The Civil War: 1861–1865

Backwards Planning Curriculum Units

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How To Use This Unit

Backwards planning offers an innovative yet simple approach to meeting curriculum goals; it also provides a way to keep students engaged and focused throughout the learning process. Many teachers approach history instruction in the following manner: they identify a topic required by state and/or national standards, they find materials on that topic, they use those materials with their students, and then they administer some sort of standard test at the end of the unit. Backwards planning, rather than just starting with a required instructional topic, goes a step further by identifying exactly what students need to know by the end of the unit—the so-called "enduring understandings." The next step involves assessment: devising ways to determine whether students have learned what they need to know. The final step involves planning the teaching/learning process so that students can acquire the knowledge needed.

This product uses backwards planning to combine a PowerPoint presentation, activities that involve authentic assessment, and traditional tests (multiple-choice and essay) into a complete curriculum unit. Although the materials have enough built-in flexibility that you can use them in a number of ways, we suggest the following procedure:

1. Start with the "essential questions" listed on slide 2 of the PowerPoint presentation (these also appear in the teacher support materials). Briefly go over them with students before getting into the topic material. These questions will help students focus their learning and note taking during the course of the unit. You can also choose to use the essential questions as essay questions at the end of the unit; one way to do this is to let students know at the outset that one of the essential questions will be on the test—they just won't know which one.

2. Next, discuss the activities students will complete during the unit. This will also help focus their learning and note taking, and it will lead them to view the PowerPoint presentation in a different light, considering it a source of ideas for authentic-assessment projects.

3. Present the PowerPoint to the class. Most slides have an image and bullet points summarizing the slide's topic. The Notes page for each slide contains a paragraph or two of information that you can use as a presentation script, or just as background information for your own reference. You don't need to present the entire PowerPoint at once: it's broken up into several sections, each of which concludes with some discussion questions that echo parts of the essential questions and also help students to get closer to the "enduring understandings." Spend some time with the class going over and debating these questions—this will not only help students think critically about the material, but it will also allow you to incorporate different modes of instruction during a single class period, offering a better chance to engage students.

4. Have students complete one or more of the authentic-assessment activities. These activities are flexible: most can be completed either individually or in groups, and either as homework or as in-class assignments. Each activity includes a rubric; many also have graphic organizers. You can choose to have students complete the activities after you have shown them the entire PowerPoint presentation, or you can show them one section of the PowerPoint, go over the discussion questions, and then have students complete an activity.

5. End the unit with traditional assessment. The support materials include a 20-question multiple-choice quiz; you can combine this with an essay question (you can use one of the essential questions or come up with one of your own) to create a full-period test.

6. If desired, debrief with students by going over the essential questions with them again and remind them what the enduring understandings are.

We are dedicated to continually improving our products and working with teachers to develop exciting and effective tools for the classroom. We can offer advice on how to maximize the use of the product and share others' experiences. We would also be happy to work with you on ideas for customizing the presentation.

We value your feedback, so please let us know more about the ways in which you use this product to supplement your lessons; we're also eager to hear any recommendations you might have for ways in which we can expand the functionality of this product in future editions. You can e-mail us at access@socialstudies.com. We look forward to hearing from you.

Dr. Aaron Willis
Chief Education Officer
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Although the United States became unified with the ratification of the Constitution, it became clear that various factions and regional groups still sought to protect their interests and ways of life. Sectionalism, economic interests, slavery, and states' rights all tore at the Union throughout the first part of the 19th century. Politicians devised various compromises to satisfy these factions and keep the country together, but in 1857 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled the Missouri Compromise unconstitutional in *Dred Scott* v. *Sandford.* This decision hastened the outbreak of what seemed an inevitable showdown—the Civil War.

From 1861 to 1865, the U.S. saw the bloodiest conflict in its history, with over 600,000 Americans dead. The conflict ended slavery as an institution in America and restored the break between North and South. While states' rights and sectionalism have since remained issues, Americans have never threatened war upon each other to the extent that they did in the 1860s.

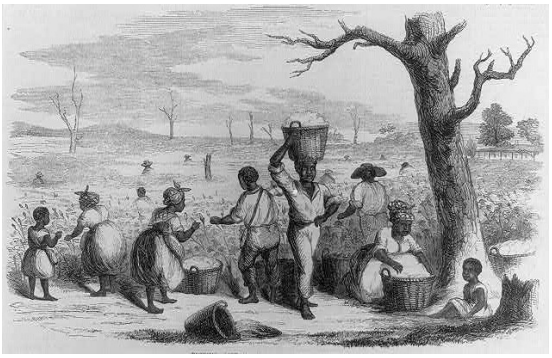
(Image: Fallen soldiers lined up near the Dunker Church during the Battle of Antietam, 1862.)

Essential Questions

- What social, political, and economic issues tended to divide Americans in the period prior to the Civil War?
- Why did the election of Abraham Lincoln seem to exacerbate sectional tensions in the prewar period?
- What impact did political and military leadership have on the conduct of the war?
- How did the war affect minorities during the period (women, free blacks, slaves, immigrants)?
- How did the Civil War "make" modern America?

Fundamental Causes of the War

- Sectionalism and states' rights
- Slavery
- Economic issues



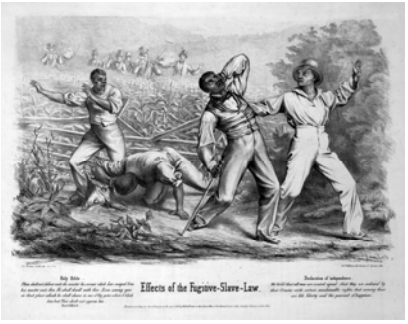
- The North and South differed on the proper function of the federal government. In the North, most felt that the power of the federal government was supreme over the power of the states. Most Southerners felt differently, believing that state governments and loyalty to one's state or region should take precedence over federal power and allegiance to the nation as a whole.

- The North—with an abundance of free, skilled labor—had little use for slavery. The South, however, with a smaller population and an agricultural economy, needed labor brought in from outside the white population. Slavery fit that bill nicely, although only a small percentage of white Southerners owned slaves. As the United States expanded due to territorial acquisitions and the doctrine of Manifest Destiny, a struggle ensued as to whether slavery should be allowed in those territories.

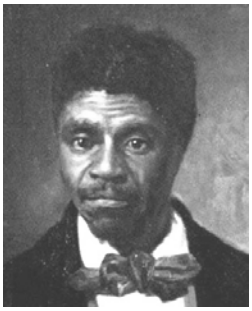
- It becomes evident early on in the nation's history that the North and South were moving in different economic directions. The North thrived on its industrial economy, while the South remained primarily agricultural. As a result, the South frequently opposed tariffs for internal improvements that the North supported. In the 1830s, tariff debates nearly led to secession of Southern states, especially South Carolina.

The Dividing Union

- Missouri Compromise (1820)
- Compromise of 1850 and the Fugitive Slave Law
- Kansas–Nebraska Act (1854)
- *Dred Scott* v. *Sandford* (1857)



Cartoon criticizing the Fugitive Slave Law

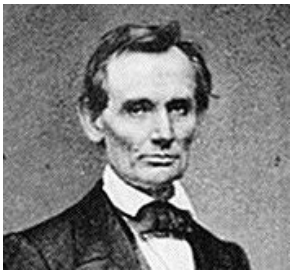

Dred Scott

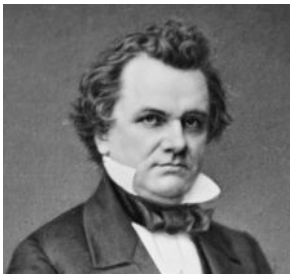
As the nation expanded due to the Louisiana Purchase and territory acquired in the Mexican-American War, questions arose as to whether slavery would be permitted in these new lands. Congress sought to resolve the issue through various legislative compromises. However, the *Dred Scott* decision destroyed the fragile balance between pro-slavery and free factions, putting the nation on the road to war.

- The impending statehood of the Missouri Territory in 1820 led to the Missouri Compromise. Congress agreed to admit Missouri to the union as a slave state and Maine as a free state. The 36º30´ line officially divided Northern free territories from Southern slave ones.
- The admission of California to the Union caused further sectional unrest. The Compromise of 1850 was a package of several measures; some benefited the North, others benefited the South. Perhaps the most controversial provision was the Fugitive Slave Law, which required Northern law enforcement agents to return runaway slaves to their masters. Several states enacted “personal liberty” laws to prohibit this.
- The Kansas-Nebraska Act, introduced by Illinois Senator Stephen Douglas, allowed the Kansas and Nebraska territories to determine their slave/free status by having their residents vote on the issue (popular sovereignty). This plan led to violence between pro- and anti-slavery factions in the Kansas territory, most famously a raid led by anti-slavery fanatic John Brown.
- In the *Dred Scott* case in 1857, the Supreme Court ruled that a slave moved from slave to free territory remained a slave. The decision also declared the Missouri Compromise unconstitutional. Many historians hold that this decision so inflamed sectional tensions that it made the Civil War inevitable.

The Election of 1860

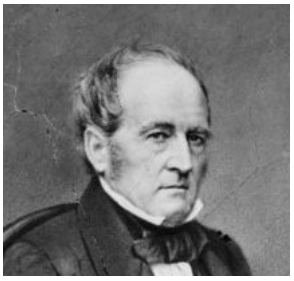
Abraham Lincoln





Stephen A. Douglas

John C. Breckin-ridge



John Bell

Sectional tensions were at a fever pitch as the presidential election of 1860 approached. Four diverse candidates secured their party's nominations. Abraham Lincoln, a relatively obscure ex-congressman from Illinois, defeated several better-known candidates to become the nominee of the Republican party. The Democrats split over the issue of slavery and ended up nominating two candidates: the Northern anti-slavery wing chose Illinois Senator Stephen A. Douglas, while former Vice-President John C. Breckenridge represented the Southern pro-slavery faction. John Bell, former Speaker of the House and senator from Tennessee, represented the slavery-neutral Constitutional Union party.

Lincoln won the electoral vote by a wide margin, 180 to 123 for the other three candidates combined. However, he only carried 40 percent of the popular vote and did not win a single Southern state; in some, his name didn't even appear on the ballot. Lincoln's election intensified the widening divisions between North and South. Several states had already threatened to leave the Union if Lincoln won, and they were now ready to make good on that threat.

Civil War: Backwards Planning Activities

Enduring understandings:

The Civil War "made modern America"
The Civil War was a conflict over slavery
The Civil War caused divided loyalties among Americans
Roles of women and African Americans changed dramatically during the war years
The Civil War resulted in great strides toward ensuring liberty and equality
The Civil War greatly expanded America technologically and industrially
The Civil War enhanced the power of the president of the United States as chief executive and commander-in-chief

Essential questions:

What social, political, and economic issues tended to divide Americans in the period prior to the Civil War?
Why did the election of Abraham Lincoln seem to exacerbate sectional tensions in the prewar period?
What impact did political and military leadership have on the conduct of the war?
How did the war impact minorities during the period (women, free blacks, slaves, immigrants)?
How did the Civil War "make" modern America?

Learning Experiences and Instruction

Students will need to know…	Students will need to be able to…
1. Fundamental causes of the Civil War 2. Major "players" during the Civil War, including political, social, and military figures 3. How various innovations in technology and manufacturing affected the conduct of the war 4. Major battles and campaigns of the war 5. How the issue of slavery affected war strategy and philosophy in the North and South 6. How Lincoln's style of national leadership differed from that of Davis 7. How the Civil War "made modern America"	1. Read and interpret primary source documents from the Civil War era 2. Make conclusions about various strategies and policies enacted during the Civil War years 3. Identify key women, African Americans, and other minority groups from the Civil War period 4. Recognize trends in American society during the war 5. Determine how the Civil War strengthened freedom and due process rights established by the Constitution 6. Understand the impact the Civil War had on the nation during the war years and afterward

Teaching and learning activities that will equip students to demonstrate targeted understandings:

Overview of essential questions and basic understandings
Class discussion of subject matter and questions from the PowerPoint presentation
Teacher introduction of terms and ideas in the essential questions and related projects
Providing students with primary source materials with which they complete the related projects
Student research in groups, to be used later in individual and group projects
Informal observation and coaching of students as they work in groups
Evaluation and delivered feedback on projects and research reports
Students create and present unit projects
Posttest made up of multiple-choice questions covering the presentation, with one or more essential questions as essay questions

Project #1: Civil War Resources

Overview:

In this lesson, students collect information about the relative resources and advantages the North and South had during the war. Using that information, students then make recommendations as to what war strategies each side should follow.

Objectives:

As a result of completing the lesson, students will

- Understand the advantages and disadvantages faced by the North and South during the war
- Consider various strategies employed by both sides, based on the information collected
- Make conclusions about how various strengths and weaknesses of both sides impacted war policy

Time required:

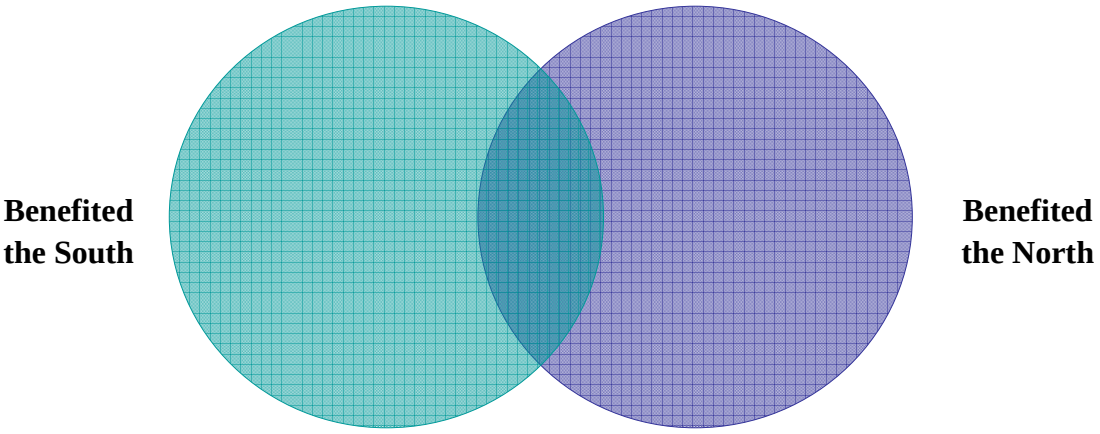
Two to three class periods

Methodology:

The activity consists of two stages. In stage 1, students collect information regarding strengths and weaknesses exhibited by the Union and Confederacy in the Civil War. In stage 2, students use that information to act as "policy advisors" to U.S. President Abraham Lincoln and/or Confederate President Jefferson Davis, and suggest what they see as the "perfect strategy" for their side to win the war.

Prior to beginning the lesson, cover basic background facts on the early days of the war, particularly slides 15–16 of the Civil War presentation, which note strengths and weaknesses of the Union and Confederacy. Note, however, that in this project students will more deeply investigate the strengths and weaknesses of both sides by using Web-based resources as well as traditional sources.

Once students have collected information using the resources, they should use a Venn diagram to organize their information in order to complete the project. A sample diagram can be found on the following page:



You may also choose to have students collect statistical information about advantages both sides had in the war and create a spreadsheet demonstrating the differences.

Allow students sufficient time to collect information. Once they have finished, direct them to the second part of the activity. If desired, you may allow students to select whether they want to "report" to Lincoln or Davis, or assign these roles to individual students.

Prior to beginning the second phase of the activity, print out and distribute Student Handout 1, or have students view the directions on an overhead projector or chalkboard.

Evaluation:

Allow sufficient time for the students to synthesize their information into position papers. After the activity has concluded, evaluate student work using a suitable rubric that mirrors the objectives of the lesson. You may wish to construct a rubric of your own, or may wish to use a rubric created by your school or school district. (A sample rubric follows this lesson.)

Suggested Web resources:

Letters, Telegrams, and Photographs Illustrating Factors That Affected the Civil War (http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/civil-war-docs/)

American Military History (Army Historical Series): The Civil War, 1861 (http://www.history.army.mil/books/amh/amh-09.htm)

PBS Video Database—The Civil War: Maps and Graphs Index (http://videoindex.pbs.org/resources/civilwar/mapsandgraphs/index.html#GR01)

From Revolution to Reconstruction: Civil War Begins (http://www.let.rug.nl/~usa/H/1990/ch5_p7.htm)

PBS's *The Civil War* Web site (http://www.pbs.org/civilwar)

Students may also wish to do further research via search engines or traditional methods in order to more comprehensively examine a particular topic or theme.