Tensions were rising in the 1860’s in the United States. Between states’ rights and slaver debates, the North and South were separating. Differences in industrial development and political viewpoint also divided the country greatly. With the election of Abraham Lincoln, Southern States began leaving the U.S.; the Civil War was just around the corner. The Civil War immensely impacted the people, including African Americans, women, and the common soldiers in both beneficial and harmful ways.

African Americans during the Civil War were impacted in positive ways, like representation, and negative ways, such as unequal pay. In the Union Army, African Americans were allowed to enter as soldiers and fight for the nation. This representation was not, however, completely integrated. Many black soldiers were placed in all-black units to fight in. Though some held higher positions than others, they were never commanders of whites (Doc. 4). As many came to the realization that African Americans were purposefully fighting for the nation, political moves were being made. Frederick Douglass, a former slave, helped convince President Lincoln to “forever free” the slaves in the South. Though technically unconstitutional, Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation freed slaves in rebellion states. The proclamation gave many slaves motivation to fight for the Union and win this war (Doc. 2).

The freeing of slaves gave many hope for a progression of African American rights and liberties in the U.S. However during the war, African Americans fought but were not citizens. The war showed many that African Americans deserved to be citizens. After the war, the passing of an amendment showed that their hard work paid off (Doc. 3). Another issue amongst black soldiers was unequal pay compared to white soldiers. Many soldiers argued that if the country allows all to serve, then all should receive the same pay. Eventually, equal pay was achieved which was another huge step for African Americans because of the war (Doc. 7). Overall, the Civil War positively affected African Americans as it helped take steps toward equality.

As the war began, many women were excited to send their husbands; however, as it progressed, opinions shifted. The war took a negative impact on the women of the South. Shortage of food for the families was a large issue and women were tired of it. In Richmond, VA, the Bread Riots began; hungry with starving causes mothers to beg for the Confederacy to end the war (Doc. 1). Starvation and anger were not the positive effects of this war. Sadly, however, this war caused mental illnesses within the nation. Soldiers were coming home with conditions unexplainable. Though this was sadden for the men affected, mental asylums needed many nurses to assist. The war caused on increase in available jobs for women once the men returned (Doc. 6). During the war as well, many worked as nurses for the sick and wounded army. Aiding these horrifically hurt men showed many that women were tough and can do their job well. Much of the government or large companies began standing with these women (Doc. 8). Though some came about in sad ways, women were overall positively impacted by this war.

Women and African Americans may have experienced positive effects of the war, but the common soldier did not. This war consisted of a lot of hand-on-hand combat. This type of fighting was aggressive and brutal, causing pain for many soldiers especially those that did not even want to fight (Doc. 5). Many soldiers were extremely injured during the Civil War. Some became sick, mentally unstable, or physically disabled. Many were ready fight but came out without an arm or leg, forever changing their life (Doc. 9). The extreme amount of causalities in the Civil War battles scared many soldiers to continue fighting. Hundreds of thousands, on both sides, died from both wounds and disease (Doc. 10). The common soldier was not positively affected by the Civil War and showed some of the upsetting side of the war.

The Civil War affected the nation negatively as a whole, but African Americans and women gained some positive effects.