

“This Means War!”

After decades of fierce debate, the U.S. states came to blows in 1861. No one imagined the horrors that would follow.

CHARACTERS

- *Ella Rae Stone, a resident of Charleston, South Carolina
 - *Jabez Ennis, owner of a general store in Charleston
 - *Cal Wiggins, one of Ennis's customers
 - *First reporter
 - Edwin D. Morgan, Governor of New York
 - *Second reporter
 - Abraham Lincoln
 - Winfield Scott, general-in-chief of the U.S. Army
 - Stephen A. Douglas, a Senator from Illinois
 - Robert Anderson, a major in the U.S. Army
 - John Carmody } sergeants in
Miles Tyler } the U.S. Army
 - *Sarah Timlin, a resident of Washington, D.C.
 - William Howard Russell, a British journalist
 - Narrators A-E
- *Indicates a fictional or composite character. All others were real people.

Words to Know

- **delegate** /n/: a person given the authority to act for others; a representative
- **secede** /v/: to formally withdraw from an organization or a group

PROLOGUE

Narrator A: The Civil War, the bloodiest conflict in American history, began 150 years ago this spring. Although the war had several contributing causes, slavery was at the root of them all.

Narrator B: When Abraham Lincoln was elected President in November 1860, the U.S. had 33 states. Of these, 15 allowed slavery, and 18 did not.

Since the birth of the nation, Americans had disagreed about slavery—not only about its morality, but also whether it should be allowed in new states joining the Union.

Narrator C: The month after Lincoln—an opponent of slavery from Illinois—was elected, South Carolina **seceded** from the Union. In January 1861, five other slave states did the same.

SCENE 1

Narrator D: In early February 1861, in a general store in Charleston, South Carolina . . .

Ella Rae Stone: So, folks, what do you think of our new country?

Jabez Ennis: What do you mean?

Stone: Haven't you heard?

Delegates from South Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, and Louisiana have been meeting in Montgomery, Alabama.

Ennis: What of it?

Stone: They voted to establish a new country—the Confederate States of America! Texas just joined.

Ennis: I suppose it's a good idea.

Cal Wiggins: You “suppose”? You were mighty proud in December, when South Carolina seceded!

Ennis: Yes, because we wanted to remind the North what the Constitution says: The powers not given to the federal government belong to the states. Each state should set its own laws on slavery!

Stone: Well, the North didn't listen.

Ennis: Do you think this will mean war? Most of us in the South don't even own slaves. Why should we risk our necks to fight the North?

Stone: Because our way of life is at stake! Their economy is based on factories and small farms. They don't need slaves. In the South, we rely on big plantations that grow cotton, tobacco, and sugarcane.

Wiggins: Without slave labor, the plantation system would collapse. Without the plantations, our economy would wither. Who could afford to shop in your store then?

Ennis: Gosh, I'd be ruined!

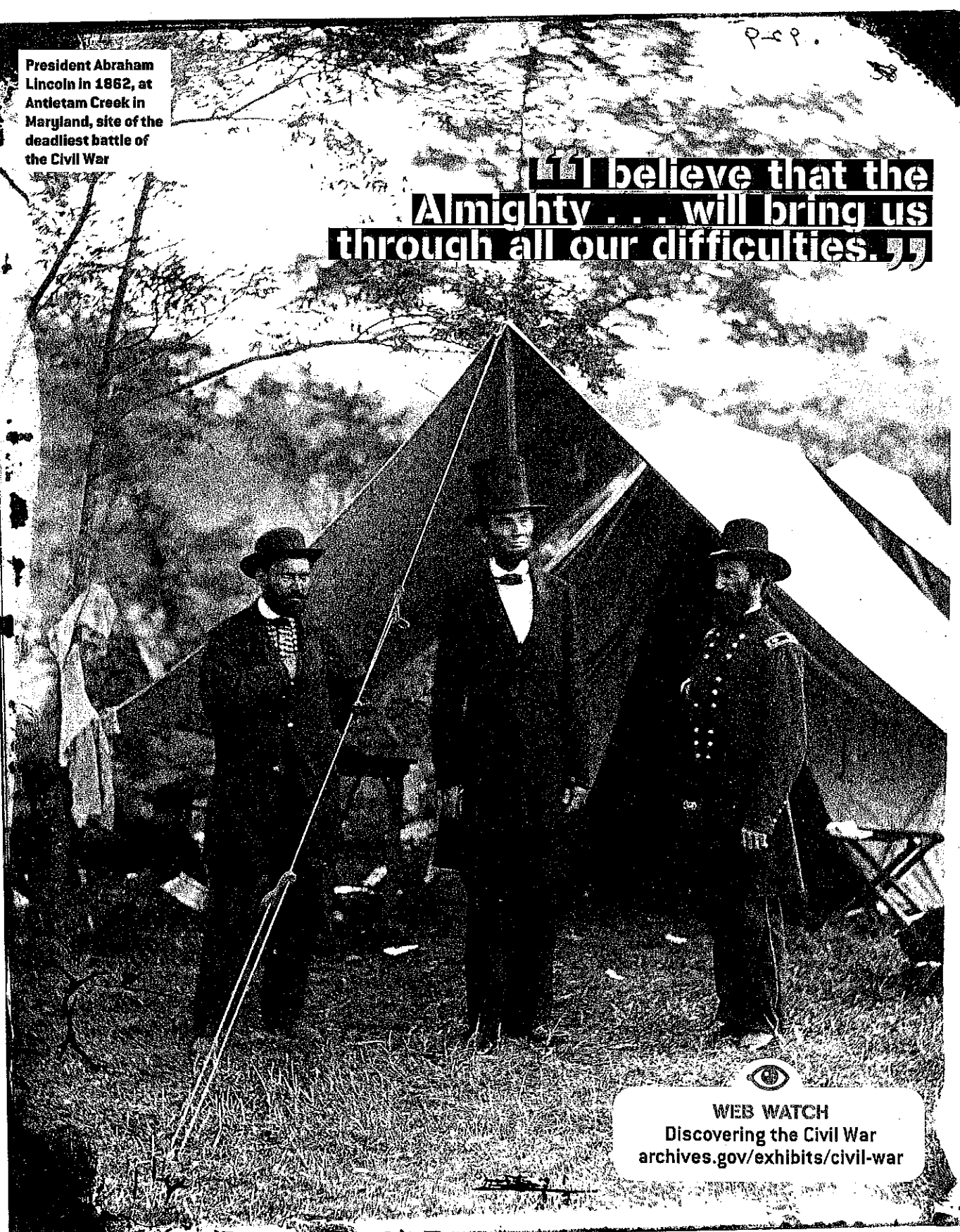
SCENE 2

Narrator E: On February 11, the Lincoln victory train leaves Springfield, Illinois, carrying the


continued on p. 20 →

President Abraham Lincoln in 1862, at Antietam Creek in Maryland, site of the deadliest battle of the Civil War

“I believe that the Almighty . . . will bring us through all our difficulties.”



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS


WEB WATCH
Discovering the Civil War
archives.gov/exhibits/civil-war

President-elect to his inauguration in Washington, D.C., on March 4. Stopping in Albany, New York, Lincoln is met by the Governor and a small crowd of reporters.

First reporter: Jefferson Davis has just been sworn in as President of the Confederate States of America!
Edwin D. Morgan: Mr. Lincoln is aware of that.

Second reporter: What does he intend to do about it?

Morgan: Gentlemen, please! Allow Mr. Lincoln to be inaugurated before you demand answers to such questions.

First reporter: But this is a national crisis! What if other states decide to secede?

Second reporter: Mr. Lincoln! Does this mean war?

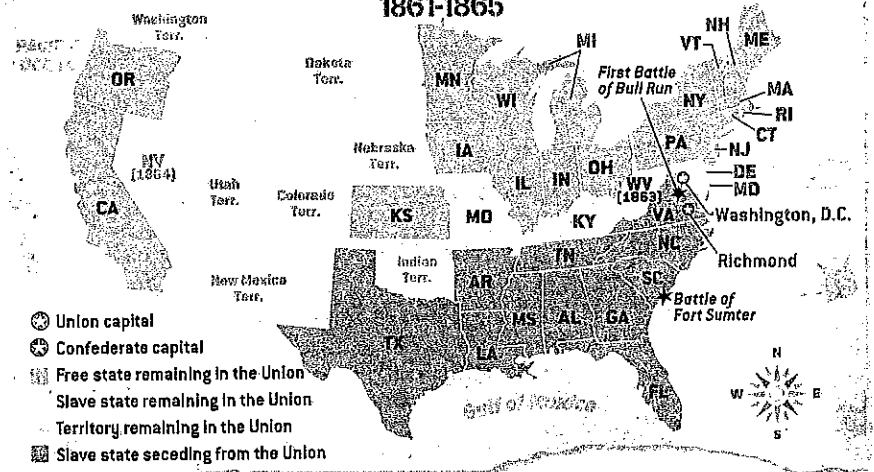
Abraham Lincoln: For now, James Buchanan is still President. When the time comes, I shall speak as well as I am able—for the good of both the North and the South. In the meantime, if we have patience, if we restrain ourselves not to run off in passion, I believe that the Almighty, through this great and intelligent people, will bring us through all our difficulties.

Chronology

The Road to War

When the Constitution was ratified in 1788, slavery was legal in the U.S., with slaves counted as three-fifths of a person. But the question of slavery bitterly divided Northern and Southern states for decades. Abolitionists believed that slavery was a crime, while slave owners considered it economically essential. As the nation expanded, the issue threatened to tear it apart. By the mid-1800s, a series of events led the nation into war.

A Nation Divided 1861-1865



SCENE 3

Narrator A: On March 6, two days after taking the oath of office, Lincoln receives a dispatch from Major Robert Anderson, commander at Fort Sumter, a military base in Charleston's harbor.

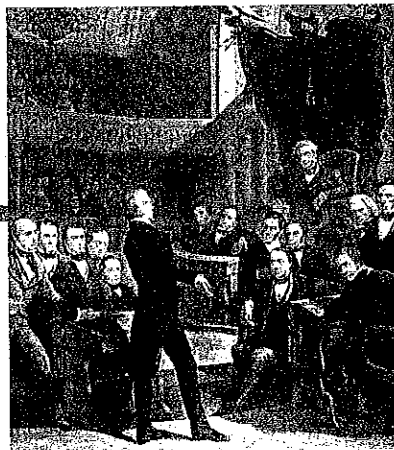
Lincoln: The major reports that his food supplies are running low. He can hold out 40 more days at most.

Winfield Scott: I would advise

you to abandon Fort Sumter, Mr. President. It would take a large fleet and at least 25,000 troops to resupply it.

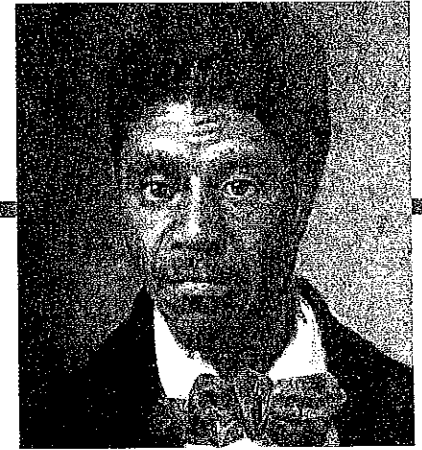
Stephen A. Douglas: But if the South's rebellion is allowed to go on, it could turn into full-scale war.

Lincoln: I don't want war. But the Union must be preserved at all costs. Come what may, we must resupply Fort Sumter!



THE COMPROMISE OF 1850

JANUARY 1850: Senator Henry Clay of Kentucky proposes a compromise that inflames both pro- and anti-slavery Americans. California will be admitted to the Union as a free state, but free states must return escaped slaves to their owners.



DRED SCOTT

MARCH 1857: The U.S. Supreme Court denies **Dred Scott**, a slave who had been taken by his owner to a free state and territory, the right to sue for his freedom. The Court rules that slaves are property, not citizens, and that slavery cannot be forbidden in U.S. territories.

MAP: JIM McHAUGH/WAPMAN; BOTTOM, FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: AP IMAGES/NORTH WIND PICTURE ARCHIVES, PHOTO RESEARCHERS, INC.; LIBRARY OF CONGRESS; STOCK MONTAGE/GETTY IMAGES; AP IMAGES/NORTH WIND PICTURE ARCHIVES

SCENE 4

Narrator B: At 4:30 a.m. on April 12, Confederate troops begin firing on Fort Sumter. Inside the fort . . .

Robert Anderson: Let's proceed with caution, men.

Narrator C: Anderson's troops fire back but inflict little damage on the rebels.

John Carmody: We must fire our cannons—or we'll be wiped out!

Miles Tyler: But they're on the other side of the fort, where it's undefended. It's too dangerous.

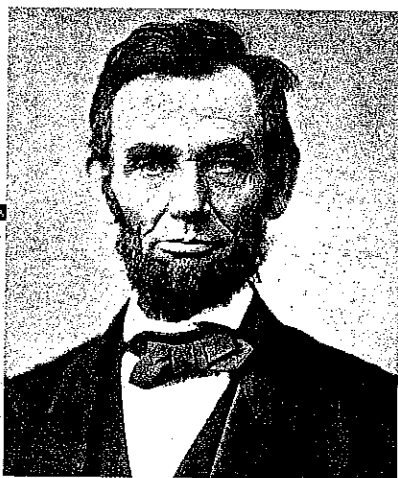
Carmody: It's our only chance!

Narrator D: Carmody dashes to the cannons and, single-handedly, fires them one by one. But without help, he can't reload. Then . . .

Tyler: Look over there! The relief ships President Lincoln sent are arriving! We're saved!

Carmody: Hallelujah!

Narrator E: But a hail of bullets and cannonballs won't let the ships dock. Worse, Confederate cannonballs set the fort on fire.



LINCOLN'S ELECTION

NOVEMBER 1860: When anti-slavery Republican Abraham Lincoln of Illinois is elected President, many Southerners are enraged. In December, South Carolina secedes from the Union. Six other slave states soon follow.

On April 14, Major Anderson surrenders. The Civil War has begun.

SCENE 5

Narrator A: The South's victory at Fort Sumter prompts four more states to join the Confederacy.

Outraged Northerners demand that the Union Army strike back hard and fast. Americans on both sides expect a short war. Then comes the First Battle of Bull Run in Virginia, on July 21. The next day, in Washington, D.C. . . .

Sarah Timlin: Mr. Russell! What's your hurry?

William Howard Russell: I've got an article to write! Yesterday, hordes of people went to Manassas Junction in Virginia to watch the battle. Farmers, families with picnic baskets, ladies with parasols—all expecting a good show.

Timlin: But it was a disaster! Everyone thought the Union Army would teach the rebels a lesson. But the Confederates turned things around and won the day.



BIRTH OF THE CONFEDERACY

FEBRUARY 1862: Delegates from the states that had seceded declare themselves the Confederate States of America, with Jefferson Davis as President. [Eleven states eventually seceded.] Lincoln vows to restore the Union.

Narrator B: The Battle of Bull Run—also known as the Battle of Manassas—lasted only a day, but it woke the nation to the severity of the conflict. About 3,000 of the Union's 37,000 troops—and roughly 2,000 of the Confederacy's 35,000—were killed or wounded.

Russell: You Americans, it seems, are in for the fight of your lives.

EPILOGUE

Narrator C: Indeed, the fighting continued for four years, with more than 10,000 battles, mainly in the South. By the time the South surrendered at Appomattox Court House in Virginia on April 9, 1865, 620,000 men from the North and South had been killed. The Civil War remains the most scarring period in U.S. history.

—Kathy Willmore & Louis C. Adelman

Think About It

1. How did economic differences between the North and South contribute to the conflict?
2. What do you think might have happened to the U.S. had the South won the war?



THE BATTLE OF FORT SUMTER

APRIL 1861: South Carolina demands that the Union relinquish Fort Sumter, in Charleston's harbor. When the Union refuses, Confederate forces attack. The Civil War begins, and four years of bloodshed follow.