

ACTIVITIES

1. In your opinion, what was the most important medical/scientific discovery of the Victorian era? Design a plaque to honour the scientist responsible. The plaque should include three or four sentences about the specific value of this discovery.
2. Who was Emily Stowe? What difficulties did she face and surmount?
3. Louis Pasteur did not become wealthy from his scientific discoveries. Should he be a model for today's scientists? Explain.

LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Victorian Canadians liked to be entertained. Those who lived in cities had many opportunities to go to parties, concerts, fairs, circuses, and shows. In the country, barn raisings, quilting bees, weddings, *ceilidhs* (parties with Scottish or Irish music, dancing and stories), barn dances, and other diversions were freely available. Books and magazines were very popular because many people could read. Stories were published in **serial format** so that people had to read the next week's issue to follow the story. Charles Dickens's stories were serialized, for example.

The Victorians had a taste for many amusements that are still enjoyed by modern Canadians—but some of their amusements would today be considered brutal or bizarre. Sports achieved a new popularity. Swimming for pleasure, a fashion started in Europe, quickly caught on in Canada. But so did “blood sports,” such as bear-baiting and dog-and-bull fighting. Bare-knuckle boxing matches always drew plenty of spectators—the boxers would hammer away at each other, with bouts often lasting more than a hundred rounds. Boxing remained a brutal sport until

Britain's Marquis of Queensbury issued his famous rules for boxing in the 1860s. These rules, which recommend boxing gloves and limit the duration of rounds, form the basis of today's boxing etiquette. They are also unintentionally **droll** because they capture the Victorian spirit—proper, but fascinated with impropriety. Rule Five, for example, notes: “A man hanging on the ropes in a helpless state, with his toes off the ground, shall be considered down.”

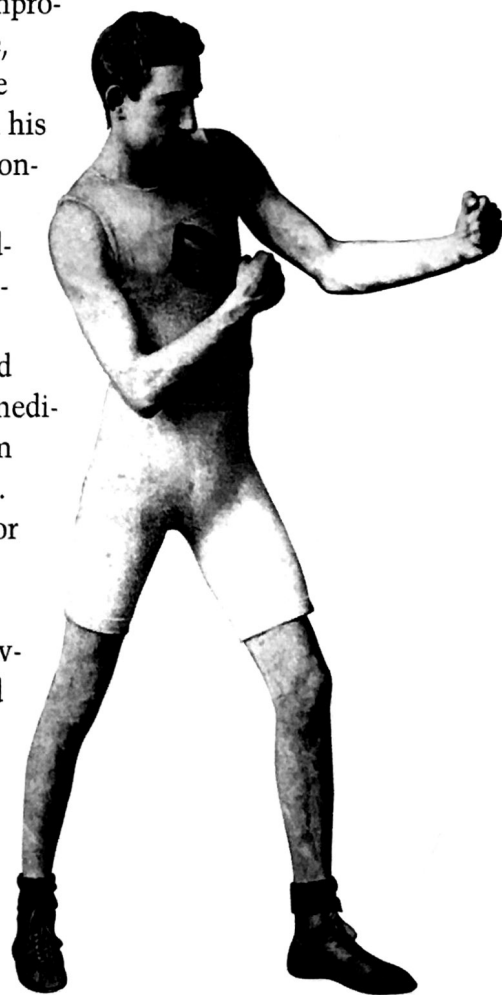
The Victorians loved medicine shows. The patent medicines sold at these affairs promised to cure anything and everything, but many of the medicines were actually made from alcohol, pepper, or turpentine. They would often intoxicate or nauseate people, but with no medicinal effect whatsoever. This was also a new era of travelling circuses. Many disabled people, including children, found jobs in the sideshows,

Figure 2-14 Bare-knuckle boxing was strongly discouraged with the publication of the Marquis of Queensbury's rules for boxing.

matriculation ticket: a piece of paper indicating that a student is enrolled in a course and will matriculate, or graduate

serial format: in weekly or monthly installments

droll: humorous



DO YOU KNOW?

The concept of the “teenager” was unknown in the Victorian era. It wasn’t until the middle of the twentieth century that the word entered common usage.

where people paid money to gawk at their handicaps. A travelling circus came to Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, during the conference on Confederation held in 1864. You will read more about this important conference later in this chapter.

Parlour Games

With no television or radio, no movies, videos, or recorded music, people relied on more personal ways to entertain themselves, particularly on winter evenings. They made music, held dances, talked, and played parlour games. Card games, such as **whist**, were very popular, as

were checkers and chess. Since large gatherings provided a venue where young people could meet each other in a socially acceptable way, games served as a natural icebreaker and entertainment. Some games were hundreds of years old and had been passed down through the generations. Those of Native, Black, French, and English ancestry had distinct cultural traditions and developed their own games. In time, many parlour games crossed cultural boundaries and were played in homes and halls everywhere.

These parlour games, for example, originated on L’ Ile Vert, a farming community on the St. Lawrence

whist: a card game for four players divided into two teams



Figure 2–15 Children formed a larger proportion of the population in Victorian times than today. Society was more youthful, since life expectancy was much lower than it is today and people tended to have large families. Victorian children amused themselves with games and outdoor activities, but most were expected to behave properly and to help out with family chores. What clues in this painting would help you identify the social class of these children?

River. Primarily tests of strength and coordination, these games would mainly have been played by men, but would have served the social purpose of allowing the sexes to mingle. What other social purposes might they have served?

Pulling Up The Stump

The first player gets down on his hands and knees, the second sits on the shoulders of the first and, facing toward his feet; he crosses his feet under the first. By giving some jerks, the second player tries to make the first player raise his hands from the floor and to tip him backwards.

Pulling the Leg

The two players lie side by side on their backs with the head of one by the feet of the other; they hold each other by the forearms and raise the left leg three times; the fourth time, they catch the other's leg and each tries to overturn the other.

Kissing His Thumb

The player, hanging by his right arm from a pipe or beam, must raise his body so as to kiss his thumb.

Getting Around

Leisure travel became immensely popular in the Victorian era. People with money to spare travelled to Europe or America whenever they could. There they experienced the nightlife, parties, and entertainments of great cities such as Paris, where they could see the most famous people in the world. Transatlantic travel became much easier after the invention of the steamboat, which reduced the time for an ocean crossing to a few weeks. The *Royal William*, built in Quebec in 1833 (see page 19), crossed the Atlantic in just seventeen days. A few years later, steamships made the



Figure 2-16 Victorian railway travel. Passenger cars were not comfortable by today's standards, but people still enjoyed themselves. How do these sleeping arrangements strike you?

crossing in less than two weeks. In our era, this seems like a very long time, but for people accustomed to crowded sailing ships that took five weeks to travel from Britain to Canada, the steamship was wonderful. And for those who could afford it, steamships had luxurious cabins and recreation facilities.

Changing Technology

The new steam locomotives made land travel more attractive for everyone, not just the wealthy. Imagine how thrilling it must have been to discover you could travel by train to some distant place in a fraction of the time it had taken just a few years earlier.

Railways and steamships also helped to build the **infrastructure** of Canada after 1830. Canada's first railway was the Champlain Saint Lawrence Railroad, which ran from La Prairie, a suburb of Montreal, to

infrastructure: the community systems that make travel, communications, and business easier: for example, roads, canals, transportation, and postal service

DID YOU KNOW?

The idea of a vacation was radically new in the nineteenth century, and it quickly became a status symbol. People often planned their trips years in advance.

Sarah Bernhardt, Superstar

The life of Madame Sarah Bernhardt may prove the greatest marvel of the nineteenth century.

—EDMOND DE GONCOURT, NOVELIST

Sarah Bernhardt, perhaps the most famous person in Europe, was one of the first “superstars.” Americans and Canadians who travelled to Paris to see her perform in a Victor Hugo play or in the Théâtre Français could tell their friends that they had witnessed one of the most magnetic performers of all time.

At the time of Confederation, most people in Canada would have recognized her name. She was also known as the “Divine Sarah,” “The Greatest French Woman since Joan of Arc,” or even “The Eighth Wonder of the World.” Marvelously talented, Bernhardt was an actor, sculptor, painter, art critic, singer—and extremely temperamental. She was fired from her first job for slapping the face of another performer and breaking an umbrella over the head of the doorman. Like some performers today, Bernhardt loved publicity and spread shocking stories about herself to attract attention. She let it be known, for example, that she slept in a coffin.

Sarah Bernhardt had an unusual and beautiful face, and a magnetic, forceful personality. People said she had the “eyes of a cat and the smile of a llama.” As a young woman, she was so thin that people joked that “an empty carriage pulled up at the stage door and Sarah Bernhardt got out.” As one of the most important people in Paris, Sarah Bernhardt was someone to know. In 1870, when the Prussian army was attacking Paris, Sarah set up a hospital and worked day and night as an administrator, fundraiser, and volunteer nurse.



Figure 2-17 The “Divine Sarah” shocked and fascinated the public, which gave her great power. As a public figure, her actions and accomplishments challenged the traditional Victorian view of women as being passive and dutiful. She was for some not only a “superstar,” but a role model.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

1. What are your criteria for a performer to be called “superstar”?
2. How would easier transatlantic travel and the rise of newspapers (see pages 71 to 72) help to create a superstar such as Sarah Bernhardt?
3. What entertainers today could be compared with Sarah Bernhardt? Why? Refer to your criteria in question 1.
4. How do bizarre, sometimes unflattering, details of a superstar’s life enhance the public’s interest in that person?

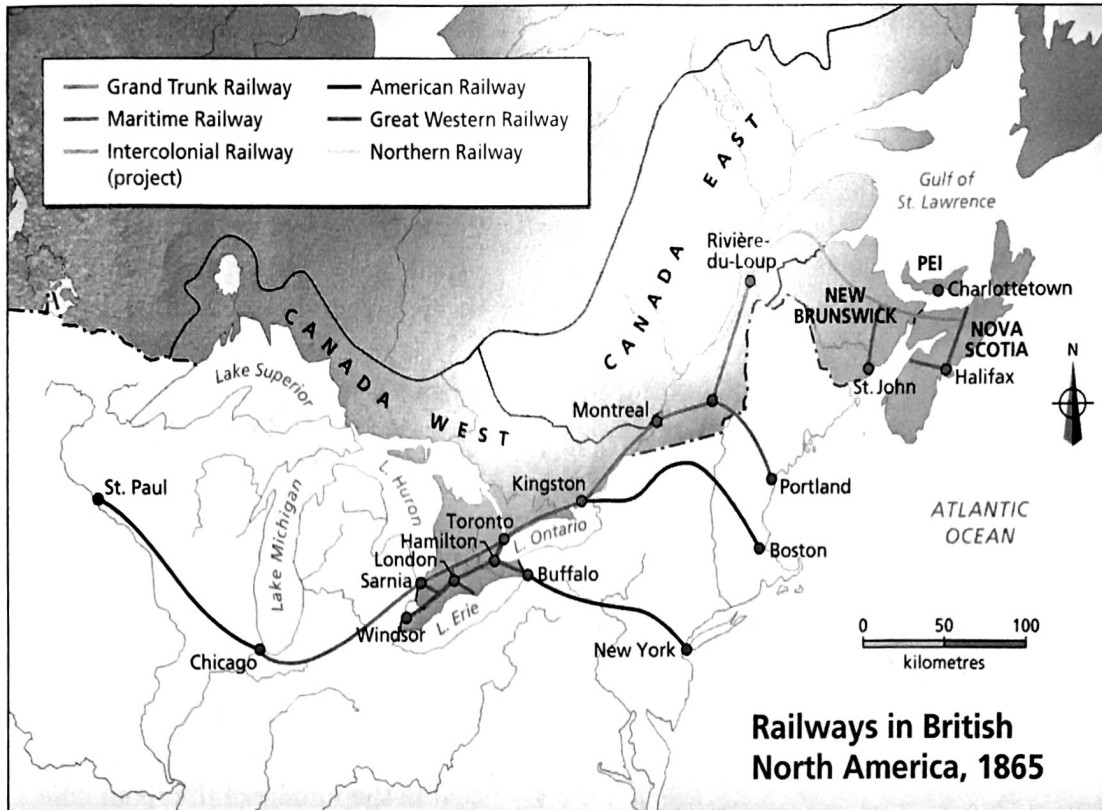


Figure 2-18
 Canada entered the railway age after 1837. By the end of the nineteenth century, rail lines linked all the cities in Canada with each other, and with the United States. Today, many of those lines have been abandoned. In fact, many railway beds are now used for bike trails. What transportation system took the place of the trains? Why would another system be more efficient and profitable now, but not in earlier times?

Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, 40 kilometres southeast of Montreal. It was completed in 1836. The railway's steam locomotive, which had been built in England and shipped to Canada, transported people and freight at speeds of up to 48 kilometres an hour.

By 1850, regularly scheduled trains moved goods and people at speeds of 80 kilometres an hour or more, and rail lines linked towns from Canada West to the Maritimes. The Champlain and Saint Lawrence Railroad, for example, was extended in 1852 to Saint Lambert, Quebec, and also travelled further into New York state. The St. Lawrence and Atlantic Railroad, completed in 1853, gave Montreal and other Quebec towns access to an ice-free port by connecting them to Portland, Maine. The railways had strict timetables, as much to avoid collisions on the same length of track as to accommodate passengers. For this reason, a train could arrive

late, but never early. Train engineers and brakemen were on the job throughout their shifts, even cooking their meals on a shovel in the steam engine's **firebox**.

firebox: the steam boiler

The Rise of Newspapers

In the mid-nineteenth century, every city and most small towns in Canada had one or more newspapers. In fact, newspapers had existed in Canada since the eighteenth century—*The Halifax Gazette* was the country's first paper, founded in 1752. The Victorian era saw the rise of the dailies—newspapers that are published every day of the week. The dailies began in Montreal in the 1840s. By 1873, Canada had forty-seven dailies. Because more and more people could read, and because so many people lived in cities, where access to information was considered important, dailies caught on rapidly.

Victorian newspapers had many features that we recognize in today's

DID YOU KNOW?

Professional sports would have been an unusual concept for Victorians. They recognized only a few professions, all of which required a university degree.

bushel: an old measure of dry goods equivalent to roughly 35 litres

peck: one-quarter of a bushel

newspapers, but there were major differences. Professional sports, other than boxing and horse racing, were not a feature of Victorian life, so there was no sports section. Aside from the odd political cartoon, Victorian newspapers had no comics section. They had no professional advice columns, or horoscopes, and few non-news or special-interest features—"helpful hints" were an exception. Moreover, by today's standards, they had limited sources of information. So how did they attract readers? They were one of the few sources of news from the outside world—the United States, the other colonies, and from places far from home. They were also far less inter-

ested in respecting people's privacy. Local news was very important because people loved to know what their neighbours were up to. Court reports and the names, sentences and fines of offenders were usually published, and made for interesting reading. For example, William Wilson sold "spirituous liquor without a license" and was fined \$5.00. Mary Morrison used "abusive language" and was fined 25 cents.

People would buy newspapers only if they found them useful or interesting—as a result, self-help articles, recipes, and helpful hints were regular features. For example, "to remove the smell of paint from a room, place a vessel of lighted charcoal in the middle of the room and throw on one or two handfuls of juniper berries." There were recipes for curing ham ("a bushel-and-a-half and a peck of salt is required for every 1000 pounds of pork"). There was late-breaking news on fad science, for example, phrenology (the science of personality study based on the bumps on a person's head) and the water cure (the theory that water could cure all ailments).

Today, Victorian newspapers may seem hopelessly old-fashioned—as do steamships and steam locomotives. At the time, however, they were revolutionary, and they reshaped society.

Figure 2-19 Can the bumps on the human skull hold the secrets to the personality within? This drawing from the Victorian era demonstrates that the fad science of the day—phrenology—inspired much enthusiasm. How does this drawing reflect Victorian values and attitudes?



ACTIVITIES

1. Describe all the ways in which Canada's infrastructure developed after 1830. In your judgement, which contribution to infrastructure was most important?
2. Reread the section, Changing Technology, on page 69. What was the first railway in British North America? When was it extended, and to where? What does this say about trade links between Canada East and the US?
3. Urbanization is about the growth of cities and the change, for many people, from a farm-based to a city-based life. Describe the beginnings of urbanization in Canada, and list some of the changes you would expect to see.

BUILDING A NATION

... the scheme as a whole has met with almost universal approval.

—JOHN.A. MACDONALD, 1864

Some politicians had been dreaming of Confederation—the union of the colonies of British North America into a **federation**—since the days of Lord Durham. It is safe to say, however, that their dream was far less popular in Canada East, with its French culture, than it was in Canada West. The idea was also unpopular in the Maritime colonies. Macdonald's speech to the Canadian Legislature, excerpted above, was a magnificent piece of rhetoric, but it virtually ignored the fact that almost as many people opposed union as favoured it.

Union would mean a central government, one that would most likely control defence, **external relations**, currency, postage, taxation, and other concerns. Britain already administered most of these functions, however, and many people preferred this arrangement to one that would shift that kind of power to central Canada. In general, those living in the Maritime colonies felt they had little in common with the growing province of Canada, and French-Canadians were wary of any attempt that would make them a minority in an English-speaking nation. Yet the idea was intoxicating—people could create, in their own lifetime, a new country stretching from sea to sea. And that new nation would be immense, one of the largest on Earth.

Like many big ideas, the concept of Confederation started at the top. Those who shared this dream had to

sell their vision. They had to win over politicians and business people who regarded union as a bad idea. Through political manoeuvring, persuasion, and debate, they had to quash the notion that big ideas for governments are usually expensive. In the mid-nineteenth century, many people were as skeptical about the motives of politicians as the public is today. The builders of Confederation had started a long process. The first hurdle they had to overcome was to convince skeptics of the merits of these proposals.

Towards Confederation

In Chapter 1, you learned that the Rebellions of 1837 resulted in the Durham Report, and that the **Canadas** were joined by the Act of Union in 1840. Many people in French Canada opposed Durham's recommendation to unite the Canadas, but the British government favoured the plan and acted upon it immediately.

Durham had also recommended **responsible government** for the colonies. This created trouble for Britain and her Canadian governors. The idea that colonies could govern themselves was entirely new. Nobody knew if, or how, self-government would work. Many thought it would seriously weaken the British Empire, and perhaps even strengthen Britain's potential enemies (such as the United States and France). On both sides of the Atlantic, many feared that self-government could create economic problems both in Canada and in Britain. Many people still clung to

federation: a federal union in which the members keep certain powers themselves, and give certain powers to a central government

external relations: dealings with other countries

Canadas: Upper and Lower Canada, whose names were changed to Canada West and Canada East—modern Ontario and Quebec

responsible government: a government in which the executive council is responsible to the legislative assembly, whose members are representatives of the people

Figure 2–20 Lord Elgin came from a wealthy, well-connected family. In spite of Elgin’s privilege, he was well-suited to be governor. Like his father-in-law, Lord Durham, he believed in responsible government, and he had considerable experience in colonial matters. Why do you think Britain would appoint Elgin governor rather than a Canadian?



entered Britain with low duties, which had helped wheat and flour production to expand in Upper Canada. Now Britain wanted to move towards free trade—it wanted to buy wheat, flour, and other products at the lowest price, and from any country. After the Corn Laws were repealed, Canada’s economy went into a **depression**. Canadians had built ships for the British trade, and they had exported raw materials and agricultural products, but they manufactured very little. With the old economic relationship in tatters, and with few existing industries to revive the economy, Canadians began considering the possibility of creating a country. Then a Canadian government could create its own economic policy—one that would best serve its people.

mercantilism: an economic system based on colonialism. The home country takes raw materials in from its colonies and manufactures goods, which it sells for profit.

Corn Laws: laws which protected British agriculture

depression: a period of low economic activity marked by high unemployment

the old idea of **mercantilism**, which defined the colony’s economic relationship to the home country.

Britain’s economic relationship with the colonies, however, was already changing. In 1846, the British government repealed the **Corn Laws**, which had given trading privileges to the British colonies. Up to this point, Canadian grain had

Support for the idea of self-government was limited. For the most part, the governors who succeeded Durham had not liked the idea, but some, such as Governor Charles Bagot, had brought reformers into the councils. As you learned in Chapter 1, Bagot chose Robert Baldwin and Louis Hippolyte Lafontaine as unofficial joint premiers. Bagot did not believe, however, that he had to do what these men demanded on behalf of the people—the key principle of responsible government. When Britain decided that free trade was in its own best interests, its attitude towards government for Canada changed completely.

In 1847, Britain named James Bruce, the eighth Earl of Elgin, governor of the Canadas. Lord Elgin, who was Lord Durham’s son-in-law, was charged with the task of putting responsible government into operation. The colony was to become Britain’s economic partner, and it

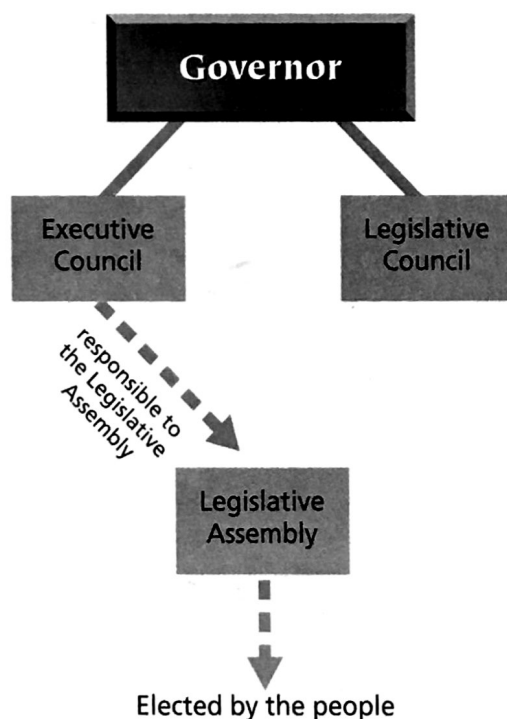


Figure 2–21 The relationships of responsible government

would cease to be Britain's responsibility. From Britain's standpoint, this was an advantage. It was expensive to govern, defend, and financially support the colonies.

Responsible government would be a new and exciting chapter in the colony's history, to be sure. Yet no one expected the explosive incident that was to occur.

In Chapter 1, you learned how the Rebellions of 1837 pitted the British establishment against a faltering people's crusade. While many people supported an end to privilege and corruption, others believed the reformers had betrayed the government. When, in 1849, the elected—and reformist—government of Canada passed a bill giving financial compensation to anyone, including the rebels who had lost property during the rebellions, anti-rebel forces

were outraged. In their eyes, **treason** was being rewarded. Even the governor, Lord Elgin, was against the Rebellion Losses Bill. But under responsible government the governor had no right to veto a bill: he had to sign it into law. Never had a governor been in such a predicament. Many people were so opposed to the bill that they attacked Elgin's carriage. The violence escalated into a full-scale riot, which **culminated** with the burning of the parliament buildings. Following the riot, angry merchants and citizens who had condemned the rebels published an Annexation Manifesto—a plan for the United States to take over Canada. Nevertheless, Elgin's signature had laid the foundation for a new form of government for the Canadas—democracy.

treason: betrayal of one's country

to culminate: to climax

DID YOU KNOW?

The first Canadian to be appointed governor general was Vincent Massey, in 1952, more than 100 years after Lord Elgin's appointment.



Figure 2-22 This painting depicts the burning of the parliament buildings in Montreal on April 25, 1849, after the passing of the Rebellion Losses Bill. The riots involved thousands of people and lasted for two days. Why were the parliament buildings located in Montreal at this time?

ACTIVITIES

1. Create an organizer. In one column, list factors that supported Confederation. In the other, list factors that went against Confederation. Based on your observations, which side do you support? Explain.
2. a) How did Britain's economic attitude towards its colonies change in the 1840s?
b) What economic impact did the repeal of the Corn Laws have on the colonies? In your opinion, would this help or hinder promoters of Confederation? Explain, with reasons.
3. Imagine that you are a witness to the burning of the parliament buildings, shown in Figure 2-22. Write a 1-minute news item for radio, vividly describing the scene and outlining the reasons for the riots.

THE ADVANTAGES OF CONFEDERATION

to annex: to incorporate a territory or country into another country

American Civil War: a war between the southern and northern American states over states' rights. The divisive issue was slavery.

There were many reasons why uniting the British North American colonies into one country would benefit everyone. As a nation, Canada would enjoy economic stability—economic union could even bring back prosperity. Tariffs and trade barriers which then existed between the colonies could be abolished, and the colonies could begin trading with each other.

A strong central government could also build an intercontinental railway to link the colonies for the purposes of trade and defence. A railway on this scale was something separate colonies could never finance on their own. Linking the central colonies to the Maritimes would mean that goods travelling to Europe in winter could go to a Canadian ice-free port—Halifax—instead of Portland, Maine. Eventually, a railway could extend to the Northwest as far as the Pacific. Although the smaller railways of the Victorian era had been greeted with much enthusiasm, they had never made much money,

and often teetered on the verge of bankruptcy.

In the West, Confederation would help to ensure that the western region of British North America—British Columbia and Rupert's Land—was not **annexed** by the United States. Canadians were very suspicious of US intentions. Some American politicians made speeches about Manifest Destiny, the idea that the destiny of the United States was to include all of British North America. Americans had invaded Canada during the War of Independence and the War of 1812. The scattered British colonies had weak defences against the Americans, but as a united and independent nation, that could change—and the United States would be far less likely to invade an independent nation. The **American Civil War**, which began in 1861, heightened the US threat. When the war ended in 1865, the army of the victorious North had more soldiers than the combined population of the British colonies. It could easily strike across