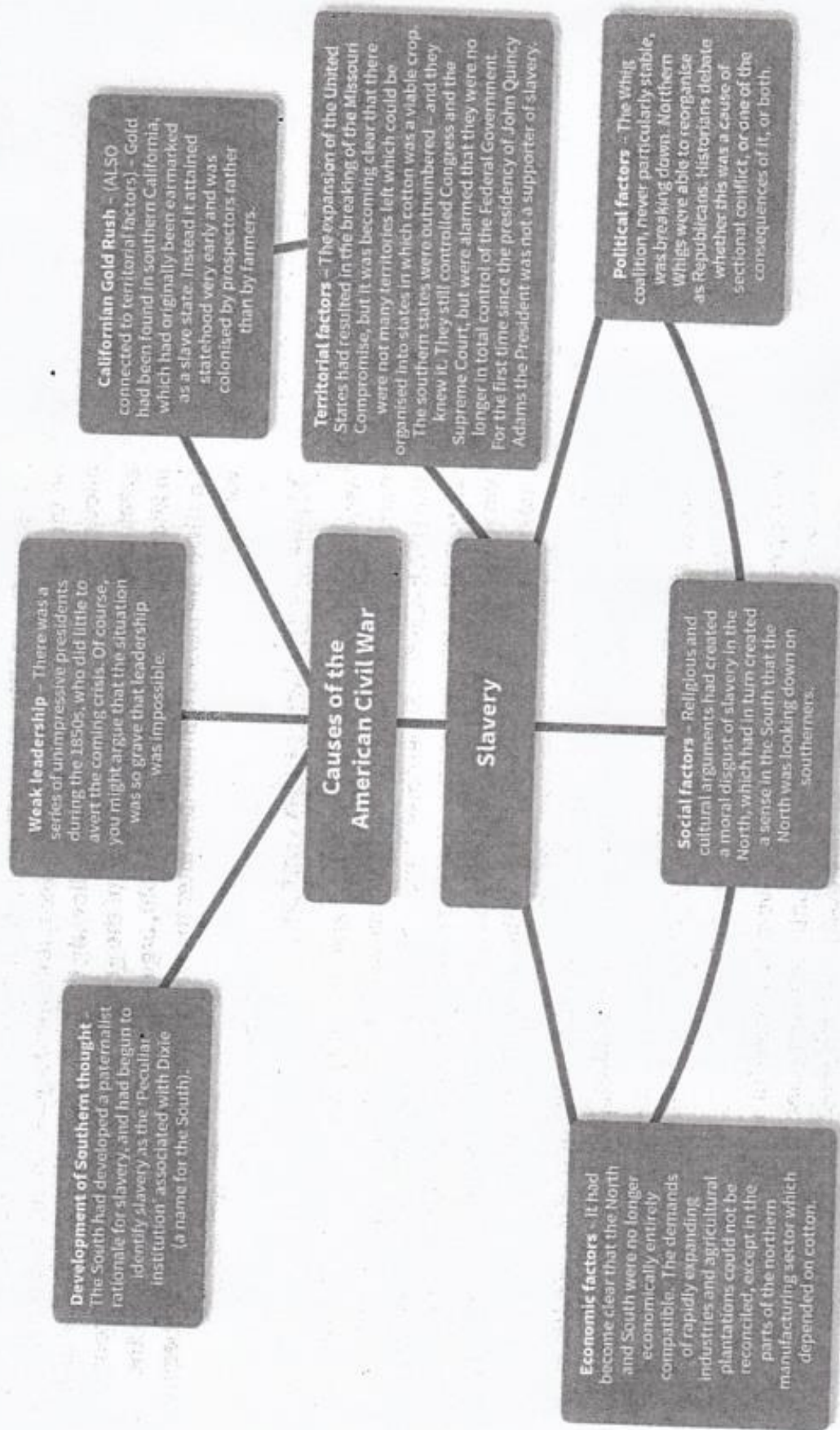


Figure 0.5: The causes of the American Civil War.

