

# Jefferson davis and abraham lincoln as wartime leaders



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There are both similarities and differences between President Abraham Lincoln, leader of the Union, and Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate States, as leaders during the conflict of the Civil War. These two war heroes lived parallel lives at birth. Both native Kentuckians, Abraham Lincoln was born February 12th, 1809 in Hodgenville, Kentucky and Jefferson Davis was born June 3rd, 1808 in Christian County, Kentucky. Both Lincoln and Davis were born in a log cabin and each moved away from Kentucky at a young age and grew up in a different state.

Lincoln moved to Indiana when he was seven and grew up on the edge of a frontier. Davis also moved away from Kentucky as a small child and grew up in Mississippi. Early in life, Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis followed similar paths however their educational experiences were very different. Lincoln had little formal teaching; however he read avidly having taught himself.

Jefferson Davis, on the contrary, had a very good formal education.

He attended Transylvania University in Kentucky until he was sixteen when President Monroe appointed him to a military school. He successfully graduated from West Point military academy as a Second Lieutenant. Davis' first active service was in the United States Army in the Northwest which lasted for six years. He was involved in several battles in the Black Hawk War of 1832 as leader of his regiment. Correspondingly, Lincoln got into the military by enlisting as a militia captain during the Black Hawk War defending the state of Illinois. As the militia captain, Lincoln made an honorable and respected name for himself however he did not see any

combat during his brief time in the Illinois militia. Although they got their starts in military service very differently, Lincoln and Davis were both directly involved in the military before they were pulled into the political scene.

Politically, Lincoln found a home with the Whig party where his vision for the nation focused on improving all aspects internally, including commerce, industry and transportation. He would concentrate on these ideals until the 1850s when he accepted the fact that slavery was contributing to the downfall of America (" Abraham Lincoln - Early Political Career"). Davis, on the other hand, spent a good deal of time reading about political philosophy and political economy, and entered as a Democrat. His logical approach to the difficulties facing the nation focused on the rights of the states, an ideal which he held for his entire political career (NNDB). The differences in their political backgrounds and military beginnings helped to shape these men into the leaders they grew to be during the Civil War.

After the Black Hawk War, Jefferson Davis married Miss Knox Taylor, Zachary Taylor's daughter, and resigned from the army. In contrast, Abraham Lincoln studied law and campaigned for Illinois State Legislature after the war. Lincoln met and soon after married Mary Todd in Springfield, Illinois where he was studying to become a lawyer. He became an attorney in 1836 when he obtained his license to practice law. Lincoln was a successful and fantastic lawyer who presented a massive amount of knowledge about the law and had an impeccable way with his speech.

Even so, he was not elected as a State Legislator the first time he ran, and it was not until his second time running that he won, and in 1834 served as a Whig. Jefferson Davis, however, led a dramatically different life during the years following his first military service than Lincoln. Three months after marriage, both he and his spouse, Knox, acquired malaria and unfortunately his wife did not make it. Davis, now a widower, retired to a plantation in Mississippi where he supervised the production of cotton and studied political science. In 1843 he came to the great conclusion that he should put his diligent studies to use and enter the political field. Davis ran for the Mississippi House of Representatives as a Democrat, but lost the election in his first attempt, similar to Lincoln.