

Southern Secession and Abraham Lincoln's Presidential Election

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Winner, 1st Place, 2012-2013 Civil War Trust Best Lesson Plan Contest

Grades: Middle School

Approximate Length of Time: Three 45 minute class periods

Goal: Students will be able to describe how Lincoln's election as president caused southern secession (the Civil War).

Objectives:

1. Students will be able to describe Abraham Lincoln's presidential platform regarding slavery (i.e. that it is morally wrong, should not be extended in the West, and is permissible in the South) and African American rights (i.e. that blacks have the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness as listed in the Declaration of Independence).
2. Students will be able to describe why Abraham Lincoln's presidential platform alarmed slave owners and caused secession by some southern states (i.e. they lost power in the federal government/Congress and therefore favored individual state rights).

Materials Used:

1. "Abraham Lincoln and Slavery" reading worksheet: This handout contains various primary source quotes said by Abraham Lincoln. A student copy and teacher annotated copy is included.
2. "Dividing up the Free and Slave States" worksheet
3. Map of the Free and Slave states in the US in 1860: sample map found at <http://lincoln.lib.niu.edu/fimage/image.php?id=436>
4. "Assignment Expectations for the Abraham Lincoln Campaign Advertisement" chart
5. "Grading Rubric for the Abraham Lincoln Campaign Advertisement" chart

Anticipatory Set/Hook:

The teacher will begin the lesson by asking students to answer the following questions:

1. True or False: Abraham Lincoln thought slavery was morally wrong.
2. True or False: Abraham Lincoln thought black and whites were equal.
3. True or False: Abraham Lincoln thought southerners were evil people for having slaves.
4. True or False: Abraham Lincoln did not want slavery to expand into westward territories or states.
5. True or False: Southerners seceded since they would have eventually lost power in the federal government if slavery was ended in the West.

The teacher should explain that there is no right or wrong answer at this point in the lesson. The teacher just wants to determine what the student believes about Lincoln.

The teacher will explain to students that they will later return to these questions. The teacher should then state today's learning objectives. The teacher will point out that many southerners were alarmed by Lincoln's presidential platform. He or she will also state that many historians today find Lincoln's presidential platform distressing. Lincoln is not, in other words, the social hero that many Americans believe him to be. Instead his presidential campaign may have started the Civil War, and he himself may have been a racist.

PROCEDURE:

Students should study this lesson after first learning basic civil war vocabulary terms (i.e. civil war, secession, union, confederacy, and popular sovereignty) and the causes of the civil war (i.e. the Missouri Compromise, Kansas Nebraska Act, and Dred Scott case).

Activity 1:

Instruction: Working with a partner, students will complete the worksheet "Abraham Lincoln and Slavery." The teacher has tried to make these primary sources more accessible to students by...

- ❖ Having multiple sources that cover the same topic
- ❖ Breaking lengthy, complex texts into smaller quotes.
- ❖ Defining some advanced vocabulary terms in parenthesis
- ❖ Allowing each student to work with a partner

Once students are done working, the class will discuss each discussion question on the "Abraham Lincoln and Slavery" worksheet. The teacher can call on students at

random to see how he or she answered each question. The teacher could also have students raise their hand for the yes/no questions. If they said “yes” they would raise their hand; a “no” response would be signaled to the teacher since the student did not raise their hand.

As the students report their answer to each question, the teacher will facilitate a class discussion regarding Lincoln’s campaign platform. The teacher will ask students to consider...

1. Who is Lincoln’s intended audience for this text?
2. How did pro-slavery southerners view Lincoln at this time? The teacher may need to explain this.
3. What type of voter is Lincoln try to sway to his side through this speech? What will he need to say to win this person’s vote?
4. How could someone read this text and think Lincoln was for black equality and black rights?
5. How could someone read this text and think Lincoln was NOT for black equality and black rights?

The purpose of this discussion is for students to discover that Lincoln was portrayed by the pro-slavery press as a dangerous abolition. The teacher may need to give some history about the Lincoln-Douglas debates here. Lincoln was also trying to sway independent voters, which meant he had to appear moderate and not conservative on the issue of slavery. He had to show, in other words, that the press’s view of him was incorrect. The debate in history is whether Lincoln was carefully selecting his words as to not disclose that he was in fact for black equality or whether Lincoln was indeed proclaiming his viewpoint that blacks were inferior to whites.

Activity 2:

The class will then complete the “Dividing up the Free and Slave States” worksheet. This worksheet shows the break down of the US along the lines of free and slave states. To complete this worksheet:

1. Students will first examine a free and slave state map of the US in 1860. A sample map can be found at:
<http://www.nps.gov/nr/twhp/wwwlps/lessons/127liho/127locate2.htm>
Many textbooks also include this map in their curriculum.
2. Students will then fill out the first chart on the “Dividing up the Free and Slave States” worksheet. The teacher will call on students at random to identify whether each state is a slave holding state or a free state. The teacher can model filling out the worksheet using a smart board or overhead projector
3. The teacher will pause after the first chart is completed and ask the class how many votes each side had in the Senate. The class should notice that at this point each side has an equal number of votes in the Senate.

4. The class will then fill out the second chart, which includes the admission of Missouri, Maine, California, and Kansas. The teacher will then ask the class how many votes each side had in the senate. The class should notice that Free states have 4 more votes in the senate over slave states.
5. The teacher will then ask students whether President Lincoln would have approved a request by a western territory to be annexed to the US as a slave state. Lincoln's campaign platform showed that he would have vetoed such a request. In other words his election is one (among others) reasons southerners seceded. Many states secede knowing they would lose power and their way of life. They argued for self-government and state's rights over federal power.

As another checking for understanding activity the teacher would return to the true/false questions from the mental set and discuss the correct responses with students. The answers are...

1. True
2. False
3. False
4. True
5. True

Activity 3:

The teacher will ask students to design a campaign poster, song, cartoon, or speech regarding Lincoln. The teacher will go over the assignment expectation chart as well as grading rubric. Students will work individually on their campaign advertisement. This assignment offers students a choice grade, which should increase student engagement.

Closure:

Was Lincoln a racist? Was Lincoln a clever politician who knew how to select his words carefully so he could win an election? How will you remember Lincoln? The teacher could ask students to present their campaign advertisements to the class. The class could also complete a poll to see how the majority views Lincoln.

Assessment:

Students will complete and discuss the mental set True/False questions.

Students will read and discuss the "Abraham Lincoln and Slavery" worksheet.

Students will complete and discuss the "Dividing up the Free and Slave States" worksheet

Students will complete their own Lincoln presidential advertisement.

Assessment:

1. Students will complete and discuss the mental set True/False questions.
2. Students will read and discuss the “Abraham Lincoln and Slavery” worksheet.
3. Students will complete and discuss the “Dividing up the Free and Slave States” worksheet
4. Students will complete their own Lincoln presidential advertisement.