

SHAPING America

LESSON 21: "THE UNION COLLAPSES"

Lesson Assignments

You are encouraged to be very attentive while viewing the video program. Review the video objectives and be prepared to record possible answers, in abbreviated form as you view the video. The topics and time periods may differ somewhat from the chapters of the textbook your school system is using. Each video program chronicles a wide array of events and personalities during a specific time period of American history prior to 1877. Keep in mind that one of the overarching goals of each lesson is to help you understand how past historical events and actions by historical personalities did not occur in a vacuum, and that they are inextricably interwoven in your society today.

Activities:

Your teacher may assign one or more activities for each lesson. Refer to your course syllabus for details.

OVERVIEW

By 1858 the Union was on the verge of disintegration, battered by the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the Dred Scott Decision, and the Fugitive Slave Law. It was in this year that a pivotal election was being held in the state of Illinois. The Democrat Stephen Douglas was up for reelection and hoped a win would catapult him into the presidential office in 1860. His opponent was an obscure politician name Abraham Lincoln who had served one term in the House of Representatives and was best known for his "spot resolution" during the Mexican War. His political career had been obscure at best, but the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act had ignited a fire in him and he mounted the Republican bandwagon in opposition to the "bloody" act.

Lincoln challenged Douglas to a series of debates and impaled his opponent on the horns of a dilemma when he asked Douglas what would happen if the people of a territory voted slavery down considering the fact that the Dred Scott decision had stated that the people of a territory could not do so. Who would prevail? Douglas replied without hesitation, in what was to be called the "Freeport Doctrine" that no matter how the Supreme Court ruled, slavery would stay down if the people voted it down. Douglas went on to win the Senate race, but his "Freeport Doctrine" speech inflamed the South, and Lincoln gained a national reputation.



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In 1859 the very foundation of the Union was rocked when John Brown led a group of abolitionists in a scheme to invade the South and encourage a slave rebellion. His small band of followers struck at Harpers Ferry, a federal arsenal in Virginia. But the slaves failed to revolt and federal forces under the leadership of Robert E. Lee captured Brown. He was convicted of murder and treason and hanged. He passed not into oblivion, but into martyrdom. Abolitionists and free-soilers were incensed by his execution and Southerners concluded that Brown was representative of most Northerners' views on slavery. Southerners asked how they could be expected to remain in the Union, when a "murderous gang of abolitionists" was financing armed invasions into the South by radicals who hoped to lead a slave rebellion.

The results of the presidential election of 1860 proved to be the death knell for the Union. The Democratic Party split over support for Stephen Douglas. Many southern Democrats viewed him as a traitor as a result of his "Freeport Doctrine" speech. Consequently, the northern Democrats nominated Douglas for president and the southern Democrats walked out of the Democrat Convention and met again and nominated the moderate John C. Breckinridge from the border state of Kentucky. A hastily formed Constitutional Union Party was formed as a compromise party and nominated John Bell from Tennessee. The Republicans choose the more moderate Lincoln over William H. Seward. Seward was far better known and experienced in politics, but his radical speeches such as the "irrepressible conflict" speech frightened the more moderate elements of the Republican Party whose power rested almost entirely in the North.

Southerners warned that the election of the abolitionist Lincoln would split the Union. If cooler heads had prevailed in the south, they would have realized that Lincoln did not say he would abolish slavery, but rather his battle cry was no extension of slavery. Lincoln was elected with less than 40% of the popular vote and was a sectional candidate. Ten southern states refused to even allow his name on the ballot. The election was really two elections and the happy South Carolinians shouted the "rail-splitter" had split the South from the Union.

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VIDEO OBJECTIVES

The following objectives are designed to assist the viewer in identifying the most significant aspects of the video segment of this lesson. You should take succinct notes while viewing the video.

1. Analyze the Senate race in Illinois in 1858 between Lincoln and Douglas.
2. Assess the significance of John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry.
3. Evaluate the presidential election of 1860.
4. Examine Lincoln's views on slavery.

WEB ACTIVITIES

These activities are assigned at the discretion of your teacher. They are offered as suggestions to help you learn more about the material presented in this lesson.

Activity 1:

- a. Access and review the following web sites:
The American Civil War Homepage:
<http://sunsite.utk.edu/civil-war/warweb.html>
Dakota State U. The American Civil War:
<http://homepages.dsu.edu/jankej/civilwar/civilwar.htm>
American Political Prints, 1766-1876:
<http://loc.harpweek.com/default.asp>
American Political Prints, 1766-1876. John Brown.
<http://loc.h.../BrowseCartoonsNav.asp?MaxID=16&UniqueID=1&Direction=F&Year=186>
Documents for the Study of American History:
http://www.ukans.edu/carrie/docs/amdocs_index.html
National Archives and Records Administration Document Analysis Worksheets:
<http://www.nara.gov/education/teaching/analysis/analysis.html>
- b. Analyze the political cartoon of John Brown and use the National Archives Cartoon Analysis Worksheet as a guide for your analysis.



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Activity 2:

- a. Access and review the following web sites:
 - The American Civil War Homepage:
<http://sunsite.utk.edu/civil-war/warweb.html>
 - Dakota State U. The American Civil War:
<http://homepages.dsu.edu/jankej/civilwar/civilwar.htm>
 - American Political Prints, 1766-1876:
<http://loc.harpweek.com/default.asp>
 - Documents for the Study of American History:
http://www.ukans.edu/carrie/docs/amdocs_index.html
 - National Archives and Records Administration Document Analysis Worksheets: <http://www.nara.gov/education/teaching/analysis/analysis.html>
 - HarpWeek. The Presidential Elections from 1860-1884:
<http://elections.harpweek.com/>
 - HarpWeek. Free Features:
<http://www.harpweek.com/07Features/features.asp>
 - HarpWeek. 1860 Medium Cartoons. “The Union Must and Shall Be Preserved:
<http://elections.harpweek.com/1Cart.../cartoon-1860-Medium.asp?UniqueID=1&Year=186>
 - HarpWeek. 1860 Medium Cartoons. “Deplorable Result of Lincoln Election.”
<http://elections.harpweek.com/1Cart.../cartoon-1860-Medium.asp?UniqueID=25&Year=186>
 - HarpWeek. 1860. Medium Cartoons. “One Political Snake-Charmer.”
<http://elections.harpweek.com/1Cart.../cartoon-1860-Medium.asp?UniqueID=11&Year=186>
- b. Compare and contrast the three political cartoons of Lincoln and Douglas and use the National Archives Political Cartoon Analysis Worksheet as a guide for your analysis.

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PRACTICE TEST

After watching the video and reviewing the objectives, you should be able to complete the following Practice Test. Access the Answer Key to score your answers after you have completed the Practice Test.

Multiple Choice:

Select the single best answer. It will be indicated if more than one answer is required.

- As a result of the Lincoln-Douglas debates:
 - Lincoln was elected to the Senate.
 - Douglas defeated Lincoln for the Senate.
 - Douglas increased his chances of winning the presidency.
 - Illinois rejected the concept of popular sovereignty.
- Stephen A. Douglas argued in his Freeport Doctrine during the Lincoln-Douglas debates that:
 - The Dred Scott decision was unconstitutional.
 - Action by territorial legislatures could keep slavery out of the territories.
 - Popular sovereignty would guarantee slavery in all United States territories.
 - Congress should reopen the Atlantic slave trade.
- After John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry, the South concluded that:
 - The raid was an isolated incident.
 - Abolitionists who were radical like Brown dominated the North.
 - Brown should be put in an insane asylum.
 - Brown had been attempting to defend his right to own slaves.
- When Abraham Lincoln won the 1860 presidential election, people in South Carolina:
 - Rejoiced because it gave them an excuse to secede.
 - Were very upset because they would have to secede from the Union.
 - Vowed to give their loyalty to Stephen Douglas.
 - None of the above.
- The Republican Party platform:
 - Favored the abolition of slavery.
 - Supported the Dred Scott decision.
 - Supported the Kansas-Nebraska Act.
 - Opposed any further extension of slavery.



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Essay Question:

1. Analyze how the following contributed to the break-up of the Union: Lincoln Douglas Debates, John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry, and the election of 1860.

Answers to the Practice Test:

The correct answer is indicated first, followed by the objective (s) that correlate with the test question.

1. B: 1
2. B: 1
3. B: 2
4. A: 3
5. D: 3