



North Carolina State Capitol, 1861

Supplemental Lesson Plan: Voices of Secession

In this lesson for grade 8, students will examine primary sources that illustrate how deeply divided North Carolinians felt on the question of secession. After analyzing both sides of the issue, students will split into groups of two or three. The teacher will assign historical personality profiles to each group and ask them to write a letter, speech, or diary entry reflecting that character's view on the question of secession. Groups will present their writings to the class.

Competency Goals

This lesson can be used in partial fulfillment of the following:

NCSCOS Social Studies Grade 8: 4.01; 4.02; 4.04

NCSCOS English/Language Arts Grade 8: 1.01, 1.02, 1.03; 2.01; 3.01, 3.03; 4.01, 4.02;

Objectives

Students will:

- Learn why North Carolina ultimately seceded
- Use primary resources to gain a better understanding of historical events
- Synthesize historical perspectives to create a plausible though fictitious historical narrative

Teacher Planning

Provide the following materials either through web access to *The North Carolina Civil War Experience* or through downloaded handouts.

Site Narrative – *The North Carolina State Capitol in the Civil War*

Lesson Narrative – *North Carolina's Secession Crisis*

Materials Needed - Letters, speeches, and/or diary entries written by North Carolinians between January and May 1861. Some material is included in this lesson plan, but teachers may choose to have their students seek out additional primary resources.

Glossary of terms found in the primary source

Time Requirement

45 minutes to one hour is required for each segment (for block scheduling, add more time to edit and share letters).

Teacher Input

- A. Have the students read the site narrative and lesson plan narrative as homework prior to the lesson.
- B. Lead students in a class discussion of the narratives.

Classroom Activities: Guided Practice

The teacher will begin the lesson by passing out copies of the transcribed written primary sources to each student. The teacher may choose to read each perspective or have different students read aloud to the class. After each piece, the teacher will make sure the class fully comprehends the writer's message. The teacher may want to ask:

- a. Who wrote the document (i.e. man or woman, politician or private citizen, etc)?
- b. For what audience was the document written? Is their goal to be persuasive, defensive, informative, etc.?
- c. What does this source tell you about life in North Carolina in early 1861?
- d. Name something that the author said that you think is important.
- e. Has the author left you with any questions?
- f. What is writer's tone (scared, indignant, determined, boastful, etc.)?

Classroom Activities: Independent Practice

After each document has been read and discussed, the teacher should split the class into groups of two or three students. Each group will be given a short biography of a North Carolinian from the time period. Using the classroom discussion and the primary documents themselves, each group will write a letter, speech, newspaper column, or diary entry reflecting the views that their historical figure likely would have held. Students must include the following information in their writing:

- a. What are this person's views on the secession crisis?
- b. Give at least two reasons why this person is for or against secession.
- c. Include how this person's race, social status, gender, and/or job may play a role in their feelings on this issue.
- d. Were this person's feelings on secession affected by President Lincoln's call for troops after the firing on Fort Sumter?
- e. Would this person benefit more if North Carolina remains in the Union or secedes and joins the Confederacy?
- f. If North Carolina goes to war, will this person go off to fight? Do they want to go?
- g. Is this person conflicted in any way about their feelings?

Closure

- A. Have students share their letters with the class.
- B. Bring the students together as a class to review the events of the secession crisis.

Assessment

Students will be evaluated on their comprehension of the secession crisis through their writing. By incorporating the required information, students will demonstrate their understanding of the causes of secession and the significance of the time period.

Lesson Plan Glossary

Abraham Lincoln – elected the 16th president of the United States in 1860; served from March 1861 until his assassination in April 1865.

Fort Sumter - the opening shots of the Civil War were fired on April 12, 1861 at

this fort in the Charleston, S.C. harbor; named for South Carolina Revolutionary War patriot Thomas Sumter.

secession – to withdraw formally from an organization; in the case of the American Civil War, the southern states exercised their perceived right to secession by withdrawing from the United States.

secession convention – convention of delegates from across the state who came to debate and vote on whether North Carolina should withdraw from the United States; voted for secession on May 20, 1861.

secessionist – one who held views that North Carolina should withdraw from the Union.

unionist – one who held views that North Carolina should remain in the Union.

North Carolina's Secession Crisis

Following the election of Abraham Lincoln in November 1860, South Carolina withdrew from the Union, followed closely by Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana and Texas. In North Carolina, citizens were deeply divided on the issue.

Prior to April 1861, the majority of North Carolinians were opposed to secession, though a forceful minority pushed for the state to join the Confederacy. Governor John W. Ellis led the state's secessionist movement while unionists like Zebulon Vance campaigned against joining the Southern cause. Secessionists believed that with Lincoln in the White House, slavery and southern economic interests were in immediate danger. Unionists argued that Lincoln had not done anything to cause North Carolina to secede. They did not want to leave the Union unless the President took direct action to end slavery or threaten the southern way of life.

The debate continued until April 15, 1861. On that date, just three days after the April 12 firing on Fort Sumter, Governor Ellis received a telegram from Simon Cameron, Lincoln's Secretary of War. The telegram asked for two regiments of troops for immediate military service to suppress the rebellion in the lower South. The attack on Fort Sumter and the call for troops silenced North Carolina unionists. Ellis responded to Cameron that he would be "no party to his wicked violation of the laws of the country and to this war upon the liberties of a free people. You can get no troops from North Carolina."

The governor quickly called the General Assembly into special session for the purpose of authorizing a state convention. Delegates to the state convention were elected by the people on May 13 and met at the State Capitol on May 20, 1861. The 120 delegates met here, in the House Chamber, to debate North Carolina's next move. Secessionist F. Burton Craige from Rowan County proposed an ordinance to dissolve the state's relationship with the other states in the Union. Despite political divisions, the convention unanimously approved Craige's ordinance. The convention then passed an ordinance ratifying the provisional Confederate constitution. As news of the vote spread through Raleigh, 100 guns boomed and church bells rang to proclaim the state's secession.

Though North Carolina was the last state to pass a secession ordinance and join the ranks of the Confederacy, the state contributed enormously to the war effort. Between 1861 and 1865, the state furnished approximately 130,000 Confederate soldiers, and as many as 35,000 of them died.

Voices of Secession Primary Sources for Classroom Discussion

Letter from Zebulon Vance to William Dickson:

December 11, 1860

The Whole Southern mind is inflamed to the highest pitch and the leaders in the disunion move are scorning every suggestion of compromise and rushing everything with ruinous and indecent haste that would seem to imply that they were absolute fools—Yet they are acting wisely for their ends—they are “precipitating” the people into a revolution without giving them time to think – They fear lest the people shall think;. . .But the people must think, and when they do begin to think and hear the matter properly discussed they will consider long and soberly before they tear down this noble fabric and invite anarchy and confusion, carnage, civil war, and financial ruin with the breathless hurry of men flying from pestilence. . . .If we go out now we cant take the army and the navy with us, and Lincoln could as easily employ them to force us back as he could to prevent our going out. . . .We have everything to gain and nothing on earth to lose by delay, but by too hasty action we may take a fatal step that we never can retrace-may lose a heritage that we can never recover ‘though we seek it earnestly and with tears.’

Johnston, Frontis W. *The Papers of Zebulon Baird Vance*. Raleigh: Dept of Archives and History, 1963.

Speech delivered by Rep. Thomas N. Crumpler of Ashe County to the House of Commons on January 10, 1861:

...I think it must be admitted that we all told the people of North Carolina in the late canvass we were for the Union, and that it was not to be broken up if Lincoln was elected. Is there any good reason why we should change our position? I believe that so far as the North is concerned, the prospect for the full recognition of Southern rights is better than it was at the time of Lincoln's election, or at any time within several years before. The Governors of several Northern States, including the great States of New York and Pennsylvania, have recommended the faithful observance of all the laws intended for the protection of slave property, and the repeal of all the personal liberty bills, and no man who is an attentive observer of events can fail to see that a re-action is going on in the northern mind.

... Look through the clouds and behold the light that breaks upon the prospect. I can see it. Lincoln's administration is powerless to harm us. Before its close, his party will be scattered into fragments. In the meantime, the conservative element of the country will rally to a common standard, and in another contest achieve the victory. Let us labor for this result, and even if we do fail, and in civil war we are called on to die upon some gory field far from home and kindred, it will not be unpleasant to reflect in the last hour, that we strove to avert the ruin of our country. And if success crowns our efforts, to the latest

day of our lives we will enjoy the satisfaction of having contributed our humble assistance in transmitting to posterity the blessings of this great and free government, founded by our fathers.

Speech of T. N. Crumpler, of Ashe, on Federal Relations, Delivered in the House of Commons, Jan. 10, 1861. Call number Cp 970.71 C95 c.2 (North Carolina Collection, UNC- Chapel Hill)

Letter from John T. Jones to Edmund E. Jones:

Dear Father,

Chapel Hill
Jan. 20th 1861

. . . I disagree very much with you in your idea of a central republic such a thing can never be, nor if it was practicable do I think that we should ever enter into it. May be that some of the states have been rather hasty, they are fighting for the institutions of the whole South and the South will yet sustain them.

Who would rather be swung on to the tail end of a Northern or central Republic than to be equals in a Southern Confederacy.

The safety of our institutions depend upon our living united; if we are divided where do we look for success. The North has shown that it was unwilling to compromise by the negation of the Crittenden resolutions. By all the South presenting one united front we may yet bring them to their senses but never while they find us quarreling among ourselves and if the worst must come let us all go together where nature would point that we should be. I know you think I am like all the young folks in for a charge without considering the consequences. I have weighed the matter as well as I am able and think that mine is the only safe course. . . .

John T. Jones

Letter from Gov. John W. Ellis to Georgia Gov. Joseph E. Brown:

January 21, 1861

...I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of two dispatches from you in the 19th inst. The latter of which informed me that Georgia has formally seceded from the Union.

I trust that this event is the beginning of a future of prosperity, peace and happiness for the people of Georgia and my earnest desire is that North Carolina will unite her destinies, by a formal act, as they are now in fact united with the Seceding States. The information furnished by your first dispatch, that a Convention of the Seceding States would be held in Montgomery on the 4th of Feb. next to form a Confederated government, will furnish the occasion of a few Suggestions on my part. North Carolina will not be represented in that Convention, but I trust and believe, will Soon enter into the

government which the Convention will form, particularly if it Should be an acceptable government. . . .

Governor John W. Ellis
Executive Department, Raleigh, North Carolina

Tolbert, Noble J. *The Papers of John Willis Ellis*. Vol. 2. Raleigh: Dept. of Archives and History, 1964.

Letter from John Wesley Halliburton, March 6, 1861 to his fiancé:

Chapel Hill
March the 6th

My Darling.

...I have seen Lincoln's inaugural. It declares that he will collect the revenue and hold on to UNS property. It amounts to coercion. Still it does not make me a secessionist only an anti-Lincoln man. His life is of less value than the Union. I can hate him and still love the Union. We must not dissolve a Government because it has one traitor in its borders. Do away with the traitor and hold on to the Government. I have a hard time here about politics. I am assailed and attacked by all the boys that I meet, I verily believe that I am the only union man in College...

[citation]

Telegram from Governor Ellis to US Secretary of War Simon Cameron:

Raleigh, April 15 [1861]

To Simon Cameron, Secretary of War:

Your dispatch is received, and if genuine which its extraordinary character leads me to doubt, I have to say in reply that I regard a levy of troops for the purpose of subjugating the States of the South, as in violation of the Constitution and a usurpation of power.

I can be no party to this wicked violation of the laws of the country, and to this war upon the liberties of a free people. You can get no troops from North Carolina.

John W. Ellis,
Governor of North Carolina

National Archives, Washington, D.C.

Diary of Catherine Edmondston, wife of a wealthy Halifax County planter and slaveholder

April 17, 1861

Heard last night that Lincoln issued his Proclamation calling for 75,000 troops to compel South Carolina to obedience. Set to the Gov. of NC for [illegible] that being the quota required from N Carolina. Thank God! that we had a governor who had spirit to refuse, which he did most decidedly & firmly. Think of the insult the man puts on us! – call upon us to subdue our Sister! The Proclamation was dated the very day of the Evacuation of Sumter! So he must have had an agent to Telegraph to him, when lo! out rumbles his thunder!

...Never was known such excitement as was caused my Mr. Lincoln's proclamation. The whole South flew to arms. On the day that the Gov. refused N Carolina's quota, Forts Caswell & Macon & the Arsenal at Fayetteville were seized by volunteer troops without waiting for orders.

Journal of a Secesh Lady: The Diary of Catherine Ann Devereux Edmondston, 1860-1866. Edited by Beth Gilbert Crabtree and James W. Patton.

Letters from Sen. Jonathan Worth in May 1861:

May 13, 1861

To Springs, Oak & Co.,

I have been the most persevering and determined public man in my State to preserve the Union—the last to abandon the hope, that the good sense of the Nation would prevent a collision between the extremes, each of which I viewed with equal abhorrence. I am left no other alternative but to fight for or against my section. I can not hesitate. Lincoln has made us a unit to resist until we repel our invaders or die.

May 15, 1861

To D. G. Worth,

I think the South is committing suicide, but my lot is cast with the South and being unable to manage the ship, I intend to face the breakers manfully and go down with my companions.

de Roulhac Hamilton, J. G., ed. *The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth*. Vol. 1. Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton Co., 1909.

Historic Personality Profiles for Writing Assignment

Unionists:

William Woods Holden: the owner and editor of the *North Carolina Standard* newspaper in Raleigh and editorialized against secession in 1860. Woods was also a NC legislator and chosen to represent Wake County at the secession convention.

William A. Graham: a U.S. senator and former N.C. governor. Graham believed that Lincoln's election alone did not warrant secession. He represented Orange County at the secession convention.

George E. Badger: a prominent lawyer from New Bern, Badger resented that the fiery actions of South Carolina threatened to draw his home state into a war. He represented Wake County at the secession convention.

Bedford Brown: a U.S. senator from Caswell County and a states' rights unionist who believed that states did not have the right to nullify the constitution. He remained a Democrat, however, and was elected to the North Carolina Senate after the Civil War in 1868. At that time, the Reconstruction Republicans controlled the North Carolina legislature and refused to seat Brown.

Secessionists:

F. Burton Craige: a lawyer and U.S. representative from Rowan County. Craige served as a delegate to the state convention in 1861 and introduced the Ordinance of Secession in the form in which it was adopted.

Thomas Clingman: a U.S. representative and later U.S. senator from Surry County. During the Civil War he refused to resign his Senate seat and was one of ten senators expelled from the Senate in absentia. He then served as a general in the Confederate States Army.

William Waightstill Avery: a N.C. representative and senator from Burke County. Avery advocated strongly for states' rights when it came to the slavery issue. He died in Morganton from wounds received in a skirmish with a party of Tennessee unionists in 1864.

Weldon N. Edwards: a U.S. representative from Gaston County, NC. Chosen as the president of the secession convention in 1861.

Other Viewpoints:

Harriet Jacobs: was born into slavery in Edenton and escaped to Philadelphia at the age of 22. Her autobiographical narrative, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, was published in 1861. Jacobs hoped to shed light on the horrors of slavery and influence public opinion in the North with her book.

A 20 year-old farmwife in Burke County: pro-union sentiment was strongest in the western part of the state, typically because the farmers there worked small plots of land and did not own slaves. However, young men from all parts of the state would be drafted and sent off to fight for the Confederacy.

A newspaper editor in Wilmington: between November 1860 and May 1861, newspapers across the state wrote and published editorials non-stop on the issue of secession. Some papers leaned heavily pro-union, while others advocated for secession. Think about the impact a war would have on the port city of Wilmington...would it benefit or hurt the citizens and businesses there?

Hinton Rowan Helper: born near Mocksville, Helper's family owned few enslaved people. He gained fame for his book, *The Impending Crisis of the South*, written partly in North Carolina but published when the author was in the North. He argued that slavery hurt the economic prospects of non-slaveholders and was an impediment to the growth of the entire South.