

Stormy Times Ahead : Voices of Secession

Lesson Plan

Topic: Secession in South Carolina

Standards Addressed:

Standard 8-3: The Student will demonstrate an understanding of the American Civil War- its causes and effects and the major events that occurred during that time.

8-3.4 Compare the attitudes of the unionists, cooperationists, and secessionists in South Carolina and summarize the reasons that the members of the South Carolina secession convention in 1860 voted unanimously to secede from the Union, including concerns about states' rights and fears about abolition.

8-3.6 Compare the effects of the Civil War on daily life in South Carolina, including the experiences of plantation owners, women, Confederate and Union soldiers, African Americans and children.

Standard USHC-4: The student will demonstrate an understanding of the causes and the course of the Civil War and Reconstruction in America.

Indicator USHC-4.2 Explain how the political events and issues that divided the nation led to civil war, including the compromises reached to maintain the balance of free and slave states, the successes and failures of the abolitionist movement, the conflicting views on states' rights and federal authority, the emergence of the Republican Party and its win in 1860, and the formation of the Confederate States of America. (H, P)

General Goal(s): Understanding the differences of opinions and emotions of the people who lived in and visited South Carolina during the secession crisis. Also, to portray the series of events which convinced the majority of voters to make a crucial decision.

Specific Objectives: Primary documents tell us how people really felt about secession, and reveal the power of propaganda.

Required Materials: PowerPoint from SCHS: Stormy Times Ahead: Voices of Secession,

Introduction:

Discussion of Missouri Compromise, and subsequent events concerning the expansion of slavery from 1820 to 1859:

Since the founding of the United States, the institution of slavery was a topic of controversy. The heated debate escalated with the addition of each new U.S. Territory. By the 1830s, South Carolina's economic strength was waning, and the region's position in national politics was weakening. In the late 1850s, events such as the Dred Scott decision, Congressional debates over the Morill Tariff, and John Brown's Raid in Virginia widened the chasm between North and South. As the presidential campaign developed, many South Carolina leaders came to view Lincoln and the Republican Party as radical abolitionists, and by 1860, the "irrepressible conflict," as New York senator William Seward called it, could no longer be avoided.

Step-By-Step Procedures:

1. PowerPoint can be read silently by students, but would be more effective if you selected someone to narrate and a few others to read the quotations.

2. Return to some of the slides for a discussion of A) People or B) Events:

A. The People (by slide number)

#11

Robert Barnwell Rhett. A lawyer and former U.S. Senator who was born in Beaufort, Rhett was extremely pro-Southern Rights and expressed his views in his son's paper, *The Charleston Mercury*. He advocated secession prior to 1860.

#12

James Louis Petigru. A lawyer and former state Attorney General, Petigru was born in Abbeville District. He was a nationally recognized lawyer who remained, until his death in 1862, a strong supporter of the Union.

#13

Elizabeth Grimball. Born in 1831 on Grove Plantation, Grimball was 29 in 1860. Her brother John would later serve in the Confederate Navy. Their war-time letters are housed at the S.C. Historical Society.

#14

Mary Boykin Chesnut. Born in Statesburg, Mary Boykin Chesnut wrote one of the most famous diaries of the Civil War period. Her father was a wealthy plantation owner who supported states' rights. She was married to James Chesnut, a U.S. Senator from South Carolina, in 1860.

#16

Murat Halstead. An editor from Ohio who attended the National Democratic Convention in Charleston. Halstead's experiences were recorded in *Caucuses of 1860: A History of the Current Presidential Campaign, Being a Complete Record of the Business of all the Conventions, etc.*

#17

James Marsh Johnson. A native of Charleston, Johnson worked as a tailor and was active in his church and community. His letters provide a rare view of the lives of free African Americans during this period. Many of his letters have been published in *No Chariot Let Down: Charleston's Free People of Color on the Eve of the Civil War*.

#28

Adeline Jackson. Jackson was a slave on a plantation near Winnsboro. She was 88 when she was interviewed by the Federal Writers' Project.

#32

W. L. Trenholm. Trenholm was a twenty-four year old banker in Charleston during the secession movement. You can see from his letter that he realizes the difficulties of a break with the Union. He went on to fight for the Confederacy and after the Civil War he served as Comptroller of the Currency of the United States.

B. Events (by Slide Number)

Political differences over slavery

#6

Abolition In the 1850s, the abolitionist movement continued to gain popularity – particularly in the Northeast-- with the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Frederick Douglass' *Narrative*. The abolitionist pictured here is Angelina Grimke who grew up in Charleston, where her father was a slaveholder. In 1819 she and her sister moved to Philadelphia where they became Quakers and began to speak out for abolition and women's rights.

Popular Sovereignty Also called "squatter sovereignty," this called for the citizens of each territory regulate their own stand on slavery. Hoping this would take the issue of slavery out of national politics, Sen. Stephen A .Douglas (pictured here) of Illinois endorsed it, along with other prominent Democrats. In 1854 Douglas was chairman of the committee on territories and promoted the Kansas Nebraska Act.

Fire-eaters The theory of States Rights argued that each state has the right to secede if the federal government acts unconstitutionally. The controversy over slavery pushed many who supported States Rights to believe that, if slavery was not allowed in the territories, southern culture would be destroyed, and they should leave the Union. Radical secessionists were called Fire-Eaters and included Robert Barnwell Rhett (of South Carolina, pictured here), William Lowndes Yancey (of Alabama) and Edmund Ruffin (of Virginia).

Free Soil – There were those who opposed slavery in the territory, but didn't want to get into the morality of the abolition movement. They didn't care about slavery in the South, but firmly supported banning slavery from all territories.

Pro-Slavery – Those who supported slavery and defended the institution, but were not as radical as the Fire-eaters. Also, in early 1860 they did not endorse the idea of seceding from the Union. These would be the people who would have to be mobilized if the South was to take action.

It Was Complicated.

#10

This is included to explain that, although slavery was the supreme issue in the secession movement, there were other factors as well. Since the nullification crisis of the 1830s, South Carolina's prestige and standing in national politics had diminished. With each new territory, the South became a bit less important. Additionally, while the Deep South cotton states enjoyed economic prosperity in the 1850s, South Carolina was losing men and money to other areas. The 1859 debate on the Morrill Tariff (tax on manufactured goods – bad for North, good for South) is a good example of the complexity of the issues.

Primary documents reveal differences of opinion that was not reported by the newspapers.

#16, #20

South Carolina was viewed, as Mary Chesnut says, as a "rampant" state in favor of secession. This view was set forth by the newspaper editors such as Murat Halstead from Ohio. It was reinforced by Rhett's newspaper, the *Mercury*. But primary resources - the personal letters and writings of the people who lived at the time - tell us that is a simplified picture.

There were those who wholeheartedly opposed secession – can you remember who?

#12, 56-57 - Pettigru #21-Perry

There were those who worried a great deal and predicted a bad war – examples?

#13 - Grimbald, #33 – Brevard

There were those who hoped for caution up to the last moment – examples?

#22 - William H. Trescot, #46 -Edward Pringle

Primary Documents depict the efforts to build support for secession:

The 1860 Association was formed in September, and many of its members had been moderates before they realized Lincoln was bound for election. At that point they decided to work together to prepare for secession. So they published several pamphlets and letters.

Slide #30 describes the 1860 Association – what do they intend to do?

Slide #31 is an excerpt from one of their pamphlets.

What method is being used to build support for secession?

Slides #32 and #43 - Compare the change in Trenholm’s tone. In August he saw a break with the Union “problematical,” By November, he was willing for SC to secede alone, if necessary, and “manfully and cheerfully.”

Slide #59 features 2 descriptions of Charleston after secession. Why was everyone so happy?

Secession and African Americans in 1860

In 1860, 4 million African Americans were enslaved and 250,000 lived as “free people of color.” Larger cities like Charleston and Spartanburg had strong communities of free African Americans who worked as skilled laborers. According to the census, there were over 3200 free blacks in Charleston in 1860 and 122 of these owned slaves themselves. Cities usually required each slave to have a badge – these were purchased by their owners. In 1822, South Carolina required that every free black have a white guardian, registered with the clerk of the court. If you could not prove proof of registration, you would be sold into slavery. As the 1860 election neared, the Charleston police went door-to-door checking for badges and/or registration. In August, the paper announced that a large number of African Americans had been arrested without proof of registration and were sold into slavery.

Indication that all African Americans were watching and being watched? # 17

What indicated that free blacks were worried? # 28

What action did they take? #37

What was required to book passage on a ship? # 36- 37

The Library of Congress’ slave narratives are online and can be found by state. Go to <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/snhtml/snhome.html> (please note - before you send students to this website - The grammar and wording in these quotes was changed for reasons listed on the website under “A Note on the Language of the Narratives.”) Also, see below for Johnson and Roark’s work on “Charleston’s Free People of Color.”

Additional activities:

8th grade:

Biographies. Find out information on the other “voices.” (Those below can be found on the internet)

William H. Trescot

J. H. Hammond

James L. Orr
Amos Kendall
Keziah Goodwyn Hopkins Brevard
Benjamin F. Perry
Edward J. Pringle

Secession Artwork: Look at Slide #43, which features the Secession Banner. This banner hung at the intersection of Meeting and Broad Street in Charleston when the Secession Convention met there. It was then taken to Institute Hall and was hung as the delegates signed the official Ordinance of Secession.

What does “Built from the Ruins” mean?

What state forms the “keystone” of the arch? The foundations?

What other symbols do you see that remind you of earlier events?

Why is John C. Calhoun dressed that way?

Another lesson plan features information on Secession, Benjamin Perry, and James Petigru. It is “Secession: A Southern Perspective,” by Kim Breen of Northside Middle School and can be found at www.teachingushistory.org/lessons/Secession.htm.

11th grade discussion/essay questions:

What events “set the stage” for South Carolina’s secession?

Why were the majority of South Carolina’s voters convinced that Lincoln’s election meant the end of their world?

Was it inevitable, as Mary Chesnut suggested, that South Carolina secede? What could have been done to stop the flow of events leading to the state’s break with the Union?

Compare the debate over secession in South Carolina with that of other significant movements such as the U.S. entrance into WWI, the Civil Rights movement, or the Vietnam War. What part did the economy, race, and propaganda play in each of these events?

Sources/Further Reading:

Walter B. Edgar, *South Carolina: A History*. USC Press, 1998

Federal Writers’ Project. *Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives for the Federal Writers’ Project, 1936 – 1938*. Library of Congress.

Michael Johnson and James Roark, eds., *No Chariot Let Down: Charleston’s Free People of Color on the Eve of the Civil War*. UNC Press, 1984

John Hammond Moore, ed., *A Plantation Mistress on the Eve of the Civil War: The Diary of Keziah Goodwin Hopkins Brevard, 1860-1861*. UNC Press, 1993

A. Toomer Porter, *Led On! Step by Step: Life in the South, 1828-1898*. Reprint by Home House Press, 2010.

C. Vann Woodward, ed., *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War*. Yale University Press, 1981