

Slavery, the Civil War & Reconstruction Background to the Civil War – Balance Sheet

Before the Civil War began, each side thought that it would quickly win the war. The South was **confident**¹ in its fighting ability, and the North was confident in its factories. General Sherman of the Northern Army best described the Southern attitude. He said that the Southern **cavalry**² would win: “As long as they have good horses . . . and an open country, they are happy. They are splendid riders and utterly reckless...They are the best cavalry in the world.”

On the other hand, the South had very little of the right raw materials. By the end of the war, General Lee asked the President of the Confederacy to collect church bells from all over the countryside. The South melted down the church bells to make bullets. They simply had no other supplies left.

These are some of the advantages each side had:

North

- The Union had about 2,100,000 soldiers while the South had only 850,000.
- The North had 90% of all of the factories in the U.S. Factories were really important for making everything from uniforms and boots to bullets.
- The Union (the North) had more than twice as many railroads per square mile.
- The North already had many war supplies like iron, firearms, and trains.
- The North had better **cannons**³ and big guns.

South

- The South had more experienced military leaders.

¹ **confident** – feeling sure of oneself

² **cavalry** – military troops that fight on horseback

³ **cannon** – a heavy gun mounted on wheels

- Many Southern men were excellent hunters and skilled with rifles. They had a very good cavalry.
- The South was fighting a defensive war. To win, it only had to keep the Union army from taking over. The South did not want to take over the North.
- The South was fighting on its own ground and was familiar with back roads and the **terrain**.¹

¹ **terrain** – the land

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. In the sentence, "They are splendid riders and utterly reckless," the pronoun "they" refers to
 - a. the horses
 - b. the Southern soldiers
 - c. the Northern soldiers
 - d. the factories

2. What was one main difference between the Northern and Southern armies?
 - a. The Northern army was much smaller.
 - b. The Southern army had more supplies.
 - c. The Northern army was much larger.
 - d. The Southern army had fewer experienced leaders.

3. Why did General Lee collect church bells toward the end of the war?
 - a. He wanted to ring the bells to celebrate victory.
 - b. He was worried about having enough raw materials.
 - c. He was an excellent hunter.
 - d. He needed them to melt down and make bullets.

4. What is one opinion from the passage about the Southern army?
 - a. The army had 850,000 soldiers.
 - b. The soldiers fought using rifles.
 - c. The soldiers were excellent riders.
 - d. The soldiers were led by generals.

5. The passage "Background to the Civil War" is mostly about
 - a. the Southern strategy to hide in the background
 - b. how the South used church bells during the war
 - c. how quickly the Civil War ended
 - d. the advantages each side had in the Civil War

6. What was the main reason the North thought it would win the Civil War?
What was the main reason the South thought it would win the Civil War?

7. Based on the passage, what probably made it very difficult for the South to keep fighting?

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word or phrase that best completes the sentence.

General Lee asked the President of the Confederacy to collect church bells from all over the countryside _____ the South needed supplies.

- a. and
- b. because
- c. so
- d. but

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

During the Civil War, the North used their railroads to move supplies.

Who? the North

(did) What? _____

Why? _____

When? _____

10. **Vocabulary Word:** confident: feeling sure about yourself.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: _____

Teacher Guide and Answers

Passage Reading Level: Lexile 670

Featured Text Structure: Compare/Contrast – the writer presents similarities and differences between two or more objects, places, events or ideas

Passage Summary: Before the Civil War, both sides were confident that they would win quickly. The North had some advantages, like having more people and factories, while the South had other advantages, like more skilled soldiers.

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6. What was the main reason the North thought it would win the Civil War?

What

was the main reason the South thought it would win the Civil War?

Suggested answer: The North thought it would win the Civil War because it had more industry. The South thought it would win because it had an excellent cavalry and well trained soldiers.

7. Based on the passage, what probably made it very difficult for the South to keep fighting?

Suggested answer: Based on the passage, it was probably very difficult for the South to keep fighting because they were running out of supplies. If General Lee has to ask for church bells to be melted down to make bullets, that probably meant that they were running out of supplies and could not fight for much longer.

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word or phrase that best completes the sentence.

General Lee asked the President of the Confederacy to collect church bells from all over the countryside _____ the South needed supplies.

- a. and
- b. **because**
- c. so
- d. but

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

During the Civil War, the North used their railroads to move supplies.

Who? the North

(did) What? **used their railroads**

Why? **to move supplies**

When? **during the Civil War**

10. **Vocabulary Word:** confident: feeling sure about yourself.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: answers may vary.