

To Secede or Not to Secede: Events Leading to the Civil War

Overview

Students will examine the causes and effects of southern secession from the United States in the pre-Civil War period. In considering secession through a modern day school scenario, students will better understand the South's reasoning for seceding and the consequences of such. Students will read about the tangle of issues and beliefs in the period before the onset of war and then exhibit their understanding of a pre-Civil War topic by creating a headline, picture, and caption representing it.

Grade

8

North Carolina Essential Standards

- 8.H.1.3 - Use primary and secondary sources to interpret various historical perspectives.
- 8.H.1.4 - Use historical inquiry to evaluate the validity of sources used to construct historical narratives (e.g. formulate historical questions, gather data from a variety of sources, evaluate and interpret data and support interpretations with historical evidence).
- 8.H.1.5 - Analyze the relationship between historical context and decision-making.
- 8.H.2.1 - Explain the impact of economic, political, social, and military conflicts (e.g. war, slavery, states' rights and citizenship and immigration policies) on the development of North Carolina and the United States.
- 8.H.2.2 - Summarize how leadership and citizen actions (e.g. the founding fathers, the Regulators, the Greensboro Four, and participants of the Wilmington Race Riots, 1898) influenced the outcome of key conflicts in North Carolina and the United States
- 8.H.2.3 - Summarize the role of debate, compromise, and negotiation during significant periods in the history of North Carolina and the United States.
- 8.H.3.4 - Compare historical and contemporary issues to understand continuity and change in the development of North Carolina and the United States.
- 8.E.1.1- Explain how conflict, cooperation, and competition influenced periods of economic growth and decline (e.g. economic depressions and recessions).
- 8.C&G.1.4 -Analyze access to democratic rights and freedoms among various groups in North Carolina and the United States (e.g. enslaved people, women, wage earners, landless farmers, American Indians, African Americans and other ethnic groups).

Essential Questions

- What is secession and what lead southern states to secede from the United States in 1860?
- In what ways did sectionalism contribute to the outbreak of the Civil War?
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the various compromises made to appease sectional differences and deter the outbreak of war in the United States.
- In what ways were the rights of Africans and African-Americans restricted during the 1800s?
- In what ways did those enslaved practice resilience? In what ways did abolitionists advocate for emancipation?
- Why did the election of Abraham Lincoln anger the south?
- What were Abraham Lincoln's views on secession?
- What occurred at Fort Sumter in April, 1861?

Materials

- Fictional memo regarding secession, attached
- Lap top and overhead projector
- To Secede or Not to Secede Power Point, available in the Carolina K-12's Database of K-12 Resources (in PDF format)
 - To view this PDF as a projectable presentation, save the file, click "View" in the top menu bar of the file, and select "Full Screen Mode"
 - To request an editable PPT version of this presentation, send a request to CarolinaK12@unc.edu
- North Carolinians debate secession:
 - Visit www.learnnc.org and type "North Carolinians debate secession" into the search bar to access the excerpts.
 - Prior to teaching this lesson, print the excerpts available of five North Carolinian's views on secession from this NC Learn webpage and cut them into strips; provide the excerpts to five student volunteers and ask them to read the excerpt in dramatic fashion for the class when reaching slide 20 of the PPT

Duration

60 minutes

Procedure

A Classroom Secedes!

1. As a warm-up, tell students that you want to get their opinions on a situation occurring at your school, but that they must keep quiet regarding what you share with them. (To add effect, the teacher can say it was discussed at a staff meeting, but even though it's "top secret," you really feel the students should know and have a say. Project or handout the attached fictional memo (or something similar that you create on your school's own letterhead for believability purposes) and explain the following situation to your students. (Really work to make them believe that what you are saying is actually being considered by the school's administration.)

Tell students that at your last staff meeting, a teacher that they all know (but whom you cannot divulge the identity of) presented a proposal to the staff regarding **secession** from the school. Discuss what secession is, then referring to the memo's bullets, tell students that the teacher stated that he/she does not agree with the school's philosophy, curriculum, or rules and thus he/she wants to start a "school within a school" consisting of 28 students. Explain that if approved, the seceded classroom will be located in the main building of our school, but will not recognize itself as part of our school as it will not be following any of our school's established rules or guidelines for behavior, curriculum, etc. The school within our school will however use the main school's resources such as the cafeteria, gym, and library.

Tell students that you have not make up your mind regarding how to vote on this situation yet, and even though this is supposed to be a confidential issue, you are trusting them to offer their opinions while keeping this situation quiet. Allow and encourage students to start expressing their thoughts. Most certainly they will have many questions for you regarding the situation. Answer them in the most realistic way you can, or tell them you don't have the information they are requesting.

Allow students to discuss and facilitate further consideration by asking:

- What might be the benefits of the classroom seceding? (classroom can determine own curriculum, rules, dress code, etc.; will perhaps alleviate tension that exists between teacher and administration; the class may end up more successful than the school at large since it is trying something new)
- What might be the negative affects of the classroom seceding? (what is to keep other classrooms from doing the same; we are stronger united rather than divided; if students do not like being in the classroom they have no recourse since they are officially separate from the main school).

- How might we appear to other schools by allowing this to happen? (other schools may find this strange or consider us to be weak)

2. Eventually, tell students that the situation your school is facing reminds you a bit of the way in which the **Civil War** began in **1861**. Explain to students that by the mid-1800s, the nation was sectionalized into three distinct geographic regions, each with deeply conflicting views regarding the decisions the United States as a whole should be making. **Slavery** was one such conflicting issue, with the Southern states adamant about keeping slave labor legal, and Northern states more interested in limiting the spread of slavery. The argument was ongoing, with Congress constantly making official compromises to try and keep every section appeased. However, once **Abraham Lincoln** was elected president in 1860, the southern states were sure that they would lose all say in government. Thus, although Lincoln declared it illegal, the southern states seceded from the United States and formed their own “country within a country” called the **Confederate States of America**.
3. After explaining all this, students will more than likely catch on to the fact that the memo and situation you shared are fictional. If not, let them know that this is the case and draw parallels between the two scenarios. Draw a chart on the board, writing down the major points from the teacher’s situation and asking students to draw the parallel to the southern states:

Remind students of the following points in the teacher scenario	Encourage students to draw the following parallels
Teacher secedes from school	South secedes from United States
Teacher does not like philosophy of the school, its curriculum, rules, etc.	South did not like election of Lincoln or the threat of emancipation
Teacher still plans to remain in school’s building and utilize school resources	South plans to utilize federal government resources (i.e. Fort Sumter) and remain on the United State’s land
Teacher will assume lead role and create own curriculum, rules, expectations, etc. for classroom; will not recognize principal and school administration	South will operate its own government, set its own laws, and elect its own president (Jefferson Davis); will not recognize Abraham Lincoln as president
If this class secedes, other classroom secessions may occur, completely splitting the school apart	If the Southern states secede, anarchy across the US may ensue
Other schools may find this decision strange and think our school is weaker since we are divided	The United States will be weaker divided and less able to defend ourselves from foreign attacks; foreign countries may use this as an opportunity to attack the US

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4. Use the accompanying PPT to give a brief overview of the constant back and forth that the Nation was going through regarding issues of sectionalism and slavery. Provide students with the attached worksheet upon which they can take notes from the Power Point. While this presentation will be somewhat didactic in conveying facts and information, teachers should use the PPT as a basis of discussion as much as possible. In addition to the discussion questions throughout the PPT, provide the following information on the particular slides noted:
 - Slide 20: After allowing students to predict how each person listed may feel regarding secession, provide students with the excerpts from Learn NC’s “North Carolinians debates secession” (<http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/nchist-civilwar/4589> (SOURCE LINK not working, however, here are some alternatives <http://docsouth.unc.edu/highlights/secession.html> and <http://northcarolinahistory.org/encyclopedia/secession/>) and ask for five student volunteers to read each primary source. After each is read, have students discuss how it seems this person actually feels about secession and why they may feel that way. To further student thinking, teachers can also ask the class to consider what they could possibly say to each person to change their views.

- Slide 21: Ask a student volunteer to read the excerpt provided and have students discuss, based on the text, what decision North Carolina made.
 - Slide 23: Ask students to review the document (from <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/nchist-civilwar/4586>) [Source Link not working] and discuss:
 - What do you see? What information or clues can you identify that may be important to figuring out the purpose of this document? (i.e. the date)
 - Who might have created this document and for what purpose? What do you think it was used for?
 - If you were presented with this document, would you have signed it? Why or why not?
 - What do you think the consequences may have been for not signing it?
5. At the end of the Power Point, pause on Slide 25 and remind students that through all of these compromises and disputes among Congressional members, there were human lives that were at stake. Some people debate today whether or not the Civil War was started over the issue of slavery. Some believe that it was, others argue that the reason for the war were issues such as states' rights. Certainly, there were many issues at play for the nation to fight itself in war, but certainly the most important issue was that of the enslaved people who finally, based upon the North's victory, would be freed.
6. As a culminating assignment, tell students that they will show what they have learned in an artistic and creative way by creating a newspaper headline, an image, and a caption based on a topic from the day's class. Topics assigned to students may include:
- Missouri Compromise
 - Compromise of 1850
 - Kansas Nebraska Act
 - Slavery
 - Dred Scott v. Sanford
 - Bleeding Kansas
 - Election of Abraham Lincoln
 - Attack on Fort Sumter
 - Fugitive slave act
 - Secession of North Carolina
 - Election of Jefferson Davis by Confederate States of America

Teachers may choose to provide an example of what you are expecting, such as:



Once students have completed their headline, image, and caption (assign for homework if needed) post student work around the room and allow the class to circulate and view all of the headlines for a few minutes. Then, choose a few to use as a catalyst for review through discussion.

Additional Activities

- Facilitate a lesson on *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, such as Street Laws curriculum, available for free at http://landmarkcases.org/en/landmark/cases/dred_scott_v_sandford.
- Ensure students learn about the people who were fighting for the emancipation of all people throughout the Congressional compromises discussed in this lesson. See the Carolina K-12's "American Abolitionists," available in the Database of Civic Resources. "Active Citizens of the 1800s," a monologue assignment (available in the Database of Civic Resources), also offers insight into some of the abolitionists fighting for social justice.

Memo

To: <<insert school name>> Teachers
From: <<insert principal name>>, Principal
Re: Proposal for Annex Classroom 3-2-2
Date: <<insert date>>

As we discussed in our last staff meeting, please review the guidelines for the Annex Classroom proposal and cast your vote by <<insert date>>. Place ballots in the box behind the secretary in the main office.

Should a teacher be able to secede from <<insert school name>> with his/her students? Why or why not?

- Teacher does not agree with philosophy, curriculum, and rules of <<insert school name>>, and thus wishes to start his/her own “school” within the building, consisting of a classroom of 28 students. (A committee would vote on which students participate if proposal is approved).
- Classroom will be located in the main building of <<insert school name>>, but will not recognize itself as officially part of <<insert school name>>.
- Classroom will follow its own behavior expectations, rules, and consequences. Likewise, classroom will determine its own administrative policies (dress code, attendance policies, etc.) and will follow a curriculum decided upon by the teacher.

Name: _____

To Secede or Not to Secede

After the Louisiana Purchase (1803), both the North & South wanted the acquired western land to benefit their sectional interests.

Northern Goals	Southern Goals

Why do you think Congress made compromises throughout the 1800s to try to appease both the North and the South?

Compromises made to appease the North & the South

Northwest Ordinance, 1787:
Missouri Compromise, 1820:
Compromise of 1850:
Kansas-Nebraska Act, 1854:

What was the fugitive slave law?

Summarize the Dred Scott v. Sandford case:

Slavery was a cruel and oppressive institution, but due to their strength and spirit, enslaved people resisted slavery in many ways. How did African's and African American's who were enslaved often survive?

Breaking the Bonds of the Union

In 1860, Republican _____ was elected as President of the United States of America. Why did this anger the south? _____

Lincoln declared, "A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot last forever, half slave and half free. I do not expect the house to fall-but I do expect it will cease to be divided." How do you interpret this quote?

On December 20, 1860, South Carolina became the first state to secede (leave/withdraw) from the "Union". Shortly after, the other southern states followed to join the newly formed **Confederate States of America**, with _____ as their recognized president. Who was the last Southern state to secede on May 20, 1861? _____

Confederate SLAVE States:	Union FREE States:
	Union SLAVE States

What occurred at Fort Sumter in April, 1861?

To Secede or Not to Secede - ANSWER KEY

After the Louisiana Purchase (1803), both the North & South wanted the acquired western land to benefit their sectional interests.

Northern Goals	Southern Goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to develop manufacturing jobs and trade, which do not depend on enslaved workers • Pass laws to promote trade and growth of factories • Make sure new Western votes in Congress are for Northern interests by <u>not</u> allowing slavery in new territories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand agriculture (such as cotton and other cash crops), which does depend on enslaved workers • Pass laws to protect slavery and growth of agriculture • Make sure new Western votes in Congress are for Southern interests by allowing slavery in new territories

Why do you think Congress made compromises throughout the 1800s to try to appease both the North and the South? Congress wanted to keep a balance between free states and slave states to mitigate tension. Congress was trying to keep the Southern states from seceding from the Union.

Compromises made to appease the North & the South

<p>Northwest Ordinance, 1787: Passed by the Continental Congress, this ordinance created the Northwest Territory and banned slavery north and west of the Ohio River. Few Southerners protested this ordinance because they were more concerned about laws affecting states that were south of the Ohio River and north of Florida. This ordinance set the stage for the balancing act between free and slave states.</p>
<p>Missouri Compromise, 1820: This compromise kept the balance of power in Congress between slave and free states by admitting Maine to the Union as a free state and Missouri as a slave state. Additionally, to prevent future arguments over the Louisiana Territory, an imaginary east-west line was drawn at the southern boundary of Missouri that said any new state north of the line would be a free state and any new state south of the line would be a slave state. However, many observers, such as Thomas Jefferson, predicted that the division of the country created by the Compromise line would eventually lead to the destruction of the Union.</p>
<p>Compromise of 1850: This was a series of laws that attempted to resolve conflict between the northern and southern states. In the Compromise, California was admitted as a free state, New Mexico and Utah were allowed to decide their own slavery laws, the slave trade (buying and selling enslaved Africans) was abolished in Washington DC, and the Fugitive Slave Law passed. The Compromise did not satisfy any side completely.</p>
<p>Kansas-Nebraska Act, 1854: This act created the territories of Kansas and Nebraska, allowing the settlers to decide whether to have slavery. This decision angered Northerners, who thought these territories should be free states because of the Missouri Compromise. Southerners said the Compromise of 1850 replaced the Missouri Compromise. Clearly, both sides were upset and the stage was set for the Civil War.</p>

What was the fugitive slave law? A law forcing all U.S. citizens to return runaway enslaved Africans, regardless of the legality of slavery in their specific state. This was part of the Compromise of 1850.

Slavery was a cruel and oppressive institution, but due to their strength and spirit, enslaved people resisted slavery in many ways. How did Africans and African Americans who were enslaved often survive?

Africans and African Americans survived slavery by forming a community where they could support one another. In slave quarters, they shared stories from their African heritage and created a sense of family. Enslaved Africans took comfort in religious services and sang spiritual songs that spoke to freedom from bondage and dreams of liberty. Slaves resisted slavery by denying their owners labor and profits, such as by slowing down work or breaking tools. Some slaves defied owners even at the risk of being brutally punished.

Summarize the Dred Scott v. Sandford case: Scott sued for his freedom based on time spent in a free state; the case made it all the way to the US Supreme Court, which ruled that slaves & their descendants had not legal rights and were not citizens. The Court also said that Congress had no authority to prohibit slavery in federal territories and that slaves—as private property—could not be taken away from their owners without due process.

Breaking the Bonds of the Union

In 1860, Republican **Abraham Lincoln** was elected as President of the United States of America. Why did this anger the south? During Lincoln’s campaign, the South warned that it would secede if Lincoln won because of the fear that Lincoln would ban slavery

Lincoln declared, “A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot last forever, half slave and half free. I do not expect the house to fall-but I do expect it will cease to be divided.” How do you interpret this quote?

The Union was divided between slave and free states. Lincoln did not think that the Union would cease to exist, but that either the South or the North would win.

On December 20, 1860, South Carolina became the first state to secede (leave/withdraw) from the “Union.” Shortly after, the other southern states followed to join the newly formed **Confederate States of America**, with Jefferson Davis as their recognized president. Who was the last Southern state to secede on May 20, 1861? North Carolina

Confederate SLAVE States:	Union FREE States:
Alabama Arkansas Florida Georgia Louisiana Mississippi North Carolina South Carolina Tennessee Texas Virginia	California, Connecticut, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Wisconsin
	Union SLAVE States
	Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri, West Virginia

What occurred at Fort Sumter in April, 1861? Confederates in South Carolina fired on federal troops stationed at Fort Sumter in Charleston; Lincoln began to build a US Army, thus signaling that war was on the horizon.