

Summary: Life in Battle, Life at Home

The Soldier's Life

Men from all over the country fought in the Civil War. Many soldiers hoped for excitement but found terror on the battlefield. Life in the camp was hard. Soldiers lived in tents. The food was not good. Confederate soldiers didn't have enough food. Many soldiers were killed by new rifles. However, twice as many died from diseases. At first almost all the soldiers were white men. About 180,000 African Americans served in the Union army. Immigrants from Ireland, Germany, and Italy also fought for the Union. American Indians fought on both sides. Thousands of boys went into battle even though they were too young. Some boys were drummers who sent signals during battles. Women on both sides disguised themselves as men and joined the army. Women also worked as spies. More than 3,000 women in the North and many women in the South nursed the sick and wounded. One nurse, Clara Barton, later founded the Red Cross.

On the Home Front

Soldiers left their families to go to war. The families made up the home front. With men gone, women took on new tasks. They ran farms and businesses. They sewed uniforms, knitted socks, made bandages, and raised money. Most of the battles were in the South. Civilians in the North could not see the war happening. Matthew Brady used the new technology of photography to show them. He took pictures of soldiers in camp and on the battlefield. People in the South saw their cities, homes, and barns destroyed in the war. Inflation, or a rise in prices, made food very expensive. Soldiers and civilians in the South often did not have enough to eat. Enslaved people also suffered, but they thought the war would bring freedom. The Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 gave them hope. News of emancipation did not get to Texas until June 19, 1865. That day is celebrated as Juneteenth, the day slavery ended, in many parts of the South.

Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

camp *noun*, a group of temporary shelters, such as tents

home front *noun*, all the people who are not in the military when a country is at war

civilian *noun*, a person who is not in the military

After You Read

REVIEW What did women on both sides of the war do to help their side? Draw a box around the sentences that tell how women helped in the Civil War.

REVIEW What happened to prices in the South during the Civil War? Underline the sentence that tells how the price of food changed during the Civil War. Then highlight the effect of higher prices for civilians and soldiers.