

Why Did the Southern States Secede?

The U.S. Civil War

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Grade Level	8th Grade	**Time Frame**	2 class periods
Subject	Social Studies	**Duration**	100 minutes
Course	U.S. History		

Essential Question

What was the principal cause of the U.S. Civil War? Why did the Southern states secede to form the Confederate States of America?

Summary

In this lesson, students analyze primary-source documents to determine why the Southern states seceded from the Union to form the Confederate States of America. Students write Claim, Evidence, Reasoning (CER) responses to explain the Southern states' actions. Students extend their learning by analyzing a 2011 Pew Research Center study about the legacy of the U.S. Civil War. Students reflect on the lesson by using the S-I-T (Surprising-Interesting-Troubling) strategy.

Snapshot

Engage

Students participate in a modified List-Group-Label activity to activate their prior knowledge about growing tensions between the North and South before the U.S. Civil War.

Explore

Students analyze primary source documents to identify reasons why the Southern states seceded from the Union.

Explain

Students create Claim, Evidence, Reasoning (CER) responses using the textual evidence they compiled during their document analysis.

Extend

Students analyze data from a 2011 Pew Research Center study about the legacy of the U.S. Civil War.

Evaluate

Students use the S-I-T strategy to identify something from the lesson that they found surprising, interesting, and troubling.

Standards

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

ORG 201: Determine the need for transition words or phrases to establish time relationships in simple narrative essays (e.g., then, this time)
ORG 302: Provide a simple conclusion to a paragraph or essay (e.g., expressing one of the essay's main ideas)

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

CLR301: Locate simple details at the sentence and paragraph level in somewhat challenging passages

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

I&A 201: Understanding the task and writing with purpose. A score in this range indicates that the writer is able to: -Generate a thesis that is unclear or not entirely related to the given issue -Respond weakly to other perspectives on the issue
I&A 302: Analyzing critical elements of an issue and differing perspectives on it. A score in this range indicates that the writer is able to: -Establish a limited or tangential context for analysis -Provide analysis that is simplistic or somewhat unclear
D&S 301: Building and strengthening the argument. A score in this range indicates that the writer is able to: -Make use of mostly relevant reasoning and examples to support the thesis and arrive at a general or simplistic understanding of the issue -Offer a rationale that largely clarifies the argument -Provide elaboration of ideas and analysis that is somewhat repetitive or imprecise

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

8.10: The student will analyze major political, economic, and social events that resulted in the Civil War.
8.10.1: Summarize the importance of slavery as the principal cause of increased sectional polarization leading to the Civil War.
8.11: The student will analyze the course and consequences of the Civil War.
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

Attachments

- CER with Teacher's Notes—Why Did the Southern States Secede.docx
- CER with Teacher's Notes—Why Did the Southern States Secede.pdf
- CER—Why Did the Southern States Secede.docx
- CER—Why Did the Southern States Secede.pdf
- Confederate Constitution and Cornerstone Speech Excerpts with Teacher's Notes—Why Did the Southern States Secede.docx
- Confederate Constitution and Cornerstone Speech Excerpts with Teacher's Notes—Why Did the Southern States Secede.pdf
- Confederate Constitution and Cornerstone Speech Excerpts—Why Did the Southern States Secede.docx
- Confederate Constitution and Cornerstone Speech Excerpts—Why Did the Southern States Secede.pdf
- Lesson Slides—Why did the Southern States Secede.pptx
- Secession Ordinances with Teacher's Notes—Why Did the Southern States Secede.docx
- Secession Ordinances with Teacher's Notes—Why Did the Southern States Secede.pdf
- Secession Ordinances—Why did the Southern States Secede.docx
- Secession Ordinances—Why did the Southern States Secede.pdf
- Text Evidence for Secession—Why did the Southern States Secede_.docx
- Text Evidence for Secession—Why did the Southern States Secede_.pdf
- The U.S. Civil War's Legacy Answer Key—Why Did the Southern States Secede.docx
- The U.S. Civil War's Legacy Answer Key—Why Did the Southern States Secede.pdf
- The U.S. Civil War's Legacy—Why did the Southern States Secede.docx
- The U.S. Civil War's Legacy—Why did the Southern States Secede.pdf

Materials

- Lesson Slides (attached)
- Secession Ordinances (attached; one ordinance per group)
- Secession Ordinances with Teacher's Notes (attached)
- Confederate Constitution and Cornerstone Speech Excerpts (attached; one document per group)
- Confederate Constitution and Cornerstone Speech Excerpts with Teacher's Notes (attached)
- Text Evidence for Secession graphic organizer (attached; one per student)
- The U.S. Civil War's Legacy handout (attached; one per student)
- The U.S. Civil War's Legacy Answer Key (attached)
- CER graphic organizer (attached; one per student)
- CER with Teacher’s Notes (attached)

15 minutes

Engage

Teacher's Note: Student Preparation

This lesson should be taught as part of a larger unit on the U.S. Civil War. Students should be familiar with events leading up to the war, such as the Compromise of 1850, the publication of Uncle Tom's Cabin, the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the Supreme Court decision in *Scott v. Sandford*, John Brown's Raid on Harpers Ferry, and the election of 1860.

Use the attached **Lesson Slides** to guide the lesson. Organize students into groups of four. Display **slide 3** and ask students to review the items on the slide with their groups. Explain that the list includes events, legislation, court decisions, and publications that students previously examined during the U.S. Civil War unit.

Using a modified version of the List-Group-Label strategy, tell students to work with their groups to consider what the items have in common and give the list a label that describes the list as a whole.

After about five minutes, invite several groups to share their labels with the class.

Sample Student Responses

- Events Related to Growing Tensions Over Slavery
- Events Involving Slavery That Led to the U.S. Civil War
- Events That Highlighted Disagreements Over Slavery

Remind students that although these events involved several political and regional disputes, each was connected to slavery as a central source of tension. Consider asking students to support their label with evidence by explaining how one or more of the terms from the list connect to the chosen label.

Sample Student Responses

In *Scott v. Sandford*, the Supreme Court ruled that people of African descent were not considered U.S. citizens under the Constitution and that Congress could not prohibit slavery in federal territories. This ruling strengthened protections for slavery and further intensified tensions between slaveholding and non-slaveholding states.

To conclude the discussion, display **slides 4–5**, and review the essential questions and learning objectives with students.

30 minutes

Explore

Teacher's Note: Primary Source Language and Ideas

Preview each of the primary source documents before teaching this lesson to prepare students for the language and ideas that they will encounter.

Before distributing the handouts, make it clear that these documents contain racist language and ideas. It is important to note that the language used represents the beliefs held by the authors of the documents. Encourage students to be on the lookout for such language and ideas so that you can discuss them as a class.

Remind students that it is important to discuss the truths about the past, and also honor the humanity of all people. Consider editing the documents to suit the needs of the students in your classroom.

Display **slide 6**. Review with students that after the election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860, seven states seceded from the Union to form the Confederate States of America. Review the meaning of secede, to formally break away.

Display **slide 7** and tell students that each state that seceded wrote a formal document declaring it was no longer part of the United States. These documents, called "ordinances of secession," explained their reasons for breaking away from the Union.

Explain that students will examine three ordinances of secession to determine why the Southern states left the Union and formed the Confederate States of America. Pass out the attached **Secession Ordinances** handout to students. Each group should have one of the three ordinances.

Display **slide 8** and introduce students to the Why-Lighting strategy. Ask students to analyze the document as a group by highlighting pieces of the text that explain why the state they are reading about seceded from the Union. After highlighting, students should write notes in the margin of the document to explain the reason for the highlighted text.

After providing time for students to analyze the documents, pass out the attached **Text Evidence for Secession** handout. Move to **slide 9** and ask students to work in their groups to complete the chart and summarize why the Southern states seceded from the Union, using the document they analyzed as a guide.

Teacher's Note: Summarizing

Give students explicit instructions about what you expect their summaries to look like. It is recommended that students write at least one complete sentence. Adjust this expectation to best fit the needs of your students. Consider telling students writing entire passages from the text is not required, they can choose important short phrases to use as supporting evidence.

After providing time for students to complete their charts, call on representatives from each group to share their findings with the class. As groups share, tell students they can change or modify their responses in the chart based on the feedback they gain from the whole-class discussion. If the topic does not come up organically, ensure that the idea of protecting slavery was the main focus of the secession ordinances.

Sample Student Responses

In each secession document, it is argued that non-slaveholding states have broken promises embodied in the U.S. Constitution by violating the Fugitive Slave Clause. They also argue that those states continue to incite hostility toward slavery in a variety of ways such as passing laws to limit slavery, encouraging enslaved people to rebel or run away, advocating for racial equality, and electing a president whom the slaveholding states believed was a threat to the institution of slavery. Given all of these things, and in order to protect their rights to property established through the institution of slavery, they argue that they must secede from the Union. See the attached **Secession Ordinances with Teacher's Notes** document for comments about each document.

Pass out one of the two documents from the attached **Confederate Constitution and Cornerstone Speech Excerpts** to members of each group. Ensure that half of the groups have the Confederate Constitution and the other half have the Cornerstone Speech Excerpts.

Display **slide 10** and tell students to again use Why-Lighting their document. Tell students to highlight parts of the text that explain why the Southern states seceded, and to write notes about why they highlighted specific sentences.

After providing time for students to work together and analyze the document, then have students complete the other half of the Text Evidence for Secession handout.

Teacher's Note: Differences Between the U.S. And Confederate Constitutions

For additional information about how the C.S.A. Constitution differed from the U.S. Constitution, refer to this article from The National Constitution Center.

Next, call on new representatives from each group to share their findings with the class.

Sample Student Responses

Diverging from the U.S. Constitution, the new Confederate States Constitution stated that there could be no law passed that would abolish slavery, ever. It specifically protected the rights of slaveholders to transport and travel with enslaved people who were legally deemed their "property." It guaranteed the right of slaveholders to recover their lost "property" should an enslaved person attempt to escape. Therefore, it can be inferred that the states seceded to protect and maintain the system of slavery.

In the "Cornerstone Speech," Stephens wrote that the Confederate states seceded to protect the institution of slavery and the superiority of white people. He praised the new Confederate States Constitution for explicitly protecting both.

See the attached **Confederate Constitution and Cornerstone Speech Excerpts with Teacher's Notes** for additional comments about each document.

Conclude the class discussion by adding any important points that might have been overlooked by students and reminding them that their charts should be completed at this point.

Teacher's Note: Additional Documents

Consider adding any documents to the analysis that you feel would help to provide additional context.

30 minutes

Explain

Display **slide 11** and pass out a copy of the attached **CER handout** to each student. Introduce students to the CER (Claim, Evidence, Reasoning) strategy to answer the question, “Why did the Southern states secede from the Union to form the Confederate States of America?”

As a class, establish the "claim." Based on the discussion of the primary source documents, the claim should be something like, "The Southern states seceded to protect and maintain the system of slavery." Have students write the claim at the top of the CER handout.

Tell students to complete the rest of the CER with their group, using the documents they have analyzed. Students should use at least one piece of textual evidence.

Optional: Extending the CER

Optionally, ask students to use the CER handout as an outline to craft a coherent paragraph response, especially focusing on integrating the textual evidence from the primary sources into their own writing.

After they have completed their CER statements, have several students read their responses aloud to the class. Use this opportunity to review what students have written and offer verbal feedback. Refer to the attached **CER with Teacher's Notes** handout for a sample student response.

15 minutes

Extend

Pass out the attached **The U.S. Civil War's Legacy** handout. Tell students that the Pew Research Center is a nonprofit organization that conducts research regarding various topics, such as U.S. politics.

In 2011, the Pew Research Center conducted a study titled Civil War at 150 about the legacy of the Civil War. Two of the prompts from this study are shown on **slide 12** and on the handout. The first prompt relates to respondents' views about the modern relevance of the U.S. Civil War, and the second relates to their understanding of the cause of the U.S. Civil War.

Teacher's Note: The Pew Research Center

Visit the Pew Research Center website's "About" page for additional information about the center's mission, research, and methods.

Have students work with their groups to predict how they think participants responded to these prompts in the 2011 study. Tell students to add their predictions to the Estimated Percentage column on the handout. Remind students that their percentages for each prompt should add up to 100% (though the reported percentages may add to slightly more or less than 100 due to rounding).

Assure students that "correct" answers are not the goal. Students should write an informed hypothesis based on what they have learned.

Display **slide 13** to reveal the actual survey percentages from the study. Ask students to write the actual percentages on the handout. Provide time for students to discuss the estimated and actual percentages in their groups.

10 minutes

Evaluate

Display **slide 14**. Introduce students to the S-I-T strategy. Tell students to think about the lesson and on the back of a handout write something from the lesson that was surprising, interesting, and troubling.

Optional: Technology Integration

As an option for students to share their S-I-T responses digitally, create a Padlet layout with three columns labeled Surprising, Interesting, and Troubling. Share the Padlet link with students.

Sample Student Responses

- **S:** I was surprised that most of the people identified states' rights as the main cause for the U.S. Civil War.
- **I:** I found it interesting that a majority of people still believe the Civil War is relevant today. However, almost 40% of people do not see how the legacies of slavery and the Civil War influenced things in the U.S.
- **T:** I was troubled that only 38% of people identified slavery as the main cause of the U.S. Civil War.

See the attached **The U.S. Civil War's Legacy Answer Key** for further guidance and responses.

Once students have had enough time to record their responses, bring students back together to share their thoughts.

Conclude the discussion by noting that, in order to solve the issues facing our communities today, it is important to understand how things became the way they are (in other words, our history).

Resources

- K20 Center. (n.d.). Claim, Evidence, Reasoning (CER). Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/156
- K20 Center. (n.d.). List-Group-Label. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/55
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Padlet. Tech Tools. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/tech-tool/1077
- K20 Center. (n.d.). S-I-T (Surprising, interesting, troubling). Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/926
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Why-Lighting. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/128
- Pew Research Center. (n.d.). About Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/about/
- Pew Research Center. (2011, April 8). Civil War at 150: Still relevant, still divisive. https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2011/04/08/civil-war-at-150-still-relevant-still-divisive/