

To Secede or Not to Secede?

American Civil War Era

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Grade Level	8th Grade	**Time Frame**	2 class periods
Subject	Social Studies	**Duration**	90 minutes
Course	U.S. History		

Essential Question

How did supporters of secession justify leaving the Union?

Summary

In this lesson, students analyze primary source documents to explain why the Southern states seceded from the Union. They record their initial ideas about the causes of secession and view a short video about the election of 1860. Next, students examine South Carolina's secession declaration and two accounts from Union and Confederate perspectives. Finally, students summarize their learning by writing a six-word memoir about secession.

Snapshot

Engage

Students use the Preflections strategy to consider what they already know about secession.

Explore

Students view a video and discuss the issues surrounding the election of 1860.

Explain

Students analyze South Carolina's declaration of secession to identify its stated reasons for leaving the Union.

Extend

Students compare accounts from Union and Confederate perspectives to examine the writers' reasons for supporting their respective causes.

Evaluate

Students reevaluate their initial responses and summarize their learning in a six-word memoir.

Standards

ACT College and Career Readiness Standards - Reading (6-12)

CLR301: Locate simple details at the sentence and paragraph level in somewhat challenging passages
CLR302: Draw simple logical conclusions in somewhat challenging passages
IDT301: Identify a clear central idea in straightforward paragraphs in somewhat challenging literary narratives
REL301: Identify clear comparative relationships between main characters in somewhat challenging literary narratives
PPV301: Recognize a clear intent of an author or narrator in somewhat challenging passages
SYN301: Make straightforward comparisons between two passages

Oklahoma Academic Standards SOCIAL STUDIES (Grade 8)

8.C.12.1: Analyze the immediate impact of the presidential election of 1860.
8.C.12.1.C: Explain slavery as the central factor for the secession of southern states by examining passages from state secession declarations.

Attachments

- Lesson Slides—To Secede or Not to Secede.pptx
- South Carolina's Declaration of Secession—To Secede or Not to Secede.docx
- South Carolina's Declaration of Secession—To Secede or Not to Secede.pdf
- Union and Confederate Perspectives—To Secede or Not to Secede.docx
- Union and Confederate Perspectives—To Secede or Not to Secede.pdf

Materials

- Lesson Slides (attached)
- South Carolina's Declaration of Secession (attached; one per student)
- Union and Confederate Perspectives (attached; one per student)
- Notebook paper
- Writing utensils

10 minutes

Engage

Use the attached **Lesson Slides** to guide the lesson. Begin by displaying **slides 3–4** to review the essential question and learning objectives of the lesson with students**.** Advance to **slide 5** and introduce the Preflections strategy. Explain that students will record their initial thoughts about what they expect to learn about secession during the American Civil War. Ask students, "What do you think led to the secession of Southern states from the United States?"

Have students write their response on a piece of notebook paper. Allow two minutes of quiet writing time for students to record their responses, then collect the Preflection responses to be revisited at the end of the lesson.

20 minutes

Explore

Display **slide 6**. Inform students that they will watch a short video clip and that, as they do, they should identify the main issue facing the country in 1860. Play the *Civil War Election of 1860* video, which outlines the major issues surrounding Abraham Lincoln's election.

Embedded video

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

After the video, display **slide 7** and introduce the Elbow Partners strategy. Ask students to discuss the issues facing the country that were presented in the video. Invite a few volunteers to share their responses with the class.

Sample Student Responses

- Southern secessionists believed they could no longer remain part of a country that threatened their way of life.
- Southern secessionists opposed Lincoln's position on the expansion of slavery.
- They feared that Lincoln's election threatened the future of slavery.

30 minutes

Explain

Move to **slide 8** and distribute the attached **South Carolina's Declaration of Secession** handout to each student. Introduce the Categorical Highlighting strategy to students. Invite students to read the handout and highlight or underline evidence explaining why South Carolina seceded after the 1860 presidential election.

After students finish reading, have them compare their selected evidence with a partner. Invite several volunteers to share examples with the class. Lead a whole-class discussion about the reasons South Carolina gave for seceding from the United States.

15 minutes

Extend

Display **slide 9** and pass out the attached **Union and Confederate Perspectives** handout to each student. Explain that the handout contains primary source accounts from two soldiers who supported opposing sides of the American Civil War.

Have students use the Why-Lighting strategy as they read the handout. Ask students to highlight or underline passages explaining why each person supported his respective cause and write notes in the margins that explain why they highlighted or underlined the text.

Provide time for students to complete the task. As an alternative, have students work with partners or complete the Why-Lighting activity as a class. After students analyze the handout, lead a whole-class discussion comparing the reasons each writer supported his cause.

15 minutes

Evaluate

Display **slide 10** and return students' Preflection responses from the beginning of the lesson. Ask students to review their initial responses. Introduce the Six-Word Memoirs strategy, which challenges students to summarize their learning in exactly six words. Have students create a six-word memoir about why the Southern states seceded. Provide time for students to write their memoir on their Preflections paper. Collect students' papers to assess their understanding of the lesson content.

Resources

- K20 Center. (n.d.). Categorical Highlighting. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/192
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Elbow Partners. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/116
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Preflections. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/191
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Why-Lighting. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/128
- MGH. (n.d.). *Civil War election of 1860* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TGg5uDYHEQA