

Divided Loyalties: Secession and Division in Civil War Tennessee Lesson Plan

Introduction:

The oft cited fact that Tennessee was the last state to secede and the first to rejoin the Union reveals the conflicts that existed in Tennessee over secession and support of the Confederacy.

Guiding Questions:

Why was Tennessee divided on the issue of secession?

What did Tennessee's secession mean for people who remained loyal to the Union?

Learning Objectives:

The learner will analyze primary and secondary sources to determine why Tennesseans were divided on the issue of secession.

The learner will analyze primary and secondary sources to learn how Unionists responded to secession.

The learner will demonstrate knowledge of Tennessee's secession controversy and its consequences by responding to the writing prompt with an essay of two to three paragraphs.

Material Needed:

Artifact Activity Card: "Bridge Burner" Flag

Artifact Activity Card: Alfred Green's shirt.

Map: [Secession Vote](#) by [East Tennessee Historical Society](#)

Informational Text: [Slavery and Secession in Tennessee](#)

Timeline: Civil War in Tennessee (included at end of lesson)

Informational Chart: Percentage of slaves and secession vote for selected Tennessee counties (included at end of lesson)

Primary Source: [Tennessean Sam Tate on Unionists in East Tennessee](#)

Background:

[Rivers and Rails: Daggers of the Civil War](#) video from [Nashville Public Television YouTube channel](#)

[The Bridge Burning Plot of 1861 Essay](#)

Writing Prompt:

Write two to three paragraphs that explain why Tennessee was divided on the issue of secession. Include details on the state convention vote of 1861, the Free and Independent State of Scott, Hurst Nation, East Tennessee mostly pro-Union and divided families.

Lesson Activities:

Activity 1- Review and discuss prompt

Whole Class Activity

Begin the lesson by showing the students the prompt and discussing the elements that will need to be included in the writing.

Activity 2 - Civil War in Tennessee Timeline

Whole Class Activity

Give students a copy of the timeline and ask them to take a moment to identify which events are familiar and which are unfamiliar to them. Start by discussing the events that are familiar to the students such as the election of Lincoln and secession. Discuss Tennessee's two secession votes. Point out that Fort Sumter and Lincoln's call for troops occurred between the two votes. Students may infer that Lincoln's call for troops influenced more people to favor secession in the second vote. Then ask them to make some predictions about how the unfamiliar events such as the bridge burnings and Alfred Green's death might relate to the idea of secession in Tennessee.



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Activity 3- Informational Chart: Percentage of slaves and secession vote for selected Tennessee

Map- [“Tennessee Divided Loyalties”](#)

Partner Activity

Give the students the informational chart. Ask them to describe the relationship between the number of slaves in a county and how the county voted on secession in June, 1861. Next, ask them to locate each county on the map. Have them look at the neighboring counties and determine if the county’s voting results were similar or different to its neighbors. Ask them to describe the patterns in voting they see throughout the state. Ask the students to infer the causes and possible consequences of the voting patterns they identify. Students should recognize that the more slaves a county had, the more likely it was to favor secession. Additionally, counties that had access to railroads and traded with the Deep South tended to support secession more than counties that did not have access to railroads. They should also recognize that East Tennessee was mostly pro-Union and that there was likely to be tension and fighting between pro-Union and Confederate supporters there.

Activity 4 -Primary Source- [Tennessean Sam Tate on Unionists in East Tennessee](#)

Partner Activity

Give the students a copy of Sam Tate’s letter to Robert Tombs. Discuss each man’s role in the Civil War. Ask the students to read and summarize the first paragraph. Discuss how Tate’s letter reveals him to be a Confederate supporter. Ask them if the letter supports or refutes the inferences they made about East Tennessee when looking at the map.



Activity 5 - Photographs- [Artifact Activity Card: “Bridge Burner” Flag](#)
[Artifact Activity Card: Alfred Green’s shirt.](#)

Partner Activity

Give the students the “Bridge Burner” card. Ask them to look at the flag and speculate on how it became damaged. Then ask them to read the text on the card and discuss. Ask them why Haun and the others targeted the railroads. How could railroads help the Confederates? Students may not readily recognize the trains were used to transport troops and supplies. You may need to ask them how the military moves soldiers and supplies today and then work backwards discussing which technologies existed at the time of the Civil War. Finally, ask students how the flag and the story of Christopher Haun relate to divisions in Tennessee over secession.

Give the students the Alfred Green card. Talk about how the shirt is different from shirts today and what the stains might be. Have students read the text on the shirt and discuss the reasons for Green’s death. Ask them how Green’s story relates to the divisions in Tennessee over secession.

Activity 6- Informational Text- [Secession in Tennessee, Hurst Nation, and the State of Scott](#)

Partner Activity

Have students read the informational text with a partner. As they read, they should highlight locations with one color and people with another color. Have them locate McNairy and Scott counties on the [Divided Loyalties](#) map. Discuss the similarities and differences between the State of Scott and Hurst Nation. Ask them how Hurst Nation and the State of Scott relate to the divisions in Tennessee over secession.

Activity 7 -Prompt Review

Whole Class Activity

Before students write, be sure to review the prompt and remind them to include information about each of the sub-topics in their essays. If the source analysis has taken more than one class period, you should briefly review each source and its relationship to secession in Tennessee. You may want to have students complete a pre-writing activity to help them organize their thoughts before they begin to write.



Assessment: The writing prompt that will be used to assess mastery of the objective was created in step 3. Students will be instructed to write two to three paragraphs in response to the prompt. Because of the extensive preparation provided in the analysis activities, students should complete the writing quickly. Using either the rubric created by the state or a modified version of it will streamline the grading process.

Extending the Lesson:

Have students research Andrew Johnson, Horace Maynard or William Brownlow to describe the role that each played in Tennessee during the Civil War.



Percentage of slaves and secession vote for selected Tennessee counties

County	Percentage of Slaves	June, 1861 Secession vote
Bradley	10.10%	26.8% for secession
Carrol	33.70%	41.8% for secession
Davidson	32.30%	93% for secession
Decatur	12.50%	36% for secession
Fayette	63.70%	98% for secession
Scott	1.70%	3.5% for secession
Sevier	5.90%	3.8 % for secession
Shelby	35.50%	99.9% for secession
Williamson	52%	98.6% for secession

Civil War in Tennessee

