

ESSENTIAL CIVIL WAR CURRICULUM

The Border States

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Resources

If you can read only one book

Author	Title. City: Publisher, Year.
Phillips, Christopher	<i>The Rivers Ran Backward: The Civil War and the Remaking of the American Middle Border</i> . Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2019.

Books and Articles

Author	Title. City: Publisher, Year. "Title," in <i>Journal</i> ##, no. # (Date): #.
Astor, Aaron	<i>Rebels on the Border: Civil War, Emancipation, and the Reconstruction of Kentucky & Missouri</i> . Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2012.
Earle, Jonathan & Diane Mutti Burke, eds.	<i>Bleeding Kansas, Bleeding Missouri: The Long Civil War on the Border</i> . Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2013.
Fellman, Michael	<i>Inside War: The Guerrilla Conflict in Missouri During the American Civil War</i> . New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.
Fields, Barbara	<i>Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground: Maryland During the Nineteenth Century</i> . New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985.
Freehling, William W.	<i>The South Vs. The South: How Anti-Confederate Southerners Shaped the Course of the Civil War</i> . New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Marshall, Anne	<i>Creating a Confederate Kentucky: The Lost Cause and Civil War Memory in a Border State</i> . Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013.
MacKenzie, Scott A.	<i>The Fifth Border State: Slavery, Emancipation, and the Formation of West Virginia, 1829-1872</i> . Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2023.
Mitchell, Charles W. & Jean H. Baker	<i>The Civil War in Maryland Reconsidered</i> . Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2021.
Mutti-Burke, Diane	<i>On Slavery's Border: Missouri's Small Slaveholding Households, 1815-1865</i> . Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010.
Robinson, Michael D.	<i>A Union Indivisible: Secession and the Politics of Slavery in the Border South</i> . Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017.
Smith, John David, ed.	<i>New Perspectives on Civil War-era Kentucky</i> . Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2023.

Web Resources

URL	Name and description
https://civilwaronthewesternborder.org/	Civil War on the Western Border is a comprehensive website with links to documents, maps, essays and other material relating to the Kansas-Missouri border war, from the 1850s onwards.
http://discovery.civilwargovernors.org/	The Civil War Governors of Kentucky Digital Documentary Edition (CWGK) animates the lives of Kentuckians between Lincoln's election in November of 1860 to the destruction of slavery in December 1865.

Other Sources

Scholars

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Topic Précis

The Border States were critical to the Union war effort. “I think to lose Kentucky is nearly the same as to lose the whole game,” President Abraham Lincoln wrote to Illinois Senator Orville Browning in September 1861. He continued, “Kentucky gone, we can not hold Missouri, nor, as I think, Maryland. These all against us, and the job on our hands is too large for us. We would as well consent to separation at once, including the surrender of this capitol.” The Border States are Missouri, Kentucky, Maryland, Delaware, and West Virginia, each very different in terms of their politics, economics and the extent to which slavery was practiced. The most important moment for the Border States came during the Civil War’s first year when the risk of defection to the Confederacy was the greatest. The war came immediately to Missouri with pro-Confederate attacks opposed by federal forces. By June 1861 it was in a state of anarchy with no functioning government. A Union faction declared itself the Provisional Government of Missouri while the elected government declared Missouri to be a Confederate State. By the end of 1861, Missouri’s officially elected state government was in exile, a Provisional Government now ruled the state, the top Union military officer was dead, and guerrilla war had already started to rampage its way across the state. This was only the beginning of Missouri’s troubled Civil War. President Lincoln had much more success in keeping Kentucky safely in the Union, whose state legislature was solidly pro-Union, than he did Missouri. Kentucky initially declared itself neutral but by mid-September after a series of military maneuvers, the neutrality agreement had collapsed, and Kentucky threw in its lot with the Union. The experience of the nascent state of West Virginia relied heavily on the successful march of Union military forces across the mountains as well as a strange legal fiction wherein a provisional or Restored Government granted the right of the people of northwestern Virginia to form the new state of West Virginia. By late summer 1861. Led by George B. McClellan the Union military claimed control of the northwestern counties, the area just across the Potomac River from Washington, D.C., and the strategically important Fortress Monroe in the state’s southeast. Maryland’s peculiar geography next to Washington D.C. meant that its own response to the sectional conflict and emerging civil war could have immediate and massive consequences for the preservation of the Union. Riots, mob action and efforts to cut off the Capitol made the situation in the state precarious, but Lincoln placed the state under martial law and Unionists secured the loyalty of the legislature. Delaware never seriously considered secession in 1861. But the state’s dominant Democratic Party politely listened to secessionist entreaties in Spring 1861. Of most consequence for the Union military was securing the railroad running from Philadelphia to Washington as well as the DuPont gunpowder works in Wilmington, which ended up producing nearly half the

gunpowder for the Union army throughout the Civil War. From 1862 to 1865 the Border States saw a series of military campaigns. In Kentucky maneuvers culminated in the Battle of Mill Springs on January 19, 1862. The Confederate defeat here and at Middle Creek resulted in Confederate forces retreating into Tennessee. In February 1862 Union victories at Forts Henry and Donelson drove Confederate forces out of Tennessee. At the Battle of Shiloh April 6-7, 1862, pushed Confederate forces out of Tennessee to Mississippi. The Confederates regrouped under newly appointed General Braxton Bragg who led an invasion of Kentucky with the Army of Tennessee. After a draw at the Battle of Perryville on October 8, 1862, Bragg withdrew back to Tennessee. After Perryville to the end of the war Kentucky saw continuous guerilla warfare but no more pitched battles between conventional armies. After some conventional military skirmishes in 1861, fighting in Missouri was mainly limited to a bitter, protracted guerilla war until 1865. Maryland saw two Confederate invasions. The first in September 1862 culminated in the Battle of Antietam on September 17, 1862, the bloodiest battle in American history, after which Lee retreated from Maryland, and Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation. In 1864 Confederate forces under Jubal Early invaded Maryland to disrupt the Union siege at Petersburg. The invasion was stopped at Fort Stevens before Washington. Fighting in West Virginia was limited to the first few months of the war. A string of Union victories pushed Confederate forces out of the new state. There were Confederate raids in 1862 and 1863 and guerilla warfare until the end of the war. Delaware never experienced a Civil War military campaign. The history of emancipation in the Border States was unusual. They were not subject to the Emancipation Proclamation as they remained in the Union. And slavery was never really a central part of their economies. Emancipation was therefore much more of a self-driven process than elsewhere, Union army service being the main means by which slaves liberated themselves. In Maryland enlistment of former slaves in the Union army began in December 1863 and shifting political winds resulted in an 1864 state constitutional referendum which was the first popular statewide vote to abolish slavery. Missouri ultimately abolished slavery by a state constitutional amendment in January 1865. The abolition of slavery was a condition of admission to the Union for West Virginia, but the original 1863 bill passed only freed children of slaves and not until 1867. Slavery was abolished in the state on February 3, 1865, with state ratification of the 13th Amendment. Both Delaware and Kentucky only abolished slavery when they ratified the 13th Amendment in December 1865. Slavery in Kentucky ultimately collapsed when 57% of the state's enslaved male population joined the Union army during 1864. Slavery was officially abolished by Kentucky's ratification of the 13th Amendment in December 1865. The Border States proved to be essential to the Union war effort from start to finish, providing material and manpower advantages that made Union victory possible. As President Lincoln's prophecy suggested in September 1861, the Border States were the "whole game." Lincoln deftly managed the tense political environment, military affairs and the process of emancipation within the Border States throughout the Civil War. At the same time, the chaotic events unfolding in the Border States, especially the internal collapse of slavery and the persistence of guerrilla conflict, would reverberate for decades to come.
