



Lesson 10.1 “A House Divided Cannot Stand”

Unit 10: New Hampshire and the Civil War

Lesson Objectives

- Students will use graphic organizers to guide discussion and definition of the terms civil war and Civil War.
- Students will take notes on a graphic organizer to understand how sectionalism grew in the United States before the Civil War.
- Students will examine primary sources to consider the points of view of both sides as well as the consequences of sectionalism in the United States before the Civil War.
- Students will create a visual reflection of Abraham Lincoln’s description of the United States as a “house divided.”

Lesson Competencies

- I can determine intended word/phrase meaning when multiple meanings or non-literal meanings are possible. (ELA 3)
- I can develop my ideas using sources to gather concrete details, facts, quotes, and other information related to my focus. (ELA 5)
- I can analyze primary and secondary sources and draw appropriate conclusions. (Moose SS)
- I can state an opinion that answers a question about a topic or text.

Essential Questions

How has New Hampshire come to be the way it is?
How has New Hampshire impacted the nation?

Focus Questions

How did sectionalism threaten the United States?

Estimated Time

Three 40-minute class sessions

Materials & Equipment

Class set of “Venn diagram: Understanding Civil War” worksheet
“[Mason Explains: Sectionalism](#)” video for projection
Class set of “A Growing Divide” worksheet
Class set of “Not in My Country!” worksheet
Class set of “House Divided Speech” worksheet



Educator Introduction & Rationale

The decades before the Civil War were a period of growing sectional divide in the United States. At the center of this tension was the practice of slavery. Southern states feared that the federal government would outlaw it. Northern states feared that slavery would expand into the west, as new states were added to the Union. A number of political and cultural events on the national level made the sectional divisions clear. At the state level, events in New Hampshire also reflected, and in many cases presaged, the divisions that would ultimately push the United States to civil war. Reference the [Educator Overview](#) for more information.

This is the first lesson in Unit 10: New Hampshire and the Civil War. In this lesson, students explore how, by the middle of the 19th century, sectionalism centered on the institution of slavery, dividing the country to such extremes that the nation was pushed to a war between its citizens. The purpose of this lesson is to present a developmentally appropriate framework for exploring how extreme differences in values and viewpoints created an extreme situation in our young country. Understanding how and why civil war happens and reminding students of the values and goals of our democracy are essential to ensuring a future for the United States that is peaceful and just.

Students begin with an educator-guided discussion of the terms “war,” “civil war,” and “Civil War” to organize a collective schema and to assess student readiness for the remaining portions of the learning activity. Students watch the video “[Mason Explains: Sectionalism](#)” and complete a graphic organizer with information learned. The learning activity then looks at sectionalism through a New Hampshire lens with an analysis of primary sources relating to three political figures from the time period: Franklin Pierce, John Parker Hale, and Jefferson Davis. Students complete the lesson by creating a visual reflection on Abraham Lincoln’s description of the unstable country: “a house divided cannot stand.”

This lesson has been aligned to standards for grades 3–5; however, the topics and skills will be meaningful for middle school students. Suggestions for reinforcement and extension are included throughout the learning activity. Please adapt all the material in this lesson, as necessary, to meet the needs of the students in your classroom. Lesson vocabulary and definitions are at the end of this document. You may wish to preview these with your students.

Teaching tip: It is essential for educators to be sensitive to the personal experiences of their students before engaging in discussions of enslavement and war. The tension, fear, and devastation of this period can be simultaneously abstract and frightening for elementary and middle school students. Similarly, today’s children hear local and international news of war and injustice, and the human cost of those events remains a source of worry while also difficult to fully understand. Some students may have first-hand experience living in, or being refugees from, war zones, have family members who have been on active military duty, or have experienced other social hardships, including the loss of family members, poverty, and homelessness. See Supporting Materials, page 7 of this Educator Guide, for websites with advice for these discussions.

Learning Activity

Activation

Definitions: civil war and Civil War. Conduct a whole group discussion with students to assess and develop what they understand about war, civil war, and the American Civil War (1861–65). Use guiding questions such as the following to generate discussion:

- What makes a conflict a war?
- Where do wars happen?
- Who takes part in wars?
- What does it mean to capitalize the name of a war?
- What do you know about the civil war that took place in the United States?
- What does the word “civil” mean?

Record student responses on chart paper or a smart screen so students can reference them as they complete the next step.

Provide students with “Venn diagram: Understanding Civil War.” Support students as they independently fill the Venn diagram with what they understand about the different categories based on the group conversation. The overlapping portion for “civil war” will likely be filled in after students record what they know about “war” in general and the American Civil War in particular. Allow students to reference the answer key as necessary; discuss the completed “Venn diagram: Understanding Civil War” as appropriate.

Student Reading

Slavery in the United States. Before moving into Direct Instruction, have students read Unit 10: Learn It! “[The Politics of Slavery](#),” pages 1 to 3. Consider sharing “[Mason Explains: Slavery in the United States](#),” which is accessible on page 2. Together, these resources provide essential background information about slavery’s role in the sectional divide of the United States.

Direct Instruction

A country in sections. Remind students that there were other issues that the two sections of the country did not agree on, but the enslavement of human beings was the major point of disagreement. Explain to students that the visions the northern and southern states had for the future of the country were extremely different; each section felt its vision was the only path forward. This extreme difference is called sectionalism.

- **sectionalism (noun):** Loyalty to the interests of your own section of the country rather than to the interests of the country as a whole.

Distribute "A Growing Divide" worksheet and preview the structure of the graphic organizer. Explain that the scroll in the middle represents the Constitution and the way the United States of America had been functioning since its ratification. Describe how the arrows represent the two different futures the North and South wanted. Both North and South felt the Constitution no longer fully supported the way the United States should work; but the sections had very different ideas for the changes that should be made.

Tell students they will watch a short video that will give them more information about the events and legislation that pushed people to feel as though they were living in two different countries: one where slavery was legal and one where slavery was not legal. They should record the examples from the video in the corresponding arrow. Find the video "[Mason Explains: Sectionalism](#)" on the [Unit 10 Find It! page](#). Pause the video as appropriate to discuss the information presented and where it should be placed on the infographic.

Grade 3–5 reinforcement: Support students' understanding of sectionalism by examining a map. Project "Free States and Slave States." Use a Quick Connect handout or develop prompts that meet your students' needs to challenge them to use the map to explain how the United States seemed like two different countries in the middle of the 19th century. Possible outcomes of the discussion include:

- Students use the map key to identify which states and territories had abolished slavery and which states still practiced slavery
- Students observe the geographic split between free and slave states.
- Students explain how the large area still labeled as territory and still open to slavery would be a source of argument between free and slave states.

Grade 6–8 extension: To better understand the connection between geography and sectionalism, older students can examine "Reynolds's Political Map of the United States," which includes extensive economic and demographic data by state, collected during the national census of 1850. Ask students to use the data to explain in more detail the differences between the northern and southern sections of the country. How does this data explain why the sections would have been so focused on their own interests?

Teaching tip: Although a copy of "Reynolds's Political Map of the United States" can be found on the Find It! page for Unit 10, the file is also available online at the Library of Congress at www.loc.gov/resource/g3701e.ct000604/?r=-0.239,0.047,1.705,0.699,0. On the Library of Congress website, students can zoom in to more easily read the data.

Teaching tip: This is a good spot to pause before continuing the learning activity.

Student Reading

Franklin Pierce and the Democratic Party. Before moving into Guided Practice, direct students to read "Unit 10: Learn It! ["The Politics of Slavery,"](#) pages 4 to 6, for an introduction to Franklin Pierce, John Parker Hale, and division within the Democratic Party.

Guided Practice

Words of sectionalism. Explain to students that when **Franklin Pierce** was elected the 14th president of the United States in 1852, he was one of New Hampshire's most prominent politicians and was placed at the center of this growing sectional conflict. Many Americans felt and still feel that Pierce's actions as president, especially his stance that the federal government should not interfere with a state's constitutional right to practice slavery, contributed to sectionalism and moved the nation closer to civil war. Pierce did believe in preserving the United States as a whole country, but many in the North felt he was too accommodating to southern demands. He served only one term in office, as his party did not renominate him in 1856. He is the only president in American history to not be renominated by his party when he sought a second term.

Two politicians Pierce knew well were on opposite sides of the sectional divide:

- **John Parker Hale:** also from New Hampshire, an abolitionist, and a candidate for president from the Free Soil party in 1852
- **Jefferson Davis:** a U.S. senator from Mississippi, a member of Pierce's cabinet during his presidency, and, eventually, the president of the Confederate States of America.

Explain to students that they will examine two documents, one created by Hale and one by Davis, that were both addressed to Franklin Pierce. The Davis document is a personal letter, while the Hale document contains Hale's remarks made during a public debate against Pierce in Concord in 1845. Provide students with the "Not in My Country" worksheet and instruct them to answer the questions after reading the excerpts from each document.

Grade 3–5 reinforcement: Ask students to write about a time when they felt no one was listening to them or that others didn't seem to try to understand their point of view. What did that feel like? What happened? If things turned out well, what did the people involved do to make it so? If things didn't turn out the way the student hoped, what could they have done differently to better communicate their feelings, needs, and interests?



Grade 6–8 extension: Sectionalism continues to be a problem today at the local, state, and federal level. Sometimes it seems as if people cannot imagine how or why others in another town or state would see a situation differently. Some issues push people to feel as if there is only one way to see or approach a problem: their way! Ask students to examine stories from trusted news sources that describe “Us” vs. “Them” situations. In which situations is the democratic process being used to navigate and find solutions? In which situations do the sides seem to be at a stalemate, with no clear or positive path forward? What are the differences in the situations? What would students suggest in order for the sides to move forward together?

Teaching tip: Pause before moving on to the final part of the learning activity.

**Student
Reading**

Franklin Pierce’s Presidency. Expand student understanding of the increase in sectionalism in United States during the presidency of Franklin Pierce by directing them to read Unit 10: Learn It! “[Franklin Pierce’s Presidency](#),” pages 1 to 9.

Reflection

A house divided against itself. At the Illinois Republican State Convention of 1858, Abraham Lincoln gave a speech about the potential directions for the United States with regard to slavery and the obstacles formerly enslaved people still encountered in exercising their freedom. Examine the excerpt of the speech with students and then ask them to create a visual reflection that illustrates Lincoln’s warning that a “house divided against itself cannot stand.” Encourage students to draw, paint, use collage, or digital tools to create a response that answers this question: “What possible future lay ahead for a country divided over slavery?”

Grade 3–5 reinforcement: Scaffold the reflection assignment with students. Distribute copies of Lincoln’s speech to read with students. Read it twice through, once where students follow along, and then once when students highlight or underline words that help them visualize what their reflection might look like.

Supporting Materials

New Hampshire Historical Society Resources

1. Letter from Jefferson Davis to Franklin Pierce, 1861 January 20
2. "Hale Meeting in Concord," *The Independent Democrat* (Concord, N.H.), June 12, 1845
3. "Free States and Slave States" map on "Moose on the Loose" Unit 10 Find It! page

Other Resources

- Reynolds's Political Map of the United States, 1856, Library of Congress
- House Divided Speech, June 16, 1858, Lincoln Home National Historic Site website, National Park Service

Suggestions for resources for talking about hard topics

"Causes of the War" Film clips from Ken Burns' *The Civil War*.

nhpbs.pbslearningmedia.org/collection/kenburnsclassroom/film/the-civil-war/

PBS has created discussion questions to accompany selected clips from Burns' documentary. These questions provide appropriate language for talking to middle school students about the topics of sectionalism and secession.

"Talking With Children about War and Violence in the World"

www.teachervision.com/historic-wars-military-action/talking-with-children-about-war-and-violence-in-the-world

Educators for Social Responsibility has developed a guide for teachers to approach the topics of war and violence with their students in a manner that considers students' social and emotional development. Organized by questions that teachers may have, the guide provides advice and approaches for listening, reflection, and taking action.

"How to Talk to Children about War: An Age-by-Age Guide"

www.today.com/parents/how-talk-children-about-war-age-age-guide-t171381

This article, organized by age group, provides expert advice for helping children navigate what they hear about war and violence through various media outlets. Directed at parents, the information is also appropriate for educator use.

"Teaching Hard History: American Slavery"

www.learningforjustice.org/frameworks/teaching-hard-history/american-slavery

Learning for Justice created K-5 and 6-12 frameworks of Key Concepts students need to know to fully understand the history and impact of slavery in the United States. Supported with teaching strategies, primary sources, student texts, and professional development podcasts and webinars, this resource is accessible with a free Learning for Justice account.

Standards

“Moose on the Loose” Content:

- ✓ Students will understand that the United States became divided over several issues in the decades before the Civil War, including slavery, which resulted in rising tensions throughout the nation. They will understand that New Hampshire played a part in these relationships. (3-5.T4.2)

“Moose on the Loose” Skills:

- ✓ Gathering, Interpreting, and Using Evidence (3-5.S1.1, 3-5.S1.2)
- ✓ Communicating and Critiquing Conclusions (3-5.S2.1)
- ✓ Effective Historical Thinking (3-5.S3.2)
- ✓ Understanding and Participating in Government (3-5.S6.2)

New Hampshire Social Studies Frameworks:

- ✓ NH History: Political Foundations and Development (SS:HI:4:1.2)
- ✓ US / NH History: World Views and Value systems and their Intellectual and Artistic Expressions (SS:HI:4:3.1)

NCSS Themes:

- ✓ Theme 2: Time, Continuity, and Change
- ✓ Theme 10: Civic Ideals and Practices

C3 Frameworks:

- ✓ Perspectives (D2.His.4.3-5, D2.His.6.3-5)
- ✓ Historical Sources and Evidence (D2.His.11.3-5)

Common Core ELA Grade 3:

- ✓ Key Ideas and Details in Informational Text (RI.3.1)
- ✓ Craft and Structure in Informational Text (RI.3.6)
- ✓ Integration of Knowledge and Ideas in Informational Text (RI.3.7)
- ✓ Text Types and Purposes in Writing (W.3.2, W.3.2b)
- ✓ Comprehension and Collaboration in Speaking and Listening (SL.3.2)
- ✓ Knowledge of Language (L.3.3)

Common Core ELA Grade 4:

- ✓ Key Ideas and Details in Informational Text (RI.4.1, RI.4.2)
- ✓ Text Types and Purposes in Writing (W.4.2b)
- ✓ Comprehension and Collaboration in Speaking and Listening (SL.4.2)

Common Core ELA Grade 5:

- ✓ Key Ideas and Details in Informational Text (RI.5.1)
- ✓ Craft and Structure in Informational Text (RI.5.6)
- ✓ Text Types and Purposes in Writing (W.5.2b)
- ✓ Comprehension and Collaboration in Speaking and Listening (SL.5.2)

Lesson Vocabulary

abolition	(noun) The action of getting rid of something, specifically ending slavery during the 19th century
abolitionist	(noun) A person who works to get rid of something, especially slavery during the 19th century
civil war	(noun) Violent armed conflict between the citizens of the same region, territory, or country
Civil War	A war that lasted from 1861 to 1865 between the northern states and the southern states. The northern states were fighting to preserve the United States as one country, while the southern states wanted to create their own country called the Confederate States of America.
Constitution of the United States of America	(noun) The document that lays out the framework for how the federal government works; written in 1787 and ratified in 1789
secede	(verb) To separate from a political organization, like from a state or country
secession	(noun) The act of separating from a political organization
sectionalism	(noun) Loyalty to the interests of a specific region or section of a country
Union	(noun) During the Civil War, the part of the country that remained loyal to the federal government of the United States of America