

# The Civil War

## 21.1 Introduction

**T**he cannon shells bursting over Fort Sumter ended months of confusion. The nation was at war. The time had come to choose sides.

For most whites in the South, the choice was clear. Early in 1861, representatives from six of the seven states that had seceded from the Union met to form a new nation called the Confederate States of America. Southerners believed that just as the states had once voluntarily joined the Union, they could voluntarily leave it now. The men who fought for the **Confederacy** were proud defenders of “Southern Rights” and “Southern Independence.”

For many northerners, the choice was just as clear. “There can be no neutrals in this war,” declared Stephen Douglas after Fort Sumter, “only patriots—and traitors.” Most northerners viewed the secession of southern states as traitorous acts of rebellion against the United States. They marched off to war eager to defend “Our Union! Our Constitution! and Our Flag!”

Choosing sides was harder for the eight slave states located between the Confederacy and the free states. Four of these “border states”—Virginia, Arkansas, Tennessee, and North Carolina—joined the Confederacy. The western counties of Virginia, however, remained loyal to the Union. Rather than fight for the South, they broke away to form a new state called West Virginia. The other four border states—Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri—remained in the Union, although many of their citizens fought for the South.

As Americans took sides, they began to see why a **civil war**—a conflict between two peoples in one country—is the most painful kind of war. This conflict divided not only states, but also families and friends. In this chapter, you will learn how this “brothers’ war” turned into the most destructive of all American wars. As you read, put yourself in the shoes of the men and women who were part of this long and tragic struggle.



### Graphic Organizer: Annotated Illustration

You will use this illustration of a soldier's haversack to understand the events and effects of the Civil War.