Weighing Wartime Strengths

Compare the people, resources, and leadership behind each side's war effort.

8.C.12.2 "Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of the Union and the Confederacy. Compare natural resources, population, and industrialization. Describe the significance of military leadership and experience (e.g., Robert E. Lee, Ulysses S..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two Union advantages, circle two Confederate advantages, and write 1 beside a limit on one of those advantages. Use your marks to weigh how well each side could sustain a long war.

What Could Each Side Bring to the War?

1. When the Civil War began in 1861, the Union held most of the nation's factories, rail lines, and iron production. Its population was about 22 million, compared with about 9 million in the Confederate states, including roughly 3.5 million enslaved people. More workers and factories helped the Union make rifles, uniforms, and trains to move supplies. The Confederacy had fertile farmland and produced cotton, which leaders hoped to trade for foreign support. Yet a Union naval blockade made cotton harder to sell and limited shipments of weapons into Southern ports.

2. Numbers alone did not decide battles. Confederate armies often fought on familiar ground, and General Robert E. Lee used bold moves to win major victories despite shortages. But his army could not easily replace soldiers and equipment lost in battle. Union General Ulysses S. Grant had experience organizing campaigns and used the North's larger supply network to keep pressure on Confederate armies. His strategy helped bring Lee's surrender at Appomattox in 1865. Leadership mattered because commanders had to turn resources and soldiers into plans that could work.

3. People beyond famous generals shaped the war. Enslaved people were forced to grow food and build defenses for the Confederacy, but many escaped to Union lines and provided information or labor for Union forces. Free Black men and formerly enslaved men also served in Union units. The 54th Massachusetts Regiment, a Black unit, attacked Fort Wagner in 1863, showing their courage despite heavy losses. Immigrants, including Irish and German soldiers, enlisted in Union armies, while some were drafted. They filled ranks and brought skills and experience that helped sustain the war effort.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the Union's population and industry give it an advantage over the Confederacy?

2. Cotton was a Confederate resource. What limited its value during the war?

3. How did Lee and Grant each make use of an advantage available to their side?

4. How did the actions of enslaved people and immigrant troops affect the Union war effort?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a five-sentence briefing for a reader who thinks the side with more soldiers must win. Judge which side was better positioned for a long war, using two differences in resources or population, one leadership factor, and one contribution by Black people or immigrant troops.

ANSWER KEY

Weighing Wartime Strengths

GRADE 8 · 8.C.12.2

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two Union advantages, circle two Confederate advantages, and write 1 beside a limit on one of those advantages. Use your marks to weigh how well each side could sustain a long war. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the Union's population and industry give it an advantage over the Confederacy?	**The Union had more people to serve and work, plus more factories and rail lines to make and move supplies.**
2	Cotton was a Confederate resource. What limited its value during the war?	**The Union naval blockade made cotton harder to sell and limited shipments into Southern ports.**
3	How did Lee and Grant each make use of an advantage available to their side?	**Lee used bold moves while Confederate armies fought on familiar ground. Grant used the Union's larger supply network to maintain pressure on Confederate armies.**
4	How did the actions of enslaved people and immigrant troops affect the Union war effort?	**Many enslaved people escaped to Union lines and provided information or labor. Immigrant troops filled Union ranks and brought skills and experience.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The Union was better positioned for a long war, but victory was not automatic. Its larger population could replace more soldiers, while its factories and rail lines helped move and equip armies. The Confederacy's familiar ground and Lee's leadership could still make Union attacks costly. Grant could use Union supplies to keep pressure on Confederate forces. Black Union soldiers, including the 54th Massachusetts Regiment, strengthened the Union war effort even as they faced heavy losses.

Accept other supported judgments if students weigh both sides rather than treating one advantage as a guarantee of victory. For the marking job, accept any two accurate advantages for each side and a relevant limit, such as the blockade or the Confederacy's difficulty replacing losses.