



To Secede or Not to Secede?

Civil War Era



Susan McHale, Jessica Hightower

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Grade Level	8th Grade	Time Frame	1-2 class period(s)
Subject	Social Studies	Duration	60 minutes
Course	U.S. History		

Essential Question

What justifications for secession are acceptable?

Summary

Students will look at two accounts from opposing sides of the Civil War in order to analyze how Abraham Lincoln's election fueled the decision to join the war effort. To demonstrate their understanding of the readings, students will use the writing strategy, RAFT (Role Audience Format Topic), where they will take on the role of the two individuals text messaging each other their reasons for being supporters of one side or the other.

Snapshot

Engage

Students watch a brief film clip outlining why Abraham Lincoln's victory in the presidential election of 1860 drove the country into a Civil War.

Explore

Students use the Why-Lighting strategy to review two letters from opposing sides of the Civil War; one from a Union supporter and one from a Confederate supporter. Students dissect the letters in order to determine each author's viewpoint

Explain

Students create a RAFT (Role Audience Format Topic), where they take on the role of each individual from the letters and create their own letters of the two talking to each other about why they believe in their cause.

Extend

Students look at a hypothetical map depicting what the United States would look like if all the secessionist movements proposed in US history been successful and discuss how these possible secessions could have shaped the present day and will write a short response on what justifies an acceptable secession.

Evaluate

Students are evaluated through their RAFT and their written response.

Standards

Oklahoma Academic Standards (Social Studies Practices (8th Grade))

- 8.11.1:** Analyze the immediate impact of the presidential election of 1860 including
- 8.11.1A:** secession of southern states who declared slavery as the central factor for seceding
- 8.11.1C:** formation of the Confederate States of America

Attachments

- [Letter from Cochran Supporting Secession - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Letter from Cochran Supporting Secession - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Letter from Cochran Supporting Secession.docx](#)
- [Letter from Cochran Supporting Secession.pdf](#)
- [RAFT Rubric - Spanish.docx](#)
- [RAFT Rubric - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [RAFT Rubric.docx](#)
- [RAFT Rubric.pdf](#)
- [Sullivan Ballou's Letter to his Wife - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Sullivan Ballou's Letter to his Wife - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Sullivan Ballou's Letter to his Wife.docx](#)
- [Sullivan Ballou's Letter to his Wife.pdf](#)

Materials

- Student devices with internet access
- Sullivan Ballou's Letter to his Wife (attached)
- Cochran's Letter to his Mother (attached)
- Map: The United States the Could've Been <http://andrewshears.com/2011/12/08/the-united-states-that-couldve-been/> (Link used with permission from Dr. Andrew Shears)
- Sample RAFT Rubric (attached)

Engage

Students will watch the “[Civil War Election of 1860](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TGg5uDYHEQA)” video, which outlines the main issues surrounding the election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860.

Embedded video

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=TGg5uDYHEQA>

Discuss with students the issues that have been introduced in the video clip. Ask students why some of the issues mentioned would inspire the South to secede.

Sample Student Responses

Student responses may include:

- They felt like they couldn't be a part of a country where their way of life wouldn't exist anymore.
- They didn't like Lincoln's ideas.
- They thought Lincoln would wipe out slavery.
- They didn't think Lincoln could lead the nation.

Explore

Inform students that they will now read letters from opposing sides of the issue in order to have a better grasp of the public sentiment surrounding Lincoln's election. Have students employ the analytical reading strategy [Why-Lighting](#) while reading the letters. Pair students with a partner and pass out letters. You can also assign the links and have students use technology to read the letters. If using technology, have students write down the author's reason's for supporting secession or not for each letter.

Teacher's Note: Why-Lighting Close Reading Strategy

Instruct students that as they read they are to highlight instances in the letter where the author describes reasons for support of their cause. Remind students that they cannot just highlight their page; they must make a note in the margin as to why they highlighted that portion of the letter For more information about [Why-Lighting](#), follow the instructional strategies link..

You can also assign the links to each letter and have students use technology to read both letters. If using technology, have students write down the author's reason's for supporting secession or opposing secession for each letter.

Explain

Have student pairs review each letter. Each partner is to take one of the letters and compose and write a [RAFT](#). A RAFT is a writing that includes a role, audience, format, topic or theme. In this way, both letters are represented. A rubric is provided for the RAFT. Please go over the rubric expectations prior to the activity.

After reading, ask students in each pair to discuss whether or not they feel the reasons listed in the letters were justifications enough for secession to happen. Have the pairs of students share out their view and evidence until all different views are shared. Ask: Was Lincoln the main problem? Discuss responses as a class.

Using the information from each letter, each student should compose a RAFT (Role Audience Format Topic) that shows their understanding of their selected side of the argument.

1. The role is one of the two individuals from the letters.
2. The audience is the letter is being sent to the other person-- either Cochran or Ballou.
3. The format is a formal letter.
4. The topic is their reasoning for being supporters of their cause. This should be in their own words, not just repeating what they have read.
5. Instruct students that they are to use evidence from the primary sources when writing their RAFT

Teacher's Note: Differentiation For The Primary Sources

For students that have difficulty reading the letter from Cochran, there is a link for the letter in modern spelling. In order to ease the reading load, the teacher may choose to partner up students and have one student read the Cochran letter and one read the Ballou letter. The students will then compose their RAFT together, voicing the reasons from the letter they read.

Extend

Have students view the map [The United States that Could've Been](#). Ask students what they notice. Student Responses May Include: It looks like a map of the United States, but it's not right, there's way too many states.

Inform students that this is a map that shows what the United States would look like if all of the proposed secession movements had actually happened. Question students on how the United States would function differently if this were what the United States looked like today. Would their lives be any different? Have the class discuss.

Have students respond to the following prompt. Based on the map of the United States that could've been, is secession always the most beneficial move? When is secession acceptable? When is it not? What would be an acceptable justification for secession? Students will need to make sure to have their claim, evidence, and reasoning.

Have students write a short summary paragraph that answers the essential question: *What justifications for secession are acceptable?*

Evaluate

The RAFT assignment and the summary paragraph will serve as the assessments.

Resources

- K20 Center. (n.d.). RAFT. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/158>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Why-Lighting. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/128>