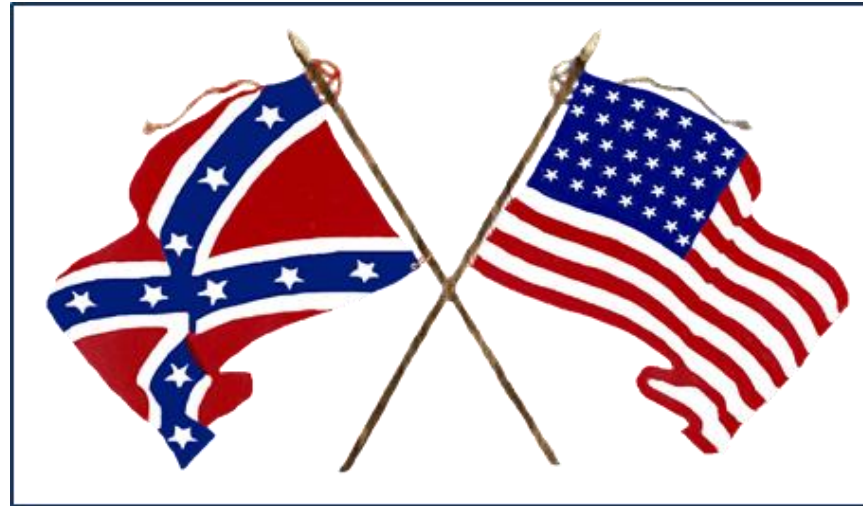


# American West Unit 2: Development of the Plains 1862 - 1876

## Lesson Objectives:

To understand the role the American Civil War had on settlement in the West

To know the reasons for, and the impact of, the **Homestead Act 1862**, the **Pacific Railroad Act** and the **First Transcontinental Railroad 1869**.



# Causes of the Civil War

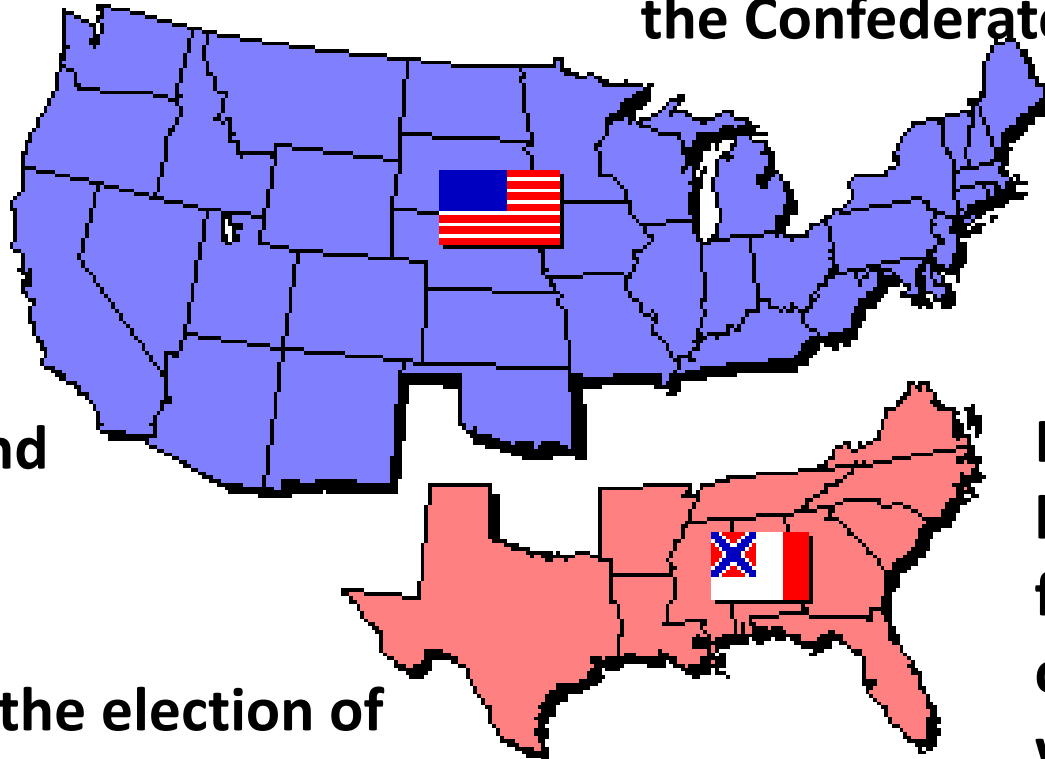
In 1861 the long running dispute over slavery between the northern and southern states of the USA came to a head.

The North wanted to abolish slavery.

In the South, slavery was a key part of the economy and they wanted to keep it.

In April 1861, shortly after the election of anti-slavery Abraham Lincoln as President, fighting broke out.

The southern states decided to split from the USA, form their own government, elect a new President and call themselves the Confederate States of America (CSA).



The North was not going to allow this break up of the USA.

It was a bitter war that lasted 4 years. The north finally won and the consequences of this war would be very significant for the settlement of the West.

# Significance of the Civil War

**Soldiers were withdrawn from regular duties to fight meaning no protection for the Indians making them even more vulnerable to murder and violence. Disastrous for relations with the Indians.**

**The war had left a lot of soldiers wanting a new life.**

**There were 3.5 million newly freed slaves who wanted to escape life in the south.**

**Many people in the south wanted to get away from rule by the victorious northern government – saw heading West as a way to put more distance between them.**

**The US government could now give incentives to encourage people to take up family sized plots in the West. (Before the southern states had blocked attempts to do this as they wanted to promote large plantations farms worked by slaves.)**



**The government encouraged settlement West in the 1860s with the Homestead Act 1862.**

# The Homestead Act 1862

## Key Vocabulary:

**Homestead** = a family house and enough land to support the family. People taking up homesteads were called **homesteaders**

### Could You be a Homesteader?

Are you the head of a family or single and over 21?

Women and former slaves ARE included – but not Indians or Confederate (southern) soldiers.

Are you single and under 21 but fought for the victorious US army in the Civil War?

Do you have \$10 to pay to file your claim?

**Then 160 acres of land is yours to claim.**

Work the land for 5 years and it becomes your property for just one further payment of \$30



# Task: Complete your version of the sheet below

Government Incentives to go West 1860s and 1870s		
Anyone could file a claim as long as they were head of a family or single and over 21. In fact you could be under 21 if you had fought for the government in the civil war) Anyone intending to become a US citizen could file a claim.	Although 80 million acres was eventually homesteaded, this was out of a total of 500 million acres of public land (16%). Only 13 million acres of claims had been 'proved up' by 1884; 24 million by 1900.	60% of homestead claims were never proved up, often because of the challenges of farming the Plains. Half the population of western Nebraska in the 1860s had left the state by the 1880s.
The Homestead Act ensured that parts of the Great Plains were being settled for the first time. Eventually 80 million acres would be settled as a direct consequence of the Homestead Act.	The government realised 160 acres was not enough to support a homesteader family. This Act allowed a homesteader to claim a further 160 acres if they promised to plant trees on half of it.	The Homestead Act was important in encouraging immigration from Europe. By 1875 more than half Nebraska's population of 123,000 were recent immigrants and their children.
Despite the government's best intention, rich landowners were able to use the Act to get more land very cheaply. Big ranch owners would make all their employees file claims and then hand over the rights to the land to the ranch owner.	Once someone had lived on the land for 5 years, built a house and planted five acres of crops they could pay \$30 and own their homestead outright. This was called 'proving up'.	The government wanted to prevent businessmen snapping up lots of land cheaply under the scheme and then selling it on at a profit.
It cost just \$10 to register a claim to a homestead plot - called 'filing a claim'.	This Act gave settler the right to buy 640 acres of land cheaply in areas where lack of rainfall was a more than usual problem	By 1876 over six million acres of government land had successfully become homesteads
The plots were 160 acres 'homesteads'. This meant a family house and enough land to support the family.	Many more homesteads were formed by people buying land from the railroad companies and through a form of 'squatting', than were proven up by through the Homestead Act.	The biggest success was in Nebraska where nearly half of all settled land was homestead land and Nebraska's population growth resulted in it becoming a state in 1867.
<b>KEY</b>	<b>1. Facts about the Homestead Act 1862</b>	<b>2. Achievements of Homestead Act</b>
<b>3. Limitations of Homestead Act</b>	<b>4. Facts about the Timber Culture Act 1873</b>	<b>5. Facts about the Desert Land Act 1877</b>

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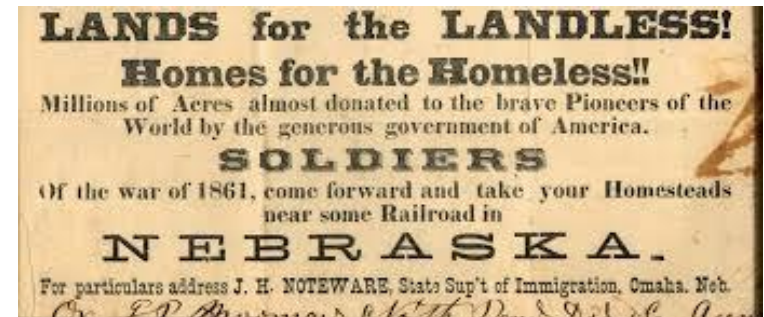
Exam Questions: (8 marks)

Explain two consequences of the Civil War in the 1860s

Or



Explain two consequences of the Homestead Act of 1862





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