

# Complicated Process: The American Civil War

By Hannah Grafelman

When people talk about the American Civil War they see a fight of good against evil. The North are the good guys, and the South the bad guys. The boundaries of the Civil War weren't that simple. There were four major reasons why the newly formed United States of America almost broke apart, forever. The first reason is the most common one, slavery of African American people. The second one, was the differing economies in the North and South. To go along with that reason was the argument of state rights vs. federal rights. The final reason was territorial lands.

The difference between state and federal governments goes back to the Jackson administration when the southern states threatened to secede from the union if the federal government didn't give more rights to states. The southern states were out numbered in Congress. If state governments had more power, the south had more power. The conflict during the Jackson administration was settled by the U.S. Army. Even though that argument was settled, the argument of whether or not the state or federal government should possess more power in the government is still yet unsettled.

The differing economies in the North and South weren't a huge issue until the war broke out. The Southern economy was run on cash crops such as cotton. In order to produce enough cotton to make a profit, the Southerners had to grow a large amount of it. This required a large labor force and the solution was slaves. The Southern economy depended on food from the north and the more industrialized Northerners depended on the south to produce raw materials for their factories.

Slavery is the reason most people associate with the beginning of the Civil War. Originally, slavery wasn't a big deal; it was an accepted way of life. To start with, the abolitionists were religious people who found slavery morally wrong. When a new slavery law was passed that made harboring slaves a federal offense, punishable by death, more people noticed slavery. It wasn't until Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to tell people about the horrors of slavery in the south, that people became involved in the abolitionist movement; this deeply wounded Southern pride. A single book caused a huge rivalry that helped to split apart the nation.

The straw that broke the camel's back was the new territories that had to be brought into the union. Because of the breakdown of Congress, the South looked to the territories as a way to gain power in the governing body. When Kansas was brought into the union, it entered its own civil war due to a corrupted vote. This gave South Carolina reason to secede from the union, plunging the country into civil war.

The Civil War was a complicated political process. It wasn't just about slavery, and it wasn't any one party's fault. It was a conflict in values and power. When power is unevenly balanced, it is human nature to become upset, and revolts happen. It is the responsibility of future generations to learn from our ancestor's mistakes and become a greater nation.