

OCR – AS GCE
European & World
History Period
Studies
F 962

Unit 1 The American Civil War, 1861–65

ESSAY

Examiner's Specific Advice

A question that demands an assessment of the role of a key reason requires evaluation of a range of factors against that factor. Answers should give prominence to the reason raised (resources), but should balance it against other factors, explain how all the reasons are interlinked and assess their relative significance. Candidates should cover a good range of reasons, perhaps including most of the following areas: the extent of northern resources (compared to the South); effective use of resources; political leadership; military leadership; morale; strategy and battles.

Exemplar Question

To what extent can the victory of the North in the Civil War be explained by superior resources?

[50 marks]

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Relating to this Topic](#)

Examiner's Exemplar Plan and Essay 1

Plan

Introduction
Superior resources
Other reasons: political and military leadership, strategy
Conclusion

Victory for the Union came in 1865 after four years of civil war. Whilst superior resources played an important part in that victory there were a number of other factors involved such as Lincoln's political leadership, the northern military strategy and the command of generals like Grant and Sherman (1).

The North's superior resources played an important part in their victory. The North had a population of 22 million compared to the South's nine million (many of whom were slaves). The North's industry outweighed the South's, producing over 90% of its iron, for example, and it had six times as many factories. The North had twice the length of railway track compared to the South. In agriculture, too, the North had the

(1) This is a promising start. You show you know something about the Civil War and indicate that there are a number of different reasons which help to explain the North's victory.

(2) This, too, is a promising paragraph, which provides statistical backing for the claim that the North had superior resources. However, the paragraph could be improved by showing how these resources linked to victory in the war – by suggesting, for example, that with over three

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The USA in the 19th Century: Westward Expansion and Civil War 1803–c.1890 –
AS Question**

advantage with 80% of livestock (2).

However, there were a number of other factors which help explain the North's victory. One of these was the able political leadership of Abraham Lincoln compared to Jefferson Davis. Abraham Lincoln, for example, appointed Grant as overall commander of the Union's armies (3) and also issued the Emancipation Proclamation to encourage the North to fight when things seemed to be going wrong in 1863. Davis, on the other hand, did not get on with many of his generals or his ministers (4).

In the end, the North also had better military leadership than the South. The Confederate General Lee was a brilliant commander with able officers like Stonewall Jackson and he was able to win some impressive early victories against poorer northern generals such as at the second Battle of Manassas. However, in General Grant and in Sherman and Sheridan, the North found generals able to take on and defeat the Confederate armies. Grant was able to make use of the North's superior manpower to crush the South both in the East and the West in 1864–65 and bring about the end of the war at Appomattox (5).

Another reason for the North's victory was its overall strategy. This was the 'Anaconda' strategy suggested by Winfield Scott at the start of the war, combining a naval blockade with control of the Mississippi to strangle the South into submission. In 1862–63 the North won control of the River Mississippi whilst its superior naval resources were able to mount a blockade of the coast, cutting the South off from its vital trade links with Europe. In 1864 Grant, as commander-in-chief, gave the Anaconda Plan military bite by pressing Lee in the East whilst Sherman advanced in the West (6).

One important reason for the defeat of the South was defeat in the Battle of Gettysburg. General Lee hoped to defeat the northern army of General Meade and the two forces met at Gettysburg in July 1863. It was a long and bloody battle featuring suicidal advances against strong defences and cannons, such as Pickett's Charge on Cemetery Ridge. Lee was defeated, losing over a third of his forces. He offered his resignation to President Davis but this was refused (7).

There are therefore a number of reasons for the North's victory. Superior resources certainly helped the North to victory, but there were other factors involved, not least the leadership of Lincoln and the abilities of

times as many men of military age available the North could sustain losses more easily than the South, and perhaps linking this with Grant's strategy in 1864–65.

(3) You are right to point out Lincoln's abilities as a political leader, but the appointment of able generals was a problem for both sides. Lincoln's early appointments – like McClellan and Burnside – were not so effective, whilst Davis, in contrast, kept faith with Lee, his most able general, despite the defeat at Gettysburg.

(4) The Emancipation Proclamation is a good example, but the point made about Davis is left a little general. It needs an example to back it up – for example, his poor relationship with his vice president Stephens.

(5) The points made here are good ones and there is an implicit linkage to superior resources also in the last sentence. In the first sentence also, the use of the phrase 'in the end' hints perhaps that the result of the war was far from certain – although what the candidate had in mind is not clear.

(6) This is a more effective paragraph showing a satisfactory understanding of overall northern strategy (despite attempts to achieve a quick victory in 1861) and indicating it took some time to come to fruition. More could be made of the aim of cutting off the South from trade – the cotton trade was vital not only for the South's economy, but also because the South hoped to buy weapons and support in Europe.

(7) This paragraph sits oddly in the essay. There is an argument that Gettysburg was a decisive defeat or turning point in the war, but this

General Grant (8).

Examiner's Assessment

This essay considers a number of relevant reasons for the North's victory, is argued in parts and the supporting evidence is mainly accurate. There is a generally logical organisation, the question issue is addressed and the paragraphing is sound. This element of the essay has been put at Level II and given 16 marks (AO1a).

However, the essay is essentially a list of explained reasons – answer to the question 'Explain four or five reasons why the North won the Civil War' rather than the actual question set, which invites the candidate to provide a relative assessment of reasons. There is little relative assessment and no explicit attempt to link the reasons together to show how they each interlinked. Some of what is included is not effectively used (e.g. the paragraph on Gettysburg – its importance is asserted rather than explained). For these reasons this element of the essay cannot go higher than Level III and has been given 17 marks (AO1b).

The total mark for the essay is 33 (Grade C).

is not made explicit here. What we have is a brief description and some facts about the battle. The relevance of the battle as part of the explanation of Union victory is not made clear.

(8) A short conclusion is all that is necessary and here the candidate sums up his argument – that there are several reasons for the North's victory. Again there is an implicit hint of the role of superior resources – they 'helped' secure victory rather than were decisive.

Examiner's Exemplar Plan and Essay 2

Plan

1. Variety of reasons for the North's victory. Superior resources certainly important in the long run, but not sufficient to explain victory. Other factors also necessary including leadership, strategy, generalship, diplomacy, mobilisation, morale and so on
 2. On paper, resources suggest a northern victory – but did not come for four years
 3. Longer the war went on the more likely a northern victory. Mobilisation of resources also important
 4. Morale a key issue – affected by resources, but also military victory/defeat
 5. Effective political and military leadership guided the North to victory
 6. Failure/neutralising of southern strategy also key
- (9)

General Lee put his defeat in Virginia in 1865 down to 'overwhelming numbers and resources' (10). Certainly such an explanation of defeat is compelling given the undoubted supremacy the North had in just about

(9) Your initial task in any essay is to decide what the question is about and what the key words in the title mean. Every question set should indicate the content area (reasons for victory), the focus (role of resources) and the key instruction 'To what extent?'. 'To what extent?' clearly indicates you need to come up with more than a list of reasons, but need to balance the significance of resources against other factors. The plan here indicates the candidate will focus on the issue of resources before considering other issues and it also suggests linkages.

(10) This is an effective opening, using a contemporary quotation from a key player in the war.

(11) The opening paragraph must

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The USA in the 19th Century: Westward Expansion and Civil War 1803–c.1890 –
AS Question**

every sphere of resources – manpower, military supplies, economic power, communications. But if it were just a case of resources, arguably the war either would not have occurred or would have been over in 1861. Resources certainly help to explain a northern victory and made it more likely the longer the war went on, but cannot, on their own, provide a sufficient explanation (11).

On paper and in terms of resources, it looks like it should have been an odds on certainty that the North would win (12). To fight wars you need men. With a population of 22 million and about 7 million men of military age, the North heavily outnumbered the 9 million of the South and a maximum of about 2 million men (about half the southern population were slaves). In agriculture, the North produced the overwhelming proportion of livestock and grain – resources of food and clothing for the troops was not a problem for the North. With twice as many factories and over 90% of iron production the materials for war were again overwhelmingly in the hands of the North. The North's merchant fleet was far greater than the South's and it had twice the length of railway track. What is more the bulk of the US army and navy and two thirds of the officers stayed with the North.

Resources played an increasing role the longer the war continued, as it turned into a war of attrition. In the hands of Lincoln's administration and General Grant, the North began to make the resources available to the North count. Over 2 million men were recruited to the Union colours. Chase managed the finances effectively and, despite inflation, avoided the problems faced by the South. Gideon Welles organised the navy and shipbuilding programmes to ensure the effectiveness of the northern blockade (13).

However, the North never had to use its full capacity and one historian has suggested the North fought with one hand tied behind its back. For example, whilst it had 7 million men potentially available for military service, it used only 2 million (although still twice the number used by the Confederacy). At the start of the war, both North and South relied on volunteers for their forces, only later resorting to conscription. In 1864, when Grant was made commander of the Union forces, his strategy was to take advantage of northern resources, knowing he could replace his losses whilst Lee and the Confederacy could not. He embarked on his approach of 'simultaneous movement all along the line', the two most important elements of which were his advance with Meade in the 'Wilderness campaign'

be focused on the question. Here the candidate gives a clear indication of his awareness of the question and also indicates a line of argument, without giving the whole game away.

(12) Here the candidate sets out the balance of resources and convincingly suggests that the North should win. The factual material that follows is well deployed in support of the opening point.

(13) The candidate maintains the emphasis on resources – the key issue raised in the question. However, here the development and supporting information, whilst there, is not so well explained.

(14) Whilst not the most effective paragraph, the candidate does manage to link the issue of resources to another factor – successful strategy. Linkage of factors is an important element in a successful argument. The campaigns referred to took place in 1864.

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The USA in the 19th Century: Westward Expansion and Civil War 1803–c.1890 –
AS Question**

and Sherman's march through Georgia. These campaigns in the end led to Union victory. Without effective strategy to employ the resource advantage, then, northern superiority may not have been enough to secure victory (14).

However, the use of superior resources in this way was not without risks and as the casualty rates rose northern morale was sapped and those arguing for a negotiated peace gathered strength. It was by no means certain in the summer of 1864 that the North would re-elect Lincoln as president. A significant factor in his re-election in November 1864 was news of Sherman's victory at Atlanta in September. These facts point to the importance of what was happening on the battlefield and the importance of morale in securing victory (15).

They also suggest that the amount of resources available is less important than whether effective use is made of them. In 1862 McClellan outnumbered Lee's forces around Richmond by more than two to one, but his caution and the vigorous leadership of the Confederate forces nullified the advantage and McClellan's Peninsula campaign failed. Similarly General Pope's incompetence led to defeat in the Second Battle of Manassas. Certainly, General Lee made more effective use of the limited resources at his command than the more modest generals opposing him (16).

Much also depended on morale. An important element in Confederate strategy in the East was certainly to try to inflict a crushing defeat on northern forces and so break public support for Lincoln and the war. In 1863 northern morale was severely shaken after Lee's victory (when outnumbered two to one) at Chancellorsville; morale in the South, of course, rose (17). Lee's later attack on Meade at Gettysburg was in part intended to secure a victory on northern soil that would increase the demand for peace. Lee lost and that defeat, coupled with Grant's victory at Vicksburg, increased northern morale whilst damaging that in the South. Similarly Lincoln's issue of the Emancipation Proclamation in 1862 after the northern 'victory' at Antietam did much to bolster northern determination and provided the North with a cause around which to unify.

The issue of the Emancipation Proclamation points to another important factor – political leadership, politics and government (18). Lincoln, whilst not always appointing the best generals, guided the North's

(15) A useful paragraph which indicates other factors involved. Arguably it may have been better in this paragraph and the previous one to start with the main point rather than end with it.

(16) Further development of the point made in the earlier paragraph about effective use of resources. Perhaps a little out of sequence, but it does drive home the key point that resources alone cannot explain victory.

(17) Notice how the candidate has used both southern and northern examples to support his points about morale and widened the issue beyond simply the military.

(18) Note how a link is kept with the previous paragraph here.

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The USA in the 19th Century: Westward Expansion and Civil War 1803–c.1890 –
AS Question**

government and appointed able ministers. Diplomatically, and not least through the Emancipation Proclamation, he was able to ensure that Britain and France would not support the South. In administration, he appointed ministers like Seward, Chase and Stanton to organise the war effort. Lincoln also worked hard to maintain public and political support and not the least of his skills was his ability to speak and write eloquently (as in the Gettysburg Address) (19).

(19) Overall a reasonable paragraph, although points here could, time allowing, be developed further.

The longer the war lasted, therefore, the more important became the issue of resources. The southern forces were poorly supplied compared to the North (the Battle of Gettysburg began with southern soldiers searching for shoes!) and increasingly were unable to match northern numbers or replace losses of men and equipment. However, victory in the war depended on far more than resources. Superior resources needed the guidance and leadership of able politicians and generals. These latter needed the support of their forces and the public and in the end the war was decided on the battlefield (20).

(20) All essays should have an argument running through them, as this does. The conclusion, therefore, should try to draw together the main arguments explored, and provide a judgement.

Examiner's Assessment

The candidate has structured the ideas clearly (though the plan has not been kept to), and used facts accurately and relevantly from a range of appropriate areas. This element of the answer has been put at Level IB and given 20 marks (AO1a).

The candidate has presented a reasoned argument that is analytical and judgemental, and has shown a good understanding of some of the complex issues involved in this question. Overall the candidate has shown links between different factors and sustained a compelling argument. The answer has been awarded 24 marks at Level IB (AO1b).

The essay has a total of 44 marks (Grade A).

Click here for a Mark Scheme that accompanies the exemplar answers provided above

Click here for further sample Questions to test your skills

Mark Scheme

Examiners use Mark Schemes to determine how best to categorise a candidate's essay and to ensure that the performances of thousands of candidates are marked to a high degree of consistency. Few essays fall neatly into the mark levels indicated below: some answers will be particularly well argued but offer little supporting detail; others may be factually full but poorly organised or contain few judgements. Examiners therefore try to find the 'best fit' when applying the scheme. Each essay has a final mark based on two Assessment Objectives (AO1a and AO1b) worth 24 + 26 = 50 marks. As the standard of the two essays lies between Level 1 and Level IV, only the descriptors and marks for these levels have been tabulated below.

	AO1a Mark Scheme for Levels I, II, III and IV
Assessment Objectives	Recall, select and use historical knowledge appropriately, and communicate knowledge and understanding clearly and effectively
Level IA 21–24 marks	Uses a wide range of accurate, detailed and relevant evidence. Accurate and confident use of appropriate historical terminology. Answer is clearly structured and coherent; communicates accurately and legibly.
Level IB 18–20 marks	Uses accurate, detailed and relevant evidence. Accurate use of a range of appropriate historical terminology. Answer is clearly structured and mostly coherent; writes accurately and legibly.
Level II 16–17 marks	Uses mostly accurate, detailed and relevant evidence, which demonstrates a competent command of the topic. Generally accurate use of historical terminology. Answer is structured and mostly coherent; writing is legible and communication is generally clear.
Level III 14–15 marks	Uses accurate and relevant evidence, which demonstrates some command of the topic but there may be some inaccuracy. Answer includes relevant historical terminology but this may not be extensive or always accurately used. Most of the answer is organised and structured; the answer is mostly legible and clearly communicated.
Level IV 12–13 marks	There is deployment of relevant knowledge but level/accuracy of detail will vary; there may be some evidence that is tangential or irrelevant. Some unclear and/or under-developed and/or disorganised sections; mostly satisfactory level of communication.

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 AS Question

	AO1b Mark Scheme for Levels I, II, III and IV
Assessment Objectives	Demonstrate an understanding of the past through explanation and analysis, arriving at substantiated judgements of key concepts and of the relationships between key features of the period studied
Level IA 24–26 marks	<p>Clear and accurate understanding of key concepts relevant to analysis and to the topic.</p> <p>Clear and accurate understanding of issues in their historical context. Answer is consistently and relevantly analytical with developed and substantiated explanations, some of which may be unexpected.</p> <p>The argument evaluates a range of relevant factors and reaches clearly substantiated judgements about relative importance and/or links.</p>
Level IB 22–23 marks	<p>Clear and accurate understanding of most key concepts relevant to analysis and to the topic.</p> <p>Answer is mostly consistently and relevantly analytical with mostly developed and substantiated explanations.</p> <p>Clear understanding of the significance of issues in their historical context.</p> <p>Substantiated judgements about relative importance of and/or links between factors will be made but quality of explanation in support may not be consistently high.</p>
Level II 19–21 marks	<p>Mostly clear and accurate understanding of many key concepts relevant to analysis and to the topic.</p> <p>Clear understanding of the significance of most relevant issues in their historical context.</p> <p>Much of the answer is relevantly analytical and substantiated with detailed evidence but there may be some description.</p> <p>The analysis of factors and/or issues provides some judgements about relative importance and/or linkages.</p>
Level III 16–18 marks	<p>Some uneven understanding of key concepts relevant to analysis and of concepts relevant to their historical context.</p> <p>Answers may be a mixture of analysis and explanation but also simple description of relevant material and narrative of relevant events OR answers may provide more consistent analysis but the quality will be uneven and its support often general or thin.</p> <p>Answer considers a number of factors but with very little evaluation of importance or linkages between factors/issues.</p> <p>Points made about importance or about developments in the context of the period will often be little more than assertions and descriptions.</p>
Level IV 13–15 marks	<p>Understanding of key concepts relevant to analysis and the topic is variable but in general is satisfactory.</p> <p>Limited and patchy understanding of a few relevant issues in their historical context.</p> <p>Answer may be largely descriptive/narratives of events and links between this and analytical comments will typically be weak or unexplained OR answers will mix passages of descriptive material with occasional explained analysis.</p> <p>Limited points made about importance/links or about developments in the context of the period will be little more than assertions and descriptions.</p>

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The USA in the 19th Century: Westward Expansion and Civil War 1803–c.1890 –
AS Question**

Further sample questions

1. 'The South was doomed to lose from the start.' How far do you agree with this judgement on the American Civil War?
2. To what extent was poor leadership the **main** reason for the South's defeat in the Civil War?
3. Compare Lee and Grant as generals.
4. To what extent did the Battles of Gettysburg and Vicksburg mark the turning point in the Civil War?
5. Assess the reasons why Civil War broke out so soon after Lincoln's election.
6. To what extent was the election of Lincoln the **main** reason for the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861?

Chronology: Key Events in *The American Civil War, 1861–65*

1860 November	Election of President Lincoln.
1861 February	The Confederacy established with Jefferson Davis as President.
1861 April	Confederates attack Fort Sumter – Civil War begins; the North implements <u>the Anaconda Plan</u> (1).
1861 July	First Battle of Manassas (Bull Run).
1862 March	Battle of Shiloh.
1862 Summer	<u>McClellan's Peninsula campaign</u> (2).
1862 August	Second Manassas (Bull Run).
1862 September	Battle of Antietam; <u>Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation</u> (3).
1862 December	Battle of Fredericksburg.
1863 May	Battle of Chancellorsville.
1863 July	Battle of Gettysburg; fall of Vicksburg.
1863 November	Lincoln's Gettysburg Address.
1864 Spring	<u>'Wilderness Campaign'</u> (4).
1864 June	Siege of Petersburg.
1864 September	Fall of Atlanta.
1864 November	<u>Lincoln re-elected President</u> (5).
1865 April	Fall of Petersburg; Lee surrenders at Appomattox.

(1) This was named after the venomous snake that crushed its victims to death. The Anaconda strategy planned to surround the enemy and starve them into submission.

(2) McClellan was an able general noted for his competent organisation and cautious strategy. He was always reluctant to send his troops into battle unless the odds were heavily stacked in their favour.

(3) Lincoln was not in favour of Emancipation fearing that if granted it would encourage the South to continue the war. He waited until the South had been halted at Antietam before issuing the Proclamation and its impact in the North was not felt until the end of the war.

(4) McClellan's troops suffered appalling casualties during the Wilderness Campaigns and at Cold Harbor – some 25,000 were killed.

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The USA in the 19th Century: Westward Expansion and Civil War 1803–c.1890 –
AS Question**

(5) Lincoln announced that the North would continue in the war until slavery was unilaterally abolished, the Union was established and Confederacy abolished, and the South surrendered unconditionally. This was only achieved after Appomattox.

Teaching Activities

Try the following with your students:

(1) Using the two exemplar essays, discuss the importance and purpose of essay planning in successfully answering an AS essay question.

(2) Compare the introductions and/or conclusions of the two exemplar essays. Which is the more effective and why?

(3) Both essays refer to a number of reasons: resources; strategy; political leadership; military leadership; decisive battles; government and administration. You may identify other factors. Discuss the relative merits of each factor – perhaps using a mark out of 10 as a rough guide. Use the discussion to introduce relevant analytical language about the reasons (long term, short term, contributory, direct, indirect etc.).

(4) Using the same reasons, build up a spider diagram to show the links between the reasons – this can be done by the students in groups or pairs on an A3 sheet for example, or using cards with the reasons on.

(5) How would the approach to the essay in the two exemplars need to change if the question was: 'The **main** reason why the North won the war was superior leadership.' How far do you agree with this judgement?

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The USA in the 19th Century: Westward Expansion and Civil War 1803–c.1890 –
AS Question**

Resources

- D. Donald, *Lincoln* (Jonathan Cape, 1995)
A. Farmer, *The American Civil War 1861–65*, (Hodder & Stoughton, 1996)
J.M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom* (Penguin, 1988)
P. Parish, *The American Civil War* (Holmes and Weir, 1975)
R.H. Sewell, *A House Divided, Sectionalism and Civil War, 1848–1865* (John Hopkins University Press, 1988)

Weblinks

- www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk
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