

The Civil War: Document Based Questions and Essay

HISTORICAL CONTEXT By 1860 the northern states and the southern states were sharply divided over a number of issues, including slavery. The election of Abraham Lincoln to the presidency finally broke the country apart. Fighting began in April 1861. After four years of civil war, northern troops defeated the Confederacy and brought an end to slavery.

Directions: Read and analyze the following documents. Underline key phrases or write notes in the margins to help you understand each document. Then answer all of the questions in complete sentences. Once you complete the reading questions, answer the essay prompt in a formal, 5 paragraph essay.

BRING A TYPED, DOUBLE SPACED AND PRINTED COPY TO THE FIRST DAY OF CLASS.

Document 1:

"...when this Government was first established, it was the policy of its founders to prohibit the spread of slavery into the new Territories of the United States, where it had not existed. ... All I have asked or desired any where is that it should be placed back again upon the basis that the fathers of our Government originally placed it upon. I have no doubt that it would become extinct, for all time to come, if we but readopted the policy of the fathers by restricting it to the limits it has already covered-restricting it from the new Territories."

-Abraham Lincoln, debate speech in Jonesboro, Illinois, Sept 15, 1858

1. What policy toward the continuation of slavery does Lincoln support?
2. Why does he support that policy?

Document 2:

From the beginning, we have only asked to be let alone in the enjoyment of our plain, inalienable rights, as explicitly guaranteed in our common organic law. We have never aggressed upon the North... They have robbed us of our property, they have murdered our citizens while endeavoring to reclaim that property by lawful means... they have declared their unalterable determination to exclude us altogether from the Territories, they have nullified the laws of Congress, and finally they have capped the mighty pyramid of unfraternal enormities by electing Abraham Lincoln on a platform and by a system which indicates nothing but the subjugation of the South and the complete ruin of her social, political and industrial institutions.

-New Orleans Daily Crescent November 13, 1860

3. Who does the author of this editorial blame for the tensions between the North and the South?
How is this opinion supported?
4. What consequences does the author believe that Lincoln's election will have for Southern States?

Document 3: A cartoon from Harper's Weekly - June, 8, 1861



5. What do the two main figures in the cartoon represent?
6. What is the primary message of the cartoon?

Document 4:

The whole South is in a state of revolution, into which Virginia, after a long struggle, has been drawn; and though I would have pleaded to the end for redress of grievances, real or supposed, yet in my own person I had to meet the question whether I should take part against my native State.

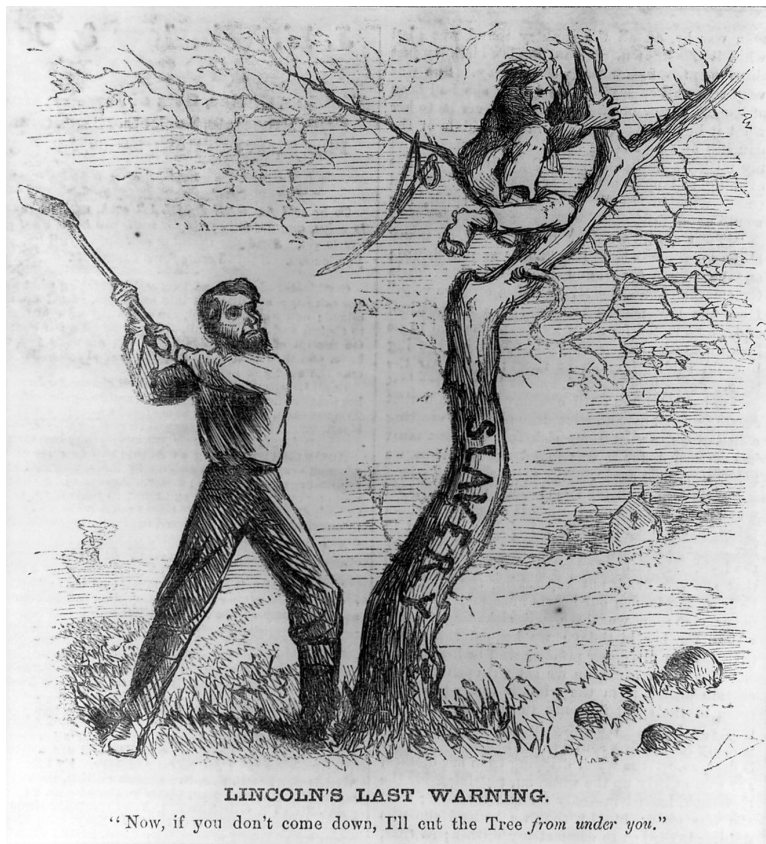
With all my devotion to the Union, and the feeling of loyalty and duty of an American citizen, I have not been able to make up my mind to raise my hand against my relative, my children, my home. I have, therefore, resigned my commission in the Army, and save in defense of my native State (with the sincere hope that my poor services may never be needed) I hope I may never be called upon to draw my sword.

I know you will blame me, but you must think as kindly as you can, and believe that I have endeavored to do what I thought right.

-Robert E. Lee - letter to his sister, April 1861

7. According to this letter, what did Lee decide to do? Why?
8. How do Lee's words contrast with the image of southerners as depicted in the cartoon in Document 3?

Document 5: Cartoon from Harper's Weekly, October 11, 1862



9. What does the person in the tree represent?
10. What does the artist suggest is going to happen?

Document 6:

. . . the more I learn of the cursed institution of Slavery, the more I feel willing to endure, for its final destruction . . . After this war is over, this whole country will undergo a change for the better . . . abolishing slavery will dignify labor; that fact of itself will revolutionize everything.

—Union Sergeant Phineas Hager, in an letter, 1864

I do not fight or want to fight for Lincoln's Negro proclamation one day longer than I can help, . . . In fact the whole Army is discouraged and very much dissatisfied in consequence of Lincoln's Proclamation which fell like a thunderbolt among the troops. I am sorry the old man forgot himself and took such bad advice.

—Union Colonel Marcus Spiegel in a letter, 1863

I think Lincoln's proclamation will produce dissensions and trouble at the North, and will thus indirectly benefit our Cause. The Democratic party there is not willing to go headlong into any abolition war. And the elections will show that Lincoln's policy will be condemned.

—Confederate Major General Mansfield Lovell in a letter, 1862

11. How did the Union soldiers respond to the Emancipation Proclamation?

12. How did the Confederate soldiers respond to the Emancipation Proclamation?

Document 7:

3. Then the Northern people began to preach, to lecture, and to write about the sin of slavery . . . And when the territories were settled they were not willing for any of them to become slaveholding. This would have made the North much stronger than the South; and many of the men said they would vote for a law to free all the negroes in the country. The Southern men tried to show them how unfair this would be, but still they kept on.

4. In the year 1860 the Abolitionists became strong enough to elect one of their own men for president. Abraham Lincoln was a weak man, and the South believed he would deprive them of their rights. So the Southern states seceded, and elected Jefferson Davis for their President. This so enraged President Lincoln that he declared war, and has exhausted nearly all the strength of the nation, in vain attempt to whip the South back into the Union. Thousands of lives have been lost, and the earth has been drenched with blood; but still Abraham is unable to conquer the "Rebels" as he calls the south. The South only asked to be let alone, and divide the public property equally. It would have been wise in the North to have said to her Southern sisters, "If you are not content to dwell with us longer, depart in peace. We will divide the inheritance with you, and may you be a great nation."

—Geographical Reader of the Dixie Children textbook for schoolchildren in the Confederacy, 1863

13. According to this textbook, how could the Civil War have been avoided?

14. What do you think the students studying this textbook believed about the Civil War?

Document 8: Photo of Atlanta, Georgia, September 1864



15. What do you think happened in Atlanta before this picture was taken?
16. How does this photo symbolize what was happening to the Confederacy in September 1864?

Final Assessment:

Using information from the documents in Part A and your knowledge of U.S. history, write an essay in which you will **compare and contrast viewpoints held by northerners and southerners about the Civil War.**

DIRECTIONS Write a well-organized 5 paragraph essay that includes an introduction, 3 body paragraphs, and a conclusion. Use evidence from at least four documents in Part A to support your response. You may draw on any additional knowledge you have acquired about the Subject. *If you use outside sources, please cite them.