

# ESSENTIAL CIVIL WAR CURRICULUM

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## American Cities in the Civil War

By Frank Towers, University of Calgary

### Resources

#### If you can read only one book

Author	<i>Title</i> . City: Publisher, Year.
Slap, Andrew L. and Frank Towers, eds.	<i>Confederate Cities: The Urban South during the Civil War Era</i> . Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2015.

### Books and Articles

Author	<i>Title</i> . City: Publisher, Year.   “Title,” in <i>Journal</i> ##, no. # (Date): #.
Ash, Stephen V.	<i>Rebel Richmond: Life and Death in the Confederate Capital</i> . Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019.
Bernstein, Iver	<i>The New York City Draft Riots; Their Significance for American Society and Politics in the Age of the Civil War</i> . New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.
Blassingame, John	<i>Black New Orleans, 1860-1880</i> . Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1973.
Cronon, William	<i>Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West</i> . New York: W.W. Norton, 1991.
Fitzgerald, Michael W.	<i>Urban Emancipation: Popular Politics in Reconstruction Mobile</i> . Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002.
Jentz, John B. and Richard Schneirov	<i>Chicago in the Age of Capital: Class, Politics, and Democracy during the Civil War and Reconstruction</i> . Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012.

Jones, Jacqueline	<i>Saving Savannah: The City and the Civil War</i> . New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008.
Marler, Scott	<i>The Merchants' Capital: New Orleans and the Political Economy of the Nineteenth-Century South</i> . New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
Masur, Kate	<i>An Example for All the Land: Emancipation and the Struggle over Equality in Washington, D.C.</i> Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010.
Ryan, Mary P.	<i>Civic Wars: Democracy and Public Life in the American City during the Nineteenth Century</i> . Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.
Strickland, Jeff	<i>Unequal Freedoms: Ethnicity, Race, and White Supremacy in Civil War Era Charleston</i> . Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2015.
Towers, Frank	<i>The Urban South and the Coming of the Civil War</i> . Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2004.
Venet, Wendy Hamand	<i>A Changing Wind: Commerce and Conflict in Civil War Atlanta</i> . New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014.
Wright, Gavin	<i>Slavery and American Economic Development</i> . Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006.

## Organizations

Organization Name	Description, Contact information including address, email
Urban History Association	The Urban History Association was founded in Cincinnati in 1988 for the purpose of stimulating interest and forwarding research and study in the history of the city in all periods and geographical areas. Their website is: <a href="https://www.urbanhistory.org">https://www.urbanhistory.org</a>

## Web Resources

URL	Name and description
<a href="https://www.alexandriava.gov/CivilWar">https://www.alexandriava.gov/CivilWar</a>	<b>Alexandria During the Civil War:</b> Located across the Potomac River from Washington DC, Alexandria Virginia was an important federal outpost in the Eastern theatre. Created by the City of Alexandria, this site focuses on the archaeological legacy of the city’s wartime history the illuminate such as hospitals, fortifications, and cemeteries for African American refugees and US soldiers.
<a href="https://www.civilwarrichmond.com">https://www.civilwarrichmond.com</a>	<b>Civil War Richmond:</b> A ongoing project founded in 1997, <i>Civil War Richmond</i> has an amazing inventory of primary sources on every aspect of the war in the city. It also includes podcasts from experts on the subject.
<a href="https://www.hnoc.org/sites/default/files/lesson_plans/LessonPlan_CivilWar.pdf">https://www.hnoc.org/sites/default/files/lesson_plans/LessonPlan_CivilWar.pdf</a>	<b>New Orleans during the Civil War:</b> Sponsored by The Historic New Orleans Collection this site provides an overview of the city’s history during the war as well as links to primary sources. It is aimed at students and teachers in grades 7-12, and includes lesson plans and teaching ideas.

## Other Sources

## Scholars

Name	Email
Frank Towers	<a href="mailto:ftowers@ucalgary.ca">ftowers@ucalgary.ca</a>

## Topic Précis

When the Civil War began America was an overwhelmingly rural society, but its growing cities mattered in ways that magnified their importance beyond basic population numbers. Cities were bases for organizing the war effort. They provided refuge for men and women displaced by the fighting. Military campaigns focused on cities as strategic objectives. Finally, because of their density and demographic diversity cities hosted notable expressions of social conflicts that roiled the homefront. In these capacities cities helped shape the course of the war. In the meantime, the Civil War altered the pattern of urban development of the pre-war era, with dramatic consequences for the South. In the antebellum period American cities grew rapidly, more so in the North where one in four people lived in cities than the South where one in ten lived at the start of the War. In the North agricultural demand was a catalyst for urbanization and industrialization while in the South the slave-based agriculture reduced demand for supporting towns and cities compared to the free labor model of the North. When the War began the different levels of urbanization, and therefore industrialization, affected the military capacity of both sides. The Union realized a significant advantage. Of the twenty five largest cities in the country only three were located in the South. And as the War progressed the loss of Confederate cities and towns exacerbated the Northern advantage of interconnected cities and towns which kept its armies better staffed and supplied, making victory more likely if not inevitable. Only 11 out of a total of 297 Confederate cities and towns suffered destruction or severe damage but three included strategically significant urban centers such as New Orleans, Charleston, Atlanta and ultimately Richmond. Behind the front lines cities shaped social and political change based on race, gender and class. As refugees from slavery flocked to cities, especially those either in the Border South or under Union control in the Confederacy issues of emancipation and racial equality affected the cities involved. In cities African Americans had the density of association, freedom from daily white supervision, and because of greater economic opportunities, the capital needed to build institutions such as churches, schools, mutual aid societies, and labor unions. Class based grievances grew as well. In the North there were draft riots, and a surge in organized labor with citywide trade assemblies and unions resulting in strikes. In the South scarcity and conscription led to female political empowerment with bread riots and other protests. In the North female activism was manifested in union organizing and through the U.S. Sanitary Commission which supplemented army medical services. Postwar urbanization accelerated affected by the abolition of slavery with African American migration to Southern towns and cities as well as Northern cities. Urbanization also increased with federal aid to industrial expansion through railroads, tariffs banking and labor regulation, at a faster pace in the North, but affecting Southern cities as well.

The war reshaped urban America. It accelerated the established pattern of fast-paced northern urbanization and slowed down city-building in the South. After 1865, the industrial revolution already underway before the war carried forward primarily in the northeast and Great Lakes states, increasing the number of city dwellers to more than half of the northeast's population by 1880. In the South established prewar ports declined and new cities emerged in the interior along with new railroad connections while African American communities forged vibrant institutions, but also white supremacist attitudes

hardened. The Civil War and Reconstruction magnified the prewar pattern of a more cosmopolitan, industrializing urban North and a more inward looking, racially divided urban South.

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