

Uneasy Balance: Stepping Stones to War INSTRUCTIONAL PROCESS

The Uneasy Balance: Stepping Stones to War

The American Civil War was a terrible, yet transformative event in the history of the United States. The following is an interactive, chronological look at some of the important factors and events that plunged the country into terrible conflict.

Compromised Constitution

During the hot summer months of 1787 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the United States Constitution was created, debated, and approved by the members of the Convention.



1). Anticipatory Set: 5-7 minutes

-The teacher asks students (or writes the question on the board)

“What information can be pulled from the picture – what assumptions can be made?”

(The image is meant to display a result of the factors and events students are about to examine. The discussion should be minimal but it should engage them. The image is a picture of Lewis J. Matson of the 2nd New York Cavalry – He was injured in the Battle of Five Forks, Virginia fighting against Pickett’s men in order to cut off Lee’s last supply line and forcing him to retreat westward. Lewis almost died from his wounds in a D.C. hospital before a heralded surgeon “fixed” the rough amputation to prevent infection and death.)

War

terrible conflict.

Compromised Constitution

During the hot summer months of 1787 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the United States Constitution was created, debated, and approved by the members of the Convention. The cherished document is the framework that has been instrumental in successfully navigating numerous hardships throughout the history of the country. For all that the U.S. Constitution was and is today, there is one issue in particular that failed to be resolved at the time of its approval: legal slavery.

Although many founding fathers had mixed views on the issue, the “peculiar” institution of slavery was not forcefully dealt with in the founding period of the United States.

FOUNDER FRUSTRATION

Ben Franklin
“AN ADDRESS TO THE PUBLIC, FROM THE Pennsylvania Society



2) Compromised Constitution: 10 minutes

Students read the overview text in the side panel.

After reading the excerpts from the primary sources (Franklin and Jefferson), have students answer the **THINK ON IT!** question. This is essentially open-ended but some basic facts should come from the discussion that follows. (Some did not view slavery as an injustice; some made large profits off of slavery, etc.)

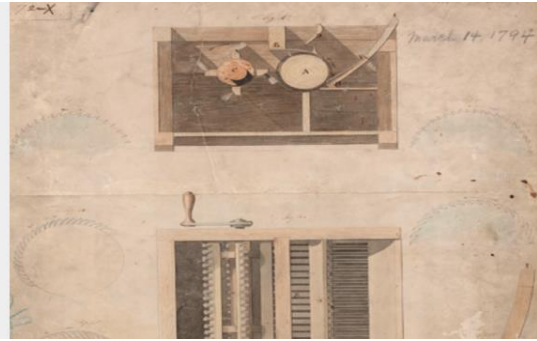
The Cotton Gin

Before the development of the cotton gin, seeds had to be removed from the cotton bulb by hand, which was both tedious and time-consuming.



(click to enlarge)

TO ELI WHITNEY J. MSS.
Germantown, Nov. 16. 1793.
Sir, —Your favor of Oct. 15. inclosing a drawing of your cotton



3) The Cotton Gin: 10-15 minutes

Students read and analyze the primary sources (letter from Jefferson to Whitney and Whitney's patent diagram of cotton gin).

History Detective Analysis:

Students will do primary source analysis using the "history detective" questions. Give them time to answer the questions independently and then discuss as a class. The Jefferson letter allows students to "discover" that cotton cleaning was an issue and that Jefferson had high hopes for the cotton gin to be a success.

THINK ON IT!

Students make predictions as to how the cotton gin might change to population of the south. There can be many answers and discussions that can arise. ("People will grow more cotton," "some people will make more money," "slaves will pick more cotton," etc.)

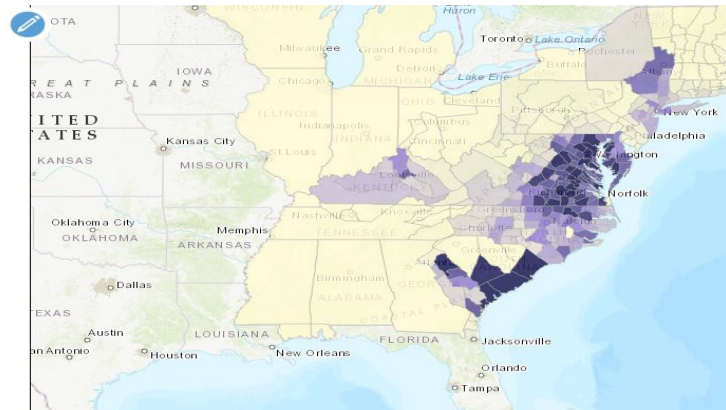
"King Cotton" and the Spread of Slavery



Enlarge Image (Coovert, J. C.)

Click through the years below in chronological order.

1790
1800
1810
1820
1830
1850



4) "King Cotton" and the Spread of Slavery: 15-20 minutes

This piece allows students to discover a correlation between cotton/cotton gin and the spread of slavery throughout the south and westward.

History Detective Analysis:

Using the image, map, and the data on cotton exports, students will answer the questions and come to conclusions on connections between slavery and rise of cotton. Allow students to complete the questions either independently, with a partner, or in groups. Facilitate discussion on their findings when they finish.

THINK ON IT!

Students ponder what problems could arise as the U.S. gains new territories. Hopefully they conclude that problems as to whether slavery would or would not exist in the new territories will arise. This could also be a place to mention the balance in the senate between “slave” and “free” states.

The Missouri Question More Land = More Problems

What issues arose between the northern and southern states as new territories were acquired in the west?

Following the success of President



5) The Missouri Question

History Detective Analysis:

Using the map and the primary source document students answer questions regarding the Missouri Compromise. They will develop an understanding of the importance of the 36 latitude line and see the split between “slave states” and “free states” as the nation pushes westward.

Kansas Up for Grabs!

As the United States expands westward, the uneasy balance between slave states and free states is continuously tested. As newly acquired territories organize and develop, they petition to become states - The big question, though, is will these new states join as "SLAVE STATES" or "FREE STATES."
The United States Congress passes the Kansas-Nebraska Act stating that newly formed states could allow the settlers or



6) Kansas Up for Grabs: 10-15 minutes

Students analyze primary sources (excerpt of law and a period map) to see how the issue of slavery affected westward expansion and led to conflict.

History Detective Analysis:

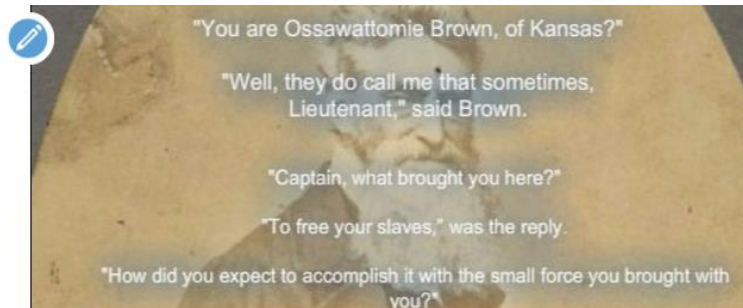
Students analyze the map that shows that color-codes “slave” states and “free” states. It also shows the “unorganized” territories and “Kansas Territory.” The goal is for students to see a visible representation of the divisions within the country based on slavery, as well as, gain an understanding of Kansas-Nebraska Act.

THINK ON IT!

Students hypothesize and discuss what possible issues or outcomes could come from congress’ decision to allow settlers to decide on their own about whether or not to allow slavery in the Kansas.

"The Riot at Harper's Ferry!" or "The Attempt to Establish Freedom"

Following the approval of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the territory of Kansas erupted in what became known as "Bleeding Kansas." By allowing the territory to decide on its own about



7) "The Riot at Harper's Ferry!" or "The Attempt to Establish Freedom:" 10-15 minutes

Students receive information on and observe primary sources relating to “Bleeding Kansas,” John Brown, and the raid at Harper’s Ferry.

Instruct the students to read, click, and navigate through this section to gain an understanding of John Brown’s raid at Harper’s Ferry. The section looks at how John Brown and the events surrounding him were crucial in escalating tensions.

THINK ON IT!

Students read Herman Melville’s poem, “The Portent,” which is about John Brown. After answering the question, discuss the answers as a class.