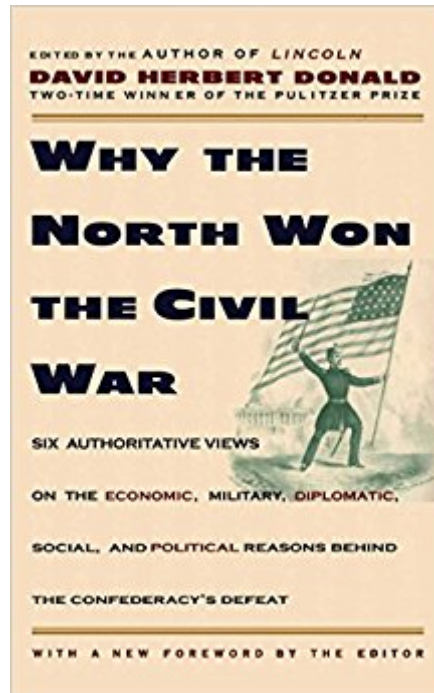




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# Why The North Won The Civil War



## Synopsis

In this classic exploration of the Confederacy's defeat in the Civil War, two-time Pulitzer Prize-winner David Herbert Donald and author of *Lincoln* assembles insightful and probing essays from six of America's most distinguished historians. Focusing on the political, military, economic, social, and diplomatic reasons behind the Union victory, this collection presents the most complete picture of this key aspect of Civil War studies. In an essay new to this edition, Henry Steele Commager offers a historiographical overview of the collapse of the Confederacy. Richard N. Current describes the economic superiority of the North and shows how the civilian resources of the South were dissipated during the war. T. Harry Williams examines the deficiencies of the Southern military strategy and leadership. Norman A. Graebner discusses the reluctance of France and England to aid the South. David Herbert Donald, in his own essay, reports that excessive Southern emphasis on individual freedom fatally undermined military discipline. And David M. Potter suggests that a lack of political leadership in the South resulted in gross incompetence. And exclusively for this edition, the editor has written a new foreword and completely updated the bibliography to create the most comprehensive and enlightening guide to understanding why the North won the Civil War.

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## Customer Reviews

Focusing on the political, military, economic, social, and diplomatic reasons behind the Union victory, this collection presents the most complete picture of this key aspect of Civil War studies. In an essay new to this edition, Henry Steele Commager offers a historiographical overview of the

collapse of the Confederacy. Richard N. Current describes the economic superiority of the North and shows how the civilian resources of the South were dissipated during the war. T. Harry Williams examines the deficiencies of the Southern military strategy and leadership. Norman A. Graebner discusses the reluctance of France and England to aid the South. David Herbert Donald, in his own essay, reports that excessive Southern emphasis on individual freedom fatally undermined military discipline. And David M. Potter suggests that a lack of political leadership in the South resulted in gross incompetence. And exclusively for this edition, the editor has written a new foreword and completely updated the bibliography to create the most comprehensive and enlightening guide to understanding this fascinating issue.

David Herbert Donald is the author of *We Are Lincoln Men*, *Lincoln*, which won the prestigious Lincoln Prize and was on the New York Times bestseller list for fourteen weeks, and *Lincoln at Home*. He has twice won the Pulitzer Prize, for *Charles Sumner and the Coming of the Civil War*, and for *Look Homeward: A Life of Thomas Wolfe*. He is the Charles Warren Professor of American History and of American Civilization Emeritus at Harvard University and resides in Lincoln, Massachusetts.

A small book densely packed with information by multiple expert historians in the field. Well worth a close reading. If you like to skim, this book is not for you. My biggest criticism is that the various authors did not include footnotes or bibliography. Any one who wants to pursue a fine point is left to his own devices. There is again a densely packed list of books at the end of the volume "for further reading." Would be more helpful if this wide-ranging list was linked to authors commentary. All in all, an excellent compilation of major historians in the field. My copy is now annotated and footnoted the way the original should have been.

This is a slim book (approximately 124 pages) that contains essays by different writers who each examine a major factor that contributed to the South losing the Civil War. Although in hindsight it appears that the South was doomed to lose, in reality, it was a close contest that literally could have been won by either side. Although the North had significant material advantages, the authors point out internal factors and decisions made (or not made) by the South that contributed greatly to its eventual defeat. This book, although originally published nearly 50 years ago, remains surprisingly relevant and thought-provoking today. As an interesting aside, the forward to the book was written by retired Major General U. S. Grant III, the grandson of Union General (and later President) U. S.

Grant.

Good as far as it went but more just a series of essays rather than a cohesive book.

Although a bit dated, the essays contained herein are short, tight, and convincing. Each chapter focuses on a single aspect of the North's victory in the Civil War (Diplomatic, Military, Political, Social, and Economic). The historians who contributed to this work did an excellent job.

It seems that much more attention is paid to debating the causes of the Civil War, but as this slim volume of essays reveals there are any number of varying and subtle arguments for explaining the outcome of the Civil War. It is probably the common view that the North winning the Civil War was inevitable, that the overwhelming preponderance of the North in terms of supplies, industrial infrastructure, and manpower ensured victory. Only one of these authors somewhat accepts the thesis of Northern material superiority. These authors are far more mindful of the fact that mismanagement or deep-seated flaws within the losing side of a conflict can be larger factors in the ultimate outcome than positive actions by the winning side. The authors all note some inherent advantages of the South: a need to only defend territory, the vastness of the South, a transportation network, the ability to produce large quantities of foodstuffs, a commodity, cotton, of great value in the international market, a huge labor force of three million slaves, and a certain psychological advantage in the defense of a way of life. But these authors discuss any number of factors that led, not necessarily inevitably, to the defeat of the South. The authors point mostly to both military and political malfeasance, as well as personalities and inherent characteristics of Southern society, as leading to defeat. The manner of financing of the War produced tremendous inflation; the supplies of cotton were mismanaged both as a source of revenue to fund the war effort and as a tool to force European nations to recognize the Confederacy; food supplies were confiscated at below market prices; and manpower was poorly utilized both in recruitment to the Southern army and in the deployment of labor on Southern farms. The states rights and independent political stance of Southerners seemed to prevent a coherent national posture being formulated in winning the Civil War. One of the authors points to the anti-statist views of all Southerners as interfering with producing a disciplined army. Southern units elected their superior officers and were disinclined to follow orders with which they disagreed. In contrast to this aggressive independence, some of the authors point to a general weakening of the Southern psychological state and even a "loss of nerve." The Confederate President, Jefferson Davis, is viewed by one author as a huge factor in the

defeat of the South. Davis incompetently micromanaged the war effort, pursued flawed economic strategies, was personally difficult to engage, and exhibited an ineffectual indecisiveness and conservatism in times needing forceful and visionary actions. But the one-party system in the South prevented the rise of an effective opposition that could have addressed the original poor choice of President. Beyond any material advantage, the authors generally contend that Lincoln and Grant were trump cards for the North. Both were better suited to their jobs both in temperament and competency than anyone in the South. Some would almost suggest that Lincoln and Grant being on the Southern side could have reversed the result. This book was reissued in 1996 after first appearing in 1960, but it is as readable and relevant as anything being written today. There is some overlap in the material covered in the essays, but the ideas are interesting and challenging. You won't see all of these ideas in a general book on the Civil War.

Great information on Civil War and why the north won. I kept this book for my library.

I learned some stuff from these articles.

This book is written by David Herbert Donald, two time Pulitzer Prize winner and author of the book Lincoln. "Why the North Won the Civil War" details the overwhelming power the Union Armies and Naval superiority, combined with the economic superiority of the northern states and many other reasons why the South would inevitably succumb to the North's power and assure the Union Forces would win this war. Small pamphlet sized offering, packed with much economic and political information which convinces the reader the South was never to be successful in its Confederate secessionist goals. This read convinces me why the Southern States maneuver today, to amass manufacturing, armament and military facilities of our current Nation, so the next time they will be ready. I recommend this little book.

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