

The Civil War

Social Studies Skills

Identifying Cause and Effect

LEARN THE SKILL

Identifying cause and effect helps historians understand *what* happened in history as well as *why* it happened. A cause is an action that makes another event happen. Causes may be stated in the text or implied. An effect is something that happens as a result of a cause.

PRACTICE THE SKILL

Use the following strategies to identify cause and effect in the reading.

1. **Identify the causes of events.** Look for clue words such as *because, so, since, therefore, and due to*.
2. **Identify the effects of events.** Look for phrases and words such as *brought about, led to, thus, consequently, and as a result* that signal reasons for a given event.
3. **Make connections between causes and their effects.**

The American Civil War was not inevitable. There was no necessity for the North and the South to engage in a bloody military conflict from 1861 to 1865, especially since the two sections had peacefully coexisted since the American Revolution. Like civil wars in other countries, this one emerged within a specific set of political, economic, and social changes that increasingly differentiated the North from the South. In the North these transformations, as they eroded traditional attachments to local communities, prevented a sense of national spirit. They also led to a development of the North's commercial capacities, which would make that section the stronger of the two warring sides. To a limited degree, the South participated in those economic and cultural transformations.

—David Herbert Donald, et al., *The Civil War and Reconstruction*

APPLY THE SKILL

1. Generally speaking, what kinds of changes became causes of the Civil War?

2. What was the effect of the North's transformations?

3. What effect did the North's commercial capacities have on the war?