

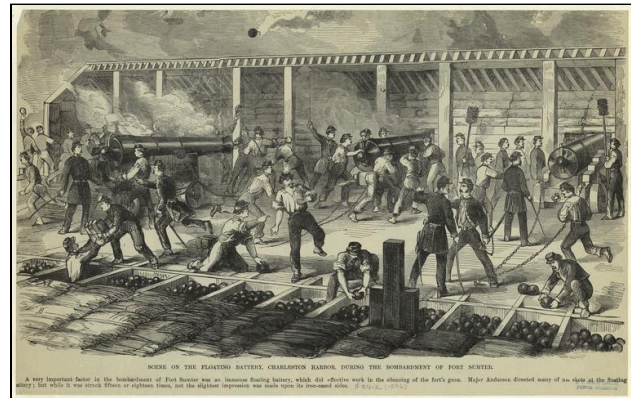
Name: _____ Class: _____

The South Secedes

By USHistory.org
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This text details the official start of the American Civil War, fought between the northern and southern states of the United States from 1861 to 1865. Just before the war broke out, northern Republican leader Abraham Lincoln had been declared the winner of the 1860 Presidential Election, in which he ran against 3 other candidates and only won 40% of the popular vote, primarily in the North. As you read, take note of each politician's goals and efforts made to achieve those goals.

- [1] When Abraham Lincoln was declared the winner of the Presidential Election of 1860, South Carolina politicians were actually thrilled. During the presidential election, state legislators¹ in South Carolina did not cast a single vote for the northern Republican² leader.³ South Carolina, like every other southern state, had cast all of its electoral votes for Vice President John Breckenridge. Leaders in Charleston, South Carolina knew that the election would directly lead to the formation of a new nation.



"Floating Battery Interior Engaged 1861" by Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper is in the public domain.

The force of events moved very quickly upon the election of Lincoln. Within a few days, the two United States Senators from South Carolina submitted their resignations.⁴ South Carolina called for a convention⁵ to secede, or remove themselves from the Union.

Congress scrambled to prevent South Carolina from seceding. On December 18, Senator John J. Crittenden of Kentucky proposed the Crittenden Compromise. The compromise would amend the Constitution and extend the old Missouri Compromise line⁶ all the way to the Pacific Coast. Only, under this new compromise, all territory North of the line would be forever free, and all territory south of the line would have slavery protected by the federal⁷ government. While southern states liked the proposal, Republicans refused to accept it.

1. a person who creates laws and is often elected to represent the people
2. The Republican Party was founded in 1854 as an antislavery party, mostly based in the Northern states.
3. In 1860, not all states had a popular vote for President. Of the 33 states that belonged to the Union in 1860, only 20 had a popular vote.
4. **Resignation (noun):** a notice of quitting
5. **Convention (noun):** a meeting of representatives of the people
6. The Missouri Compromise of 1820 stated that all states north of the southern border of the new state of Missouri would be free from slavery, while all territories and new states south of the border would be allowed to choose for themselves on whether to permit or prohibit slavery.
7. **Federal (adjective):** of or relating to a country's national government

On December 20, 1860, by a vote of 169-0, the South Carolina legislature⁸ approved an "ordinance⁹ of secession," stating that "the union now subsisting between South Carolina and other States, under the name of 'The United States of America,' is hereby dissolved."¹⁰

- [5] The Charleston Mercury newspaper said of the ordinance, "The tea has been thrown overboard, the revolution of 1860 has been initiated."

South Carolina's action resulted in conventions in other southern states. Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas all left the Union by February 1. On February 4, delegates¹¹ from all these states except Texas met in Montgomery, Alabama, to create and staff a government called the Confederate States of America. The Confederacy elected Jefferson Davis of Mississippi as their new president.

Throughout the secession crisis of 1860-1861, Abraham Lincoln was not yet president. He would not be inaugurated¹² until March 4. President James Buchanan presided over the exodus¹³ from the Union. Although he thought secession to be illegal, he found using the army in this case to be unconstitutional. Both the North and the South awaited the arrival of President Lincoln and wondered anxiously what he would do.

Meanwhile, in South Carolina, the groundwork was being laid for the first actual battle of the Civil War. Six days after that state declared its ordinance of secession, 85 Union troops stationed in Charleston, South Carolina, withdrew to Fort Sumter, an island in Charleston Harbor. The North considered the fort to be the property of the United States government. By the time that the Confederate States of America formed, however, the people of South Carolina believed that the fort belonged to the new Confederacy.

The commander at Fort Sumter was Major Robert Anderson, a former slave owner who was nevertheless unquestionably loyal to the Union. With 6,000 South Carolina militia¹⁴ members circling the harbor,¹⁵ Anderson and his soldiers were cut off from reinforcements¹⁶ and resupplies. In January 1861, as one of the last acts of his administration, President Buchanan sent 200 soldiers and supplies on an unarmed merchant vessel, *Star of the West*, to reinforce Anderson. It quickly departed when South Carolina artillery¹⁷ started firing on it.

- [10] After Davis' and Lincoln's inaugurations, pressure mounted for the two new leaders to take some action on Fort Sumter. Lincoln in particular was pressured to reunite the states. The Union president thought that the southern secession was "artificial." When Jefferson Davis sent a group to Washington to negotiate for the transfer of Fort Sumter to South Carolina, they were promptly refused.

8. **Legislature (noun):** a body of people that make laws

9. **Ordinance (noun):** a decree or law

10. **Dissolve (verb):** to come or bring to an end

11. **Delegate (noun):** a representative

12. **Inaugurate (verb):** to swear into office

13. **Exodus (noun):** a mass departure of people

14. **Militia (noun):** a body of citizen soldiers

15. **Harbor (noun):** a part of the ocean, a lake, etc., that is next to land and that is protected and deep enough to provide safety for ships

16. **Reinforcement (noun):** people and supplies that are sent to help or support an army, military force, etc.

17. **Artillery (noun):** shooting weapons, including guns and cannons

Lincoln had a dilemma.¹⁸ Fort Sumter was running out of supplies, but any attack on the South Carolina militias cutting off the fort from resupplies would appear as Northern aggression. States that still remained part of the Union (such as Virginia and North Carolina) might be driven into the secessionist camp if they thought that the Union soldiers were the aggressors. People at home and abroad might become sympathetic to the South. But Lincoln could not allow his troops to starve, nor could they surrender and risk showing considerable weakness.

At last he developed a plan. On April 6, Lincoln told the governor of South Carolina that he was going to send provisions¹⁹ to Fort Sumter. He would send no arms,²⁰ troops, or ammunition²¹ — unless, of course, South Carolina attacked.

Now the dilemma sat with Jefferson Davis. Attacking Lincoln's resupply ships would make the South the aggressive party. But he simply could not allow the fort to be resupplied — a southern newspaper writer warned, "Unless you sprinkle the blood in the face of the people of Alabama, they will be back in the old Union in less than ten days."

Davis decided he had no choice but to order Anderson to surrender Sumter. Anderson refused.

- [15] The Civil War began at 4:30 a.m. on April 12, 1861, when Confederate artillery, under the command of General Pierre Gustave T. Beauregard, opened fire on Fort Sumter. Confederate batteries²² showered the fort with over 3,000 shells²³ in a three-and-a-half day period. Anderson surrendered before any men were killed. Ironically, Beauregard had developed his military skills under Anderson's instruction at West Point.²⁴ This was the first of countless relationships and families devastated²⁵ in the Civil War.

Though the Battle of Fort Sumter was technically a defeat for the Union, Lincoln got what he wanted – for the South to fire the first shot. After Sumter, Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers to suppress the rebellion. Despite Lincoln's best efforts though, four more states – Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Arkansas – seceded and joined the Confederacy. The Civil War had begun.

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18. **Dilemma (noun):** a problem that seems incapable of a solution
 19. **Provisions (noun):** supplies
 20. **Arms (noun):** weapons
 21. **Ammunition (noun):** objects that can be shot from a weapon, such as bullets, cannonballs, and rockets
 22. Batteries were large groups of guns. In the Battle of Fort Sumter, many floating batteries were stationed in the harbor.
 23. Each shell represented a bullet fired; a shell is the casing that holds bullets before they are fired.
 24. West Point is a military academy in New York.
 25. **Devastate (verb):** to destroy

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which TWO of the following best identify the central ideas of this text?
 - A. The South seceded because it feared that Lincoln would abolish slavery.
 - B. South Carolina seceded because southern states felt Lincoln had not won the southern election and was not their true leader.
 - C. The South seceded because South Carolina was crucial to the slave economy and without its support, other southern states would fail economically.
 - D. Lincoln successfully baited South Carolina into being the first to lead an offensive military attack.
 - E. Lincoln's plan to make South Carolina the war aggressors helped him keep other states from seceding.
 - F. The Battle of Fort Sumter was insignificant because there were no major losses.

2. PART B: Which TWO phrases from the text best support the answers to Part A?
 - A. "South Carolina, like every other southern state, had cast all of its electoral votes for Vice President John Breckenridge." (Paragraph 1)
 - B. "South Carolina called for a convention to secede, or remove themselves from the Union." (Paragraph 2)
 - C. "under this new compromise, all territory North of the line would be forever free, and all territory south of the line would have slavery protected by the federal government." (Paragraph 3)
 - D. "By the time that the Confederate States of America formed, however, the people of South Carolina believed that the fort belonged to the new Confederacy." (Paragraph 8)
 - E. "Fort Sumter was running out of supplies, but any attack on the South Carolina militias cutting off the fort from resupplies would appear as Northern aggression. (Paragraph 11)
 - F. "The Civil War began at 4:30 a.m. on April 12, 1861, when Confederate artillery, under the command of General Pierre Gustave T. Beauregard, opened fire on Fort Sumter." (Paragraph 15)

3. Which statement best describes the relationship between the southern secession and the Battle of Fort Sumter?
 - A. While the Battle of Fort Sumter signaled that conflict was unavoidable, it was southern secession that truly started the war.
 - B. While the southern secession signaled that conflict was unavoidable, it was the Battle of Fort Sumter that truly started the war.
 - C. It is unknown when the Civil War technically started, as fighting occurred in Kansas all the way back in 1857 over states' rights to enforce slavery.
 - D. If federal troops had not fled to Fort Sumter just after South Carolina seceded, then none of the other 10 southern states would have seceded.

4. How does the inclusion of paragraph 3 contribute to the development of ideas in the text?
- A. It implies cause and effect between the Missouri Compromise and the start of the Civil War.
 - B. It reinforces the assumption that the southern states were not willing to negotiate on secession.
 - C. It highlights how Republicans attempted to compromise in order to appease the South.
 - D. It reveals how the country's deep divisions prevented any resolution that did not end the debate on expanding slavery once and for all.

5. Explain why President Lincoln wanted the South to attack federal troops, using evidence from the text to support your answer.
