



DISCOVERING JUSTICE CHILDREN DISCOVERING JUSTICE

Grade 8 Sample Lesson

Growing Tensions between North and South

Section Objective

Students will think critically about events that led to civil war by categorizing them as actions that created greater tensions or those that held war off by compromise or peaceful intervention.

Preparation

- Prepare to put students into pairs.
- Make copies of **North vs. South Events** and **Matching: North vs. South Events**, one of each for each pair of students.

Warm-Up

- Ask students to jot down what they think a civil war is and how it differs from other kinds of wars. Have a few students share their responses.

Was the Civil War Avoidable?

For this lesson, your students will build an argument in favor or in opposition to this statement: **The Civil War was unavoidable.** By looking at economic, social, and political factors, students will build a case for or against the inevitability of the split within the Union.

- Have students write this question in their notebooks: Was the Civil War unavoidable? Then have them divide their notebook paper in half by drawing a vertical line down the middle and labeling one column “Avoidable” and the other column “Unavoidable.”
- Let them know that they will keep track of facts and ideas that would lead to the belief that the war could have been avoided in the left-hand column. Actions that were taken to avoid war, such as political compromises or decisions that were made in order to maintain stability and keep the Union together, will go in that column.
- Any facts or ideas that would lead to the belief of the inevitability of a civil war will go in the right-hand column. This includes actions taken by individuals and organizations that would not, or felt they could not compromise or negotiate with the opposing side. Events that led to heightened tensions or that fanned the flames of hostility between the two sides should be placed in this column.

- Write these statements on the board:
The two issues that most divided the South and the North were tariffs and slavery. Both stemmed from significant economic differences between these two regions, but the issue of slavery would become the wedge that would split them into two opposing sides of a bloody and costly civil war.
- Tell students that a series of events occurred that led to civil war between the North and the South. Pair students up and hand out a copy of North vs. South Events to each pair. Have students work with their partners to divide the **North vs. South Events** by recording each of the titles of the events in one of the two columns in their notebooks. For example, the Missouri Compromise would go under the column headed “Avoidable” because it was an action taken to avoid civil war.
- Then, working with their partners, have students check their understanding by completing the activity, **Matching: North vs. South Events**. Students may use the descriptions from **North vs. South Events** to help them match titles of events to the short summaries in the matching activity.

Assessment Writing Prompt:

Choose one of these prompts and respond to it in writing.

- Do you think the Civil War could have been avoided? Explain your position by using historical evidence.

OR

- Pick three events and explain how they contributed to the start of the Civil War.

Note about responses to the first prompt: In assessing the responses to the first prompt, look for ways that students successfully build a case one way or the other. Consider the viewpoint that war can almost always be avoided in a lawful society, if compromises are made, as well as the viewpoint that an institution such as slavery was so antithetical to the values enumerated in the founding documents that it could not be tolerated and therefore, no compromise around it could, or should have been made. In other words, there is no one correct answer to this prompt. Rather, you are assessing your students’ ability to articulate an argument and use historical evidence in a logical way to support it. While the evidence does seem to point to the inevitability of civil war, a student could argue that the compromises that were made did hold it off for at least several decades.

Contemporary Connection

The tariffs imposed during this time period were highly unpopular with Southerners.

- Have students research modern-day examples of taxes that are highly unpopular with certain groups of people and report to the class about them.

North vs. South Events

Missouri Compromise

In 1819, Missouri requested to join the Union as a state that permitted slaveholding. This threatened to disturb the balance of power in the federal government between the number of slaveholding states (called “slave states”) and states in which slavery had been abolished or was legally phasing it out (called “free states”). In order to keep the peace, Congress established a two-part compromise. This compromise admitted Missouri as a slave state along with admitting Maine, around the same time, as a free state. It also drew an imaginary line across the former Louisiana territory, along Missouri’s southern border (latitude 36°30’), outlawing slavery north of the line and permitting it south of the line.

The Tariff of 1828

The Tariff of 1828 was a tax passed by Congress placed on imported goods. It was designed to protect Northern industries, which were having a hard time competing with the sale of those foreign goods. The tax directly harmed the South by forcing Southerners to pay higher prices for goods they did not produce. It also indirectly affected their economy by making it more difficult for countries like England to buy raw materials from the South, particularly cotton. The South, particularly South Carolina, was outraged at this tariff and called it the “Tariff of Abominations.”

Nat Turner’s Rebellion

In 1831, Nat Turner, a slave, along with about 60 other slaves, led a violent rebellion that resulted in the deaths of more than 55 Virginians. Turner and many others were executed for their part, or suspected part, in the revolt. Nat Turner’s Rebellion struck long-term fear in the hearts of slave owners, which caused them to redouble their efforts to keep slaves disempowered. The rebellion led to laws that kept slaves illiterate, restricted their rights to assembly, and required white ministers to be present at all slave church services.

The Nullification Crisis

The Nullification Crisis involved a confrontation between South Carolina and the federal government. The crisis ensued after South Carolina declared that the federal Tariff of 1828, and another, the Tariff of 1832, were unconstitutional and therefore null and void within the sovereign boundaries of the state. Military preparations to resist anticipated federal enforcement were initiated by the state and South Carolina’s state government passed the Nullification Ordinance. In March of 1833, the U.S. Congress passed both the Force Bill, which authorized the president to use military forces against South Carolina, and a new negotiated tariff, the Compromise Tariff of 1833, which was satisfactory to South Carolina. The South Carolina congress reconvened and repealed its Nullification Ordinance on March 15, 1833, but three days later nullified the Force Bill as a symbolic gesture to assert its principles. This crisis underscored the ongoing constitutional battle of states rights versus federal control.

The 1850 Compromise

The Compromise of 1850 was actually a package of five laws that settled a dispute over the status of land acquired from Mexico during the Mexican-American War (1846–1848). The deal was crafted and executed by Senators Henry Clay and Stephen Douglas and signed into

law by President Millard Fillmore. The Compromise addressed divisions between North and South, and successfully held back war and preserved the Union, but only for another decade. In it, the following was resolved:

- California was admitted to the Union as a free state.
- The slave trade (the sale of slaves, not slavery itself) was abolished in the District of Columbia.
- In exchange for 10 million dollars to pay off its war debt, Texas ceded territory to the federal government for what would become parts of New Mexico, Utah, Colorado, and Arizona.
- The Territory of New Mexico and the Territory of Utah were established under “popular sovereignty” which allowed the people who lived there the right to decide if slavery would or would not be allowed there.
- The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 strengthened existing laws about runaway slaves, requiring all escaped slaves, upon capture, to be returned to their masters and forcing officials and citizens of free states to cooperate in this process. It also denied legal protections or power for captured slaves to prove their freedom.

The Publication of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*

Published in 1852, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* was an anti-slavery novel featuring the character of Uncle Tom, a black slave suffering under three masters, the worst being the evil master, Simon LaGree. The book was enormously popular and would become the best-selling novel of the nineteenth century. It depicts the cruelty of slavery and asserts the power of Christian love in overcoming the horrors associated with enslavement. The book infuriated Southerners who were fiercely pro-slavery while strengthening the resolve of Northern abolitionists to outlaw slavery nationwide. Many Southerners felt that it insulted their way of life and depicted slavery inaccurately. Many Northerners hoped the publication of the book would bring about an end to the institution of slavery. When President Lincoln met the author, he exclaimed, “So this is the little woman who started this great war!”

The Kansas-Nebraska Act

In 1854, Congress enacted a law to address the organization of territories in Kansas and Nebraska. The purpose of the act was to open the territories to settlement and to establish a firm rationale for a trans-continental railroad system. Because these territories were north of the Missouri Compromise line, no mention of slavery was made in the bill’s original version. Before it became law, a popular sovereignty clause was added, giving the people who lived there the right to decide the territory’s status as slaveholding or free. This caused many people to flood into the area in order to sway the decision. The Kansas-Nebraska Act created a great deal of tension between the South and the North and resulted in the territory being called “Bleeding Kansas.” The act would soon incite violent conflict, including looting, the destruction of property, and eventually, loss of life.

The Dred Scott Decision

A Missouri slave, Dred Scott, and his wife, Harriet, sued for their freedom by arguing that they lived for a time with their owner in Wisconsin, a free territory, and should therefore be freed. The case went all the way to the Supreme Court, which ruled against Scott. The ruling said that Scott was not a citizen and was therefore not allowed to bring his case to court. The Chief Justice reasoned that giving Scott his freedom would be like taking property away from

his owner. Furthermore, it ruled that the Missouri Compromise was unconstitutional because it established territories that prohibited citizens from owning a particular kind of property. Chief Justice Roger Taney hoped his ruling would settle the issue of slavery in the territories and would help the country avoid civil war. However, it had the opposite effect, as it infuriated Northerners opposed to slavery and led to heightened tensions between the North and the South.

John Brown's Raid on Harper's Ferry

John Brown was a white abolitionist who believed that the only way to overthrow the institution of slavery was through armed, violent resistance. He did not think that the issue of slavery could be resolved through legal means. With a group of 21 other men, he raided an arsenal in Harper's Ferry, Virginia in order to steal weapons and ammunition and distribute them to slaves he had convinced to revolt. At first Brown's plan was succeeding as he and his men holed up in the armory with hostages taken. However, federal troops soon stormed the armory, killed several of Brown's men (including two of his sons), and arrested Brown. He was wounded, and then later hanged for his crimes. Many Southerners were shocked by Brown's actions and afraid there would be further violent actions taken to end slavery. Many Northerners saw John Brown as a hero and a martyr for the cause of abolition.

Matching: North vs. South Events

1. Missouri Compromise
2. The Tariff of 1828
3. Nat Turner's Rebellion
4. The Nullification Crisis
5. The 1850 Compromise
6. Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*
7. The Kansas-Nebraska Act
8. The Dred Scott Decision
9. John Brown's Raid on Harper's Ferry

This event was an uprising of slaves against slaveholding families in Virginia. When it was over, laws were made in some Southern states that made it a crime to teach slaves how to read and write, and it forbade groups of slaves to assemble in large gatherings without white people present. _____

This book about a slave's life sold more than two million copies within two years of its publication worldwide. Southern slaveholders thought it portrayed an inaccurate and negative picture of life in the South. Northern abolitionists welcomed it because they felt it showed the cruelties of slavery. _____

This Supreme Court case was a setback for abolitionists as it reaffirmed the idea that slaves were considered to be property and therefore could not gain their freedom by living in a free territory for a period of time. It nullified the Missouri Compromise, stating that the federal government did not have the right to exclude slaves from the territories.

The passage of this law was designed to boost American industry by encouraging Southerners to buy American-made goods produced by Northern states. Southerners had been used to buying inexpensive goods from foreign countries; this law placed a tax on those goods, forcing Southerners to pay higher prices and thus infuriating them.

This group of laws admitted Missouri to the Union as a slave state, admitted Maine as a free state to maintain the balance in the Senate, and prohibited slavery north of latitude 36° 30' in the Louisiana Purchase territory, with the exception of Missouri.

This slave revolt began with the theft of weapons in an attempt to arm slaves and ended with federal troops capturing its leader and killing some of his followers. It was a precursor to the Civil War as the country saw some abolitionists take violent action to overthrow what they believed was the oppressive institution of slavery. _____

This event added the idea of “popular sovereignty” to decisions about whether territory would become slaveholding or free. It caused many people to temporarily move into the territory in order to sway the decision the way they wanted it to go. This led to greater conflict and even violence. _____

This group of laws dealt with land acquired from Mexico after the Mexican-American war, the admission of California to the Union, and the Fugitive Slave Act, and it ended the slave trade in Washington, DC. _____

This event was a confrontation between South Carolina and the federal government. South Carolina abhorred the tariffs that the federal government was imposing so much that they declared them null and void. President Andrew Jackson threatened to send troops down South to get the state to comply while also pushing through lower tariffs, thus averting a greater crisis. _____