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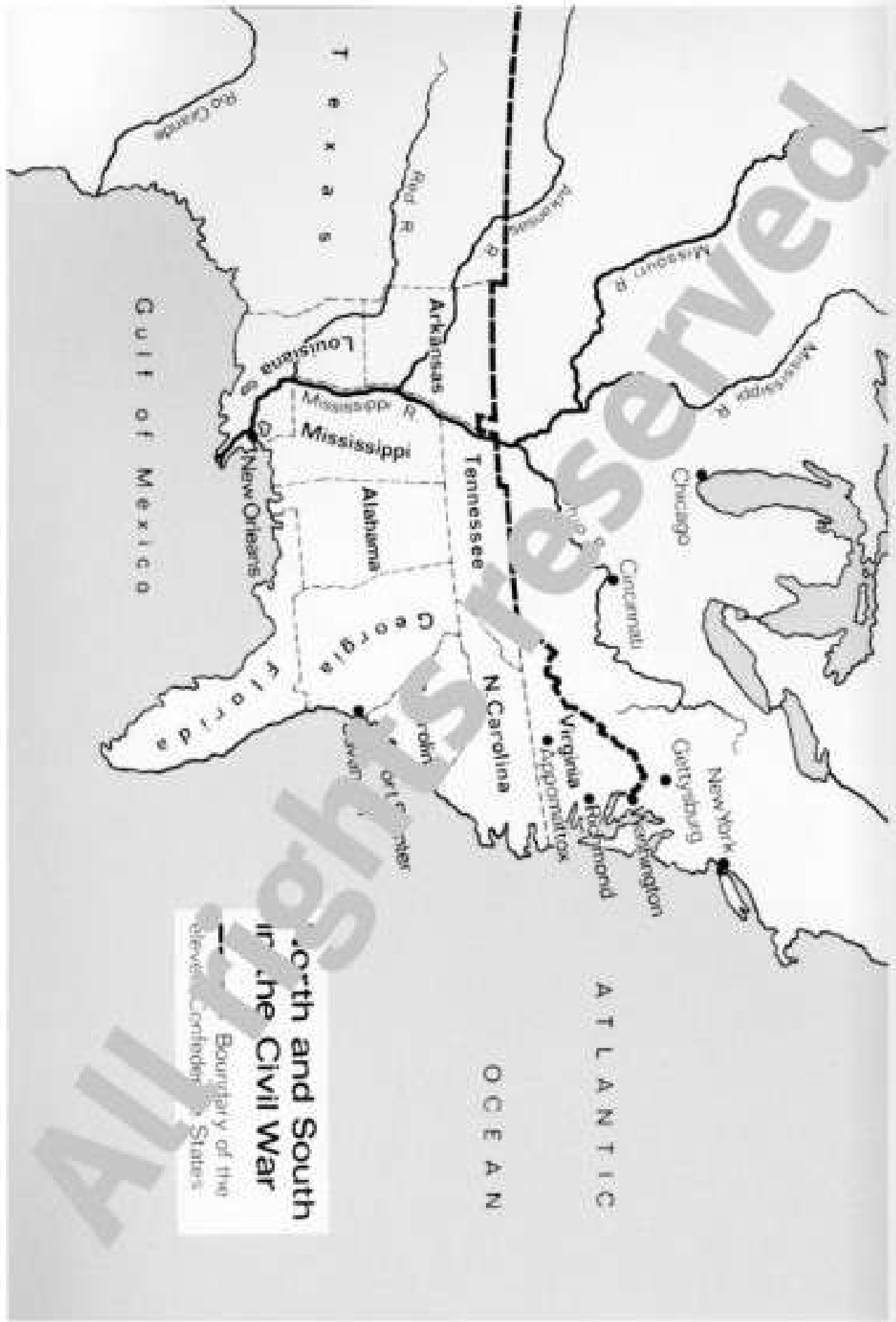
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Abbreviations

sb = somebody
sth = something



**North and South
in the Civil War**
Boundary of the
Confederate States



In 1776 Britain's thirteen American colonies decided to break away from the mother country and call themselves the United States of America. After more than five years of bitter struggle they won their freedom. The world recognized them as a new and independent republic, founded on the principle that all men are created equal.

"All men are created equal." These famous words were written by Thomas Jefferson, the author of the Declaration of Independence. It was a promise beginning for a new nation. America was the land of equality, the land of freedom. No American doubted it in the early days of independence. But it was again Thomas Jefferson who reminded his countrymen not many years later that in the land of freedom there were over 700,000 men, women, and children, who lived as slaves. They were the negroes of the south. They had no rights; the law did not recognize them as human beings, but only as 'things' that could be bought and sold.

Jefferson was a southerner himself. He came from Virginia and he knew how the slaves lived. "I tremble for my country," he said in 1784, "when I reflect that God is just; that his justice cannot sleep forever."

10 struggle fighting – 15 independent not controlled by others – 15 principle belief – 17 to create to make – 20 equality to be equal, the same – 21 to doubt sth to think that sth is perhaps not true – 29 to tremble to be afraid for – 30 just fair

Jefferson's anxiety about slavery was shared by many Americans, both in the North and the South. They looked on it as an evil custom left over from the old days of Colonial rule and they hoped that it would gradually disappear as the new American nation developed. What happened, however, was exactly the opposite.

In 1790 the large majority of the slaves worked on the southern cotton plantations, mainly in South Carolina and Georgia. The growing textile industry in England and the northeast of the United States made cotton-planting the most profitable occupation in the South. In 1793 the cotton gin was invented. This machine for cleaning the cotton fibres could do the work of fifty men in one day. More and more cotton was grown. More and more slaves were needed for the cotton fields. Cotton-planting spread westwards into Alabama and Mississippi. The South grew rich, and the powerful cotton planters became its leaders. By 1850 the cotton belt stretched from South Carolina on the Atlantic Coast to Arkansas, Louisiana, and eastern Texas. 'Cotton is King!' said the southern people. The whole life of the South depended on King Cotton and on the work of his toiling black slaves. In 1860 at the height of the cotton boom, there were nearly 4,000,000 negro slaves in the South.

Thomas Jefferson's warning came true. For eighty years the dark shadow of slavery lay over the young, free nation who believed that all men were created equal. Sometimes they tried to pretend that the problem did not exist; sometimes they tried to compromise with it. But in the end no compromise was possible between freedom and slavery. It was a terrible test that they had to face.

10 anxiety fear – 8 cotton a material used to make clothes – 8 plantation a place where plants are grown – 11 gin machine for separating cotton from the seeds – 12 fibre very small part of a material – 20 to toil to work hard – 21 to pretend to imagine that the situation is different – 27 to compromise to make an agreement that both sides are happy with; if you compromise, you might not "win" all the points you wanted to

Think about it...

Jefferson, and many Americans at that time, were worried about slavery and were concerned that everyone should have the same rights. Think about these questions:

1790s	Now
What was life as a slave like? What was life as a plantation owner like?	What is the impact of slavery on life today?

Jefferson said that we are all equal. How equal or unequal is the world around you?