Student Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**The War Begins: North vs. South**

By 1860, the divisions in the country had reached a breaking point. The presidential Election of 1860 brought these conflicts to a head with dramatic consequences. The Democratic Party split into three, all of which held different ideas about how to deal with slavery in the West. These three camps lined up against Abraham Lincoln, the nominee of the Republican Party, who advocated that the West be free of slavery entirely. Because Lincoln’s opponents were so deeply divided, he won with less than forty percent of the popular vote (but with fifty-nine percent of the Electoral College) and without taking a single slave state. Although Lincoln’s election was fair, it nonetheless pushed the Deep South toward secession.

South Carolina responded to Lincoln’s election first, seceding from the Union on December 20, 1860. Several other southern states followed, and in early February, representatives of those states gathered in Alabama, to found a new nation, The Confederate States of America (also known as the Confederacy), and to name its president, Jefferson Davis of Mississippi.

Once inaugurated, Lincoln had insisted that his government would not allow the Confederacy to take control of United States military forts in the South, which had begun to happen in many places. Lincoln was determined not to allow Fort Sumter (South Carolina) to be taken, so he sent *unarmed* supply ships to the fort, giving Jefferson Davis advance notice of his actions. The Confederacy attacked the fort before the ships could arrive, opening fire on April 12, 1861. The Union troops inside held out for thirty-four hours, but finally surrendered on April 14 in the face of constant shelling. The next day, President Lincoln called out 75,000 militia men to put down the rebellion. War had begun.

In this activity you will consider the economic and military balance of the North and South in 1861. Based on these factors, you will make a judgment as to which side possessed the overall advantage at the outset of the war. Before you can begin, you must first research which states were part of the Union (north), which were part of the Confederacy (south), and which were Border States (neutral).

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Union States** | **Confederate States** | **Border States** |
|  |  |  |

**Part 1: Economic Balance**

It is May 1861, and the Civil War has just begun. You must first consider the economic advantages and disadvantages of each side. For each category, indicate which side—North or South—seemed to possess the advantage, and **explain why**. Use specific evidence from the map and chart to back up your claims.

Chart:

<http://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/american-civil-war/resources/north-south-comparisons>

Map:

<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/static/neh/interactives/civilwar/lesson1/>

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Which side had the advantage?** | **Explanation** |
| Wealth |  |  |
| Manufacturing |  |  |
| Agricultural (food) Production |  |  |
| Cotton Production |  |  |
| Railroads |  |  |
| Slaves |  |  |
| Immigrants |  |  |

**Part 2: The Military Balance**

It is May 1861, and the Civil War has just begun. Your group has the task of considering the military advantages and disadvantages of each side. Using the information that follows, determine which side possesses the military advantage going into the war.

Comparing the Army Commanders

<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/static/neh/interactives/cmdrs/>

The link above provides information about the top-ranking field commanders in the Confederate and Union armies during the first year of the Civil War. As you study the information, answer the questions that following, citing specific evidence for your answers.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Question** | **Answer** |
| Which side’s commanders were more likely to have attended the U.S. military academy at West Point? Why might this make a difference in determining the overall military balance? |  |
| Which side’s commanders, on average, performed better at West Point? Why might this matter? |  |
| Which side’s commanders, on average, were older? How might this make a difference? |  |
| Which side’s commanders, on average, had more military experience? Why might this be important? |  |