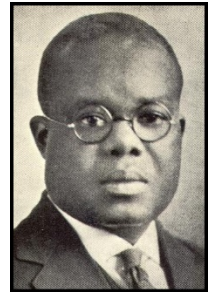


DOCUMENT-BASED QUESTIONS: THE U.S. CIVIL WAR

Hubert H. Harrison (1883-1927), excerpt from
THE NEGRO AND THE NATION (1917)



Directions: Read the text and answer the questions below.

...(L)et me say a word about the Civil War which put an end to chattel-slavery. Now, I know that certain people have taught you to believe that the Civil War was fought to free the slaves. But it isn't true, at all, and only very ignorant people hold that opinion nowadays. If you will read the Emancipation Proclamation carefully you will see that it wasn't for love of the slave that the slaves were freed. You will see that this was done, "as a fit and necessary war-measure for suppressing said rebellion." If you will read Lincoln's letter to Horace Greeley (August 22nd 1862) you will find this sentence: "My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union and is not either to save or destroy slavery." Now I will tell you briefly how "this struggle" came about. I know that my explanation is not the one which you have been taught. But, no matter; it happens

to be true. This was the way of it: In the South there had grown up one system of exploiting the laborer. That was chattel-slavery. The money-Kings of that section whom we will call capitalists, for short, were naturally fond of their own system. In the North the capitalists had another system of which they were equally fond. That was wage-slavery. The Southern capitalists found that it was necessary to extend their system; so we had the Mexican War, and they got Texas. Then, as fast as new territory was opened they would rush to occupy it with their system and so shut out the Northern system. Of course, the Northern capitalists would try to get their system into the new territory also; so we had the long struggle over Kansas and Nebraska. These two systems were then in open competition and it came to be seen that one or the other had to give in;

that both of them couldn't exist in the same country; that "a house divided against itself cannot stand"; that "this nation cannot exist half-slave and half-free." Then people began to talk of "the impending crisis"; of "the irrepressible conflict." Then, when Lincoln was elected in 1859, the southern capitalists saw that their system was doomed. They wished to preserve it; so they

seceded and tried to make of themselves a separate nation in which their system of robbing the worker should be the only one. But the Northern capitalists said, "Nix! Our system shall be the only system." So they went to war "to save the Union"—for their system of robbing the workers. And that's the gist of the whole story.

1. What was done "as a fit and necessary war-measure for suppressing said rebellion"?

2. In a letter to Horace Greeley, what did President Lincoln give as his reason for waging the Civil War?

3. What economic system was expanding in the northern states?
- a. capitalism
 - b. feudalism
 - c. socialism
 - d. None of the above

4. Do you agree with Harrison's assessment of the root cause of the Civil War? Explain your answer.
