

Secession in Tennessee

Lesson plans for primary sources at the Tennessee State Library & Archives

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Grade Level: 5th and 8th Grade

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Introduction: Tennesseans were divided on the issue of secession. In this lesson, students will explore the events that ultimately led Tennessee to secede. Students will also examine the geographical division of Tennessee over the issue of slavery and secession.

Guiding Question(s):

- What events led Tennessee to secede in June 1861?
- How did views on secession vary throughout the three Grand Divisions of Tennessee?

Learning Objectives: In the course of the lesson, students will

- Analyze primary source documents
- Work in groups to create a timeline of events
- Analyze the geographic patterns of voting results
- Write an editorial that demonstrates knowledge of how public sentiment regarding slavery varied in throughout the three Grand Divisions of Tennessee

Curriculum Standards:

5.41 - Examine the issue of slavery in the three grand divisions and the impact their differences had on Tennessee's secession from the Union. (C, E, G, H, P, T)

8.62 - Describe the outbreak of the Civil War and the resulting sectional differences, including: Economic, geographic, and technological differences, military strategies, roles of President Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis, Significance of Fort Sumter, and geographical divisions within states. (C, E, G, H, P, T)

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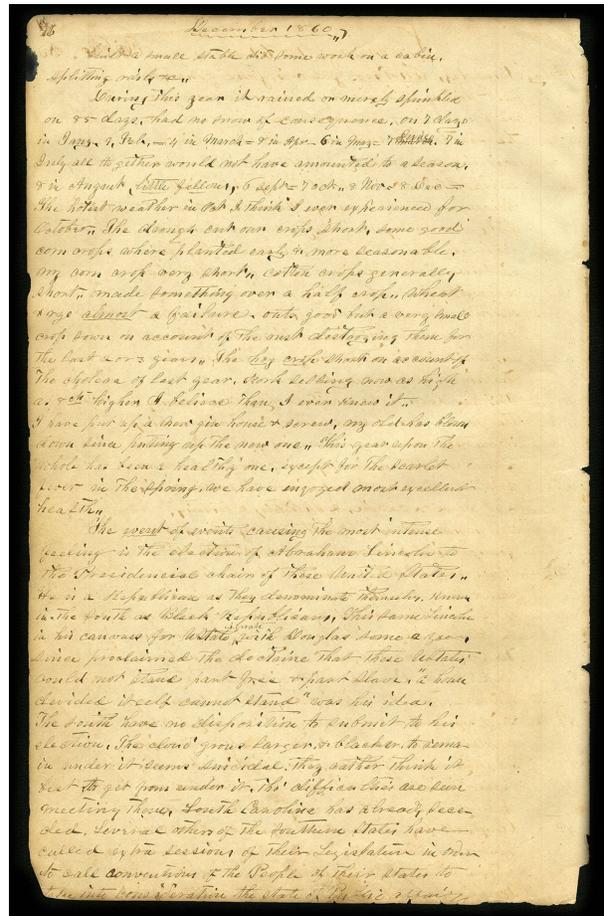
Materials Needed:

Election Results:

- [Maury County](#)
- [Scott County](#)
- [Greene County](#)
- [Hardeman County](#)
- [Henry County](#)
- [Cartmell Diary Entry: December 1860](#)

Lawrence Family Papers Entries for

- Jan 1, 1861 ([page 68](#))
- Feb 9, 1861 (page 68)
- April 13, 1861 ([page 69](#))
- April 20, 1861 (page 69)
- April 25, 1861 (page 69)
- May 1, 1861 ([page 70](#))
- June 1, 1861 (page 70)
- June 8, 1861 (page 70)
- June 17, 1861 (page 70)
- [Map of Tennessee Counties](#)
- [Timeline Graphic Organizer](#)
- [Voting Results Organizer](#)
- [Governor Isham Harris' letter of February 28th, 1861 \(for extension activity\)](#)



Background: [Teachtnhistory.org—Hurst Nation and the State of Scott](#)

Preparation Instructions:

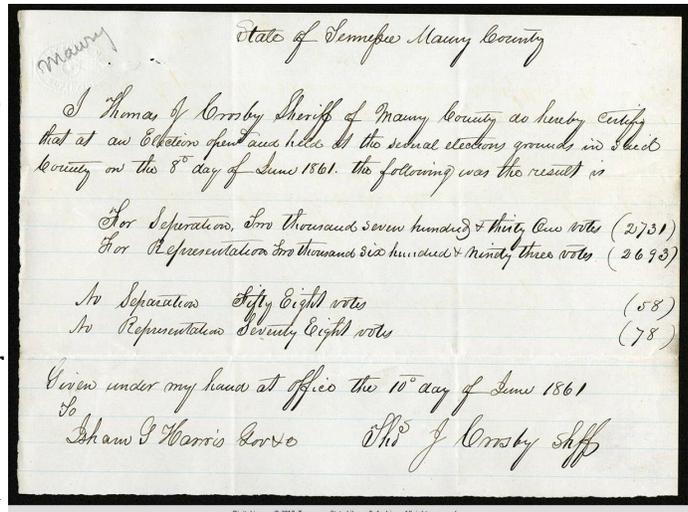
- Print one copy of each of the diary entries. Transcriptions of the entries are included with lesson materials. These will be distributed in 10 stations throughout the classroom.
- Print copies of each of the election results for the five counties listed above. You will need one set for each of your small groups. Alternately, you may wish to provide students with links to the digital copies so that they can utilize the zoom feature to view the documents in more detail.
- Print one copy of the county map for each group.
- Print one copy of the timeline organizer for each group.
- Print one copy of the election results organizer for each group.
- Read the background essay and primary source documents to familiarize yourself with the issues and materials.

Lesson Activities: Activity 1

Divide students into small groups. Give each group a copy of the timeline organizer. Groups will travel to each of the stations, read each primary source document and summarize it on the timeline organizer. Once all groups have completed the timeline, review the events with the students. Ask the students to explain the relationship between national events such as the election of Abraham Lincoln with events in Tennessee.

Lesson Activities Continued: Activity 2

Before beginning this activity, you will need to clarify with students that the June 1861 ballot had two questions. Should Tennessee separate from the Union? Should Tennessee seek representation in the Confederate Congress? Give each group a set of county election results, a map of Tennessee counties and a graphic organizer. Students need to find each county on the map and determine if it is in East, Middle or West Tennessee. Next, students will read the primary source documents, determine the results of the election and record the information on the organizer. After students have completed the organizer, discuss their findings. Ask students to generalize about public sentiment regarding secession in each of the Grand Divisions based on their findings.



Lesson Activities Continued: Activity 3

Write an editorial that might have appeared in a Scott county or Maury county newspaper. The editorial should mention at least 3 of the Tennessee events from the timeline and correctly reflect the public sentiment of the county.

Extending the Lesson: Have students create a multimedia presentation on secession in Tennessee using documents and images from the Tennessee State Library and Archives.

Have students transcribe [Governor Isham Harris' letter of February 28th, 1861](#). Ask them to compare the sentiments expressed in letter with Harris reply to Lincoln's call for troops following the Battle at Fort Sumter.

June Secession Vote

County	Grand Division	Election Results
Maury County		Secession Representation
Scott County		Secession Representation
Greene County		Secession Representation
Hardeman County		Secession Representation
Henry County		Secession Representation

Secession Events Timeline

National Events

November 1860 Lincoln elected president
December 1860 South Carolina secedes
January 1861 Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, and Louisiana secede
April 12, 1861 Battle of Fort Sumter

Tennessee Events

December, 1860
January 1, 1861
February 9, 1861
April 13, 1861
April 20, 1861
April 25, 1861
May 1, 1861
June 1, 1861
June 8, 1861
June 17, 1861

July 21, 1861 First Battle of Bull Run/Manassas

Cartmell Diary December, 1860

“The event of events causing the most intense feeling is the election of Abraham Lincoln to the presidential chair of these United States. He is a republican as they dominate themselves. Known in the South as Black republicans. This same Lincoln in his canvas for State Senate with Douglas some a year since proclaimed the doctrine that these S. States could not stand part free & part slave, “A house divided itself cannot stand” was his idea. The south have no disposition to submit to his election. The cloud grows larger & blacker to remain under it seems suicidal. They rather think it best to get from under it. The difficulties are seen meeting them. South Carolina has already seceded. Several others of the southern states have called extra sessions of their legislation in order to call convention of the People of their states to take into consideration the state of Public affairs.”

Lawrence Family Papers January 1, 1861

“Finds the American Eagle in deep distress, while want & misery & fear stumbling walk unrestrained over the land, which was once home of plenty & happiness. The politicians cannot save the Union, people are divided, business stagnant & nothing but the power of Almighty God can save us from that destruction to which we are so rapidly hastening.”

Lawrence Family Papers February 9, 1861

“ Election held today in Tennessee. Question, Union or Disunion. I voted for Union & Convention. South Carolina, Ala, Miss, Geo, Florida & La have already seceded from the Union - six states. ”

Lawrence Family Papers April 13, 1861

“The great and political crisis is upon us, which has been anticipated for a long time. Fort Sumter was attacked yesterday by the South Carolinians & surrendered today. Military movements are going on North & South, excitement rules & is galloping rampant over the Country.”

Lawrence Family Papers April 20, 1861

“Lincoln has made a call upon all the border & Northern States for troops to put down “rebellion” in our Sister Southern States. Our Gov. Harris has indignantly refused to furnish a single man for any such accursed purpose, but 50,000 if necessary for the defense of our & their rights.”

Lawrence Family Papers April 25, 1861

“A called session of the legislature commences today for the purpose of deciding measures to meet the extraordinary times that are upon us - Nashville & the State generally are busy in warlike preparations, companies are forming at this time in almost every district in the state. I have joined the Nashville Guards commanded by Major Heinman a gallant officer who has been in service in the wilds of Mexico.

Lawrence Family Papers May 1, 1861

“ The Legislature in Extra Session has made a call upon the State for 55,000 troops, 25,000 for immediate service & 30,000 as a reserve to be mustered in as soon as needed, also \$5,000,000 have been appropriated for defense, Secession Ordinance & Confederate alliance past.”

Lawrence Family Papers June 1, 1861

“Companies are being rapidly mustered into service from all parts of the state.”

Lawrence Family Papers June 8, 1861

“Vote was taken upon Separation & Representation & carried by a large majority in the affirmative.”

Lawrence Family Papers June 17, 1861

“ The Secession Flag now waves in triumph from our state Capitol, it was hoisted today amid much enthusiasm”