

Unit 4: The U.S. Civil War and Reconstruction (1860 – 1877)

8th Grade Social Studies

18 Class Meetings

Revised May 2025

Essential Questions

- Does the idea of compromising help our government?
- To what degree did the Civil War resolve the disputes between the North and the South?
- Why is Reconstruction considered a failure?

Enduring Understandings with Unit Goals

EU 1: The root causes of regional tensions were not corrected by the series of compromises that ultimately resulted in the Civil War.

- Investigate the tensions that led to the southern states seceding from the union.
- Examine how the 1860 election of Abraham Lincoln was the tipping point for the abolition of slavery and the catalyst for war.

EU 2: The U.S. Civil War was the result of two distinctly different sets of values, both economically and socially.

- Formulate an opinion for why southerners may have believed that their way of life and economic survival were at risk.
- Evaluate primary and secondary sources about major civil war battles, people, and events.

EU 3: With the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, the path towards reconciliation and healing was impossible to achieve.

- Critique the approach President Johnson and the North took in healing the Union during Reconstruction.
- List the ways that the North tried to help recently freed slaves and incorporate them as free citizens.

Standard

CT Elementary and Secondary Social Studies Standards:

- **8.His.1.d.** Analyze how secession sought to preserve the social, economic, and racial hierarchies throughout the United States (e.g., domestic labor, manufacturing, slavocracy, textiles).
- **8.His.12.b.** Using multiple historical sources, identify individuals and groups during the Antebellum Period who sustained, promoted, or challenged the institution of slavery (e.g., Frederick Douglass, Harriett Beecher Stowe, John C. Calhoun).
- **8.His.15.a.** Evaluate the relative influence of political, economic, and social developments that contributed to secession (e.g., Free Soil Movement, Nullification, Dred Scott Decision, Harper's Ferry, abolition).
- **8.Civ.14.c.** Compare historical means used by individuals and groups to promote, sustain, and dismantle discrimination in the Antebellum Period (e.g., Underground Railroad, Bleeding Kansas, American Anti-Slavery Society, American Colonization Society, Compromise of 1850).
- **8.His.2.a.** Explain how change and continuity in technology, infrastructure, and military strategies

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shaped the Civil War (e.g., rail, scorched earth, blockade, Colt Firearms, Sharps Rifles).

- **8.His.2.b.** Describe how policies related to military service shaped the events and outcomes of the Civil War (e.g., conscription, Emancipation Proclamation, draft riots, Connecticut 29th, Massachusetts 54th).
- **8.His.14.b.** Analyze the causes and effects of the Reconstruction Amendments (e.g., abolition, Latino and Black citizenship, suffrage).
- **8.His.14.c.** Explain multiple causes and effects of racism both during and after Reconstruction (e.g., Page Act, Ku Klux Klan, Black Codes).
- **8.Civ.13.a.** Analyze the purposes, implementation, and consequences of policies and political strategies during the Reconstruction Era (e.g., Homestead Act, Second Treaty of Fort Laramie, women’s suffrage, Radical Reconstruction).
- **8.His.16.b.** Evaluate the successes and failures of the Reconstruction in fulfilling ideas and principles contained in the founding documents (e.g., elected Black officials, Ebenezer Bassett, Freedmen’s Bureau, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Compromise of 1877).

Common Core State Standards:

- **RH.6-8.2:** Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.
- **RH.6-8.4:** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.
- **W.8.2:** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.
- **W.8.5:** With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.
- **WHST.6-8.4:** Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

ISAAC Vision of the Graduate Competencies

Competency 1: Write effectively for a variety of purposes.

Competency 2: Speak to diverse audiences in an accountable manner.

Competency 3: Develop the behaviors needed to interact and contribute with others on a team.

Competency 4: Analyze and solve problems independently and collaboratively.

Competency 5: Be responsible, creative, and empathetic members of the community.

Unit Content Overview

1. *“A house divided against itself cannot stand.” – Abraham Lincoln*

- Predict how Westward expansion and compromises allowed slavery to continue and led to violence.
- Connect the election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860 and how it was a breaking point for southern states.

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2. ***“War is the remedy that our enemies have chosen, and I say let us give them all they want.”***
– **Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman**

- Analyze why loyalty to the southern way of life superseded loyalty to the country.
- Explain why the Union Army was vastly better equipped and had more men but was mismanaged on the battlefield.
- Argue how “Total War” is waged due to the industrialization of weaponry and communications.

3. ***“Sic semper tyrannis!”*** – **John Wilkes Booth**

- Determine why the Assassination of Lincoln fundamentally changed the approach of Reconstruction.
- Investigate why the Freedmen’s Bureau was hampered by political forces it could not overcome.

Vocabulary:

- Antebellum, Jefferson Davis, General Robert E. Lee, General Ulysses S. Grant, Clara Barton, Army of the Potomac, Battle of Fort Sumter, The Army of Northern Virginia, Battle of Bull Run, Battle of Gettysburg, Ironclads: Monitor and Merrimack, Sherman's March to the Sea, The Emancipation Proclamation, Appomattox Court House, Lincoln Assassination, Reconstruction, 13th Amendment, Freedmen's Bureau, President Andrew Johnson, Black Codes, 14th Amendment.

Interdisciplinary Connection:

- Language Arts – reading informational texts & SBAC prep questions
- Mystic Seaport Partnership Whaling Lessons (one in class / one at seaport)

Daily Learning Objectives with TWPS

Students will be able to...

- Investigate the tensions that led to the southern states seceding from the union. **
 - *Lincoln famously said, “A house divided against itself cannot stand.” What do you think he meant by this? What issue was he referring to in this speech?*
- Examine how the 1860 election of Abraham Lincoln was the tipping point for the abolition of slavery and the catalyst for war. **
 - *The Civil War was both a failure and success of national leadership. Please give an example of each.*
- Formulate an opinion about why southerners may have believed that their way of life and economic survival were at risk. **
 - *What were some economic reasons for the Civil War?*
- Evaluate primary and secondary sources about major civil war battles, people, and events. ***
 - *Why do people think they fought so passionately for such a horrible cause?*
- Critique the approach President Johnson and the North took in healing the Union during Reconstruction. **
 - *How did the assassination of Lincoln change the years following the Civil War?*

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- Identify the ways that the North tried to help recently freed slaves and incorporate them as free citizens. **
 - *List some reasons why Reconstruction is considered a failure. Or why is it ...*
- Investigate the local maritime and economic history of Southeastern Connecticut. **
 - *Describe an event or cause for the decline of the whaling industry.*
- Apply concepts of Civil War people and events to present in a scholarly and professional manner. ***
 - *Please tell me the difference between primary, secondary, and tertiary source.*

Instructional Strategies/Differentiated Instruction

- Whole group instruction
- Guided notes
- Paragraph frames and sentence starters
- Student-led instruction
- Teacher modeling
- Written feedback
- Think-pair-share and small-group discussions
- Graphic organizers
- Cornell notes
- Accountable talk
- Homework
- Word walls with visuals
- Anchor charts
- Small group instruction
- Conferencing
- Text and video chunking with guiding questions
- Close reading with text-dependent questions

Differentiated Instruction for English Learners

- Whole group instruction
- Guided notes
- Paragraph frames and sentence starters
- Student-led instruction
- Written feedback
- Think-pair-share and small-group discussions
- Graphic organizers
- Cornell notes
- Accountable talk
- Homework
- Word walls with visuals

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- Anchor charts
- Small group instruction
- Conferencing
- Text and video chunking with guiding questions
- Close reading with text-dependent questions
- Modified Assessments

Assessments

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENTS:

- Do Now – CNN10
- TWPS
- Exit Slips
- Accountable Talk Discussions
- Completed guided notes
- Completed graphic organizers
- Revision worksheets
- Homework
- AIMS Web
- Performance Task – Biographical essay and Civil War presentation
 - Scoring Guides

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENTS:

- *House Divided* writing response - EU 1
- Pear Assessment Unit 4 Test – EU 3
- Performance Task – Biographical essay and Civil War presentation – EU 2

Unit Task

Unit Task Name: “*Civil War Battles, People and Events*” biographical essay and presentation.

Description: The unit task is broken into two parts, equaling one-hundred points each. The students choose a person or topic randomly and write a three-paragraph biographical essay with primary and secondary sources provided. (EU1) (EU2) The presentation portion is a seven to ten google slides project that describes the person or event in more visual terms. Additionally, students take notes on a graphic organizer from their classmates’ presentation. (EU3)

Evaluation: Essay Scoring Guide, Civil War Presentation Scoring Guide.

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Unit Resources

- Guided vocabulary notes handout
- Pear Assessment
- Excerpt of Lincoln's House Divided speech
- Lincoln's Gettysburg Address PBS with worksheet
- ["Letter from Frederick Douglas to Harriet Tubman"](#)
- Junior Scholastic – *Forever Free*
- Crash Course Reconstruction EdPuzzle
- PBS Ken Burns in the Classroom – Civil War
- *The American History Big Fat Notebook*
- *America: The Story of Us* episode 4 w/ notes
- Revision worksheets