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English 10A

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Compare and Contrast: North and South During the 1800s

The North and South had many similarities and differences that helped shape the states during the 1800s. The similarities and differences of the economy, culture, and geography greatly impacted the role of the Union.

The economy played an important role in the survival of the Union. The industry of the North was based on the production of cotton, and the manufacture of leather and ammunition for the Civil War. The economy of the South was based on agriculture. However, they both had plantations, with the North producing wheat and corn, and the South producing cotton and rice. Unlike the North, the South relied on cheap, manual labor and slavery to sustain southern agriculture. Labor in the northern states was expensive and hard to come by. Both of their economies, however, relied on each other. The North bought cotton that was harvested in the South, and they, in turn, bought food grown in the North.

Culture is also another aspect that greatly impacted the North and South. The culture of the North was determined by industry and life in the cities. The culture of the South was determined by the upper-class plantation owners and their families. Both sides had different views on slavery, which greatly divided the nation and resulted in a devastating war. The North wanted to get rid of slavery throughout the Union, while the South was in favor of it. Education was also a major factor that separated the North and the South. Most towns in the North had schools, while education in the South was hard to come by. Unlike education, religion was extremely important to both sides. There were churches in almost every town. Northern and southern states had also developed equivalent class systems, with a substantially lower class, a smaller middle class and an even smaller upper class. This meant that across the Union, very few people were wealthy.

Geography and climate were important factors that decided where people chose to live. The North and South had diverse weather and natural features. The North solely had rocky terrain, humid summers, and snowy winters so it was difficult to farm consistently. This meant it was ideal for building cities. The South, on the other hand, had humid winters with lots of rain which made farming practical. Although rain was more abundant in the South, the North had many flowing rivers and lakes which they took advantage of to use as power. This led to the rapid increase of industry. Because of the differences in terrains, the North had a larger population of twenty-two million people. The South had a population of only nine million, three-and-a-half million consisting of slaves in the mid-1800s.

Although the two nations were divided for some time, the outcome of the Civil War led to the reunion of the nation. Many factors impacted the Union, but the culture, economics and geography aspect, encouraged and helped shape the future of the North and South.