

Lesson: A State Divided -- Maryland in the Civil War Era

Objective: Students will use primary sources to explore Maryland's divided positions on the issues that helped lead to the Civil War.

Grade Level: Grades 4 and 8

Voluntary State Curriculum Correlation:

Grade 4:

5.C.3.b. Describe the economic interests in Maryland, such as agricultural v. industrial and slave v. non-slave

5.C.3.c. Describe why loyalties to the North and to the South were divided in Maryland

Grade 8: 5.C.5.a. Describe pro-slavery and anti-slavery positions and explain how debates over slavery influenced politics and sectionalism

5.C.6. Prioritize causes and key events leading to secession and Civil War

Estimated Time:

One 45-minute class session

Advance Preparation:

(Note: Map link below is in PDF format and may take a few minutes to open)

1. Create a transparency map of the eastern United States as it existed in 1861, coloring states that remained in the Union blue and states that seceded red. Do not color in Maryland.

2. Create a transparency on which the two [maps](#) of Maryland from the student worksheet are colored in as described below.

3. Copy vocabulary list for distribution to students.

New Vocabulary:

border state - a state that was geographically located between North and South and had some characteristics of the North and some characteristics of the South during the Civil War era

cash crop - a crop raised for the purpose of selling it for profit

confederacy - the political organization formed by the 11 Southern states that seceded from the United States

coal - a mineral that is used as fuel

ironworks - a factory where iron is made

livestock - farm animals kept for sale or profit

lumber - wood sawed into boards

mills - a building where grain is ground into flour

secede - to remove oneself from a political organization

Union - the United States of America

Historical Background:

As a border state, Maryland was caught between North and South in the years

leading up to the Civil War. The state's geographic and topographic diversity resulted in a state whose regions were very different politically, economically, and socially.

In many ways, the state had Southern characteristics. Early Maryland colonists had intended to make their fortunes through the cultivation and sale of tobacco as the Virginians had done. On the eve of the Civil War, tobacco agriculture still dominated the economies of Southern Maryland and some parts of the Eastern Shore. Coupled with the tobacco economy was the institution of slavery. Initially, white indentured servants had been used to cultivate the tobacco crop, but a convergence of economic factors around the 1680s led to the decline of indentured servitude and the rise of African slavery on Maryland's tobacco plantations. In addition, many Marylanders were tied to Virginia by family, friendships, and business relationships. Like the South, in general, Southern Maryland also had relatively few towns. Although tobacco was becoming less profitable by the Civil War and the number of enslaved African Americans was decreasing by the beginning of the Civil War, the plantation culture still defined Southern and Eastern Maryland.

In the more recently settled Northern and Western regions of the state, tendencies were more Northern. Wheat, rather than tobacco, was the predominant crop, and because labor needs associated with wheat cultivation are less constant than those associated with tobacco, the region had far fewer slaves than Southern Maryland. The populations of these regions were also much more diverse, including growing numbers of free blacks and German and Scotch-Irish immigrants. Although the region remained overwhelmingly rural, manufacturing enterprises such as iron and glass works, gristmills, and breweries flourished, as did towns.

Baltimore, as the state's largest urban area, resembled Northern cities in many respects. Shipping and shipbuilding were at the core of the city's economy, and many of the merchants who led city affairs were from German, Scotch-Irish, or Quaker families originally of modest means. Although there were slaves in Baltimore, there was a far larger and more vibrant free black community. By 1850, there were over eight times as many free blacks as slaves in the city. Despite these Northern tendencies, however, some of Baltimore's most powerful residents were members of old, distinguished families like the Howards and viewed Maryland as a Southern state.

As the sectional crisis intensified, most Marylanders wanted to remain neutral, although they sympathized with the South. The election of 1860 illustrates this point. Southern Democrat John Breckinridge, who supported the extension of slavery into the territories, received 45.9% of the vote in Maryland. John Bell of the Constitutional Union Party, which took no position on slavery and supported peace and the Union, received 45.1% but carried all but 6 counties, albeit by narrow margins. Both candidates were from border states and were viewed as moderates who wanted to restore peace. Northern candidates Abraham Lincoln (Republican) and Stephen Douglas (Northern Democrat) received just 9% of the Maryland vote combined.

Despite Maryland's sympathy for the South, the state never seceded. Even when Southern sentiment reached its zenith after a secessionist mob attacked Northern troops passing through the city in April 1861, Maryland did not move to secede, although it was much discussed. After the riots, President Lincoln established de facto martial law in Maryland, suspending the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus and occupying the city with Federal troops. Thus ended any chance that the state would actually join the Confederacy.

Motivation:

Show students the transparency map of the United States in 1861 that indicates

which states remained loyal to the Union (Northern) and which seceded (Southern). Ask students whether they think Maryland was a Northern or Southern state based on this map. Tell them that this lesson will help them understand where Maryland stood in the conflict between North and South.

Procedure:

1. On the chalkboard or overhead, draw a two-column table with the columns headed "North" and "South." Ask the students to list some of the political, social, and economic characteristics of each region.

North: all individual states had outlawed slavery, free black populations, growing industry, large numbers of immigrants, small farms, belief in the power of the United States government over individual states

South: slavery, little industry, large farms concentrating on "cash crops," few immigrants, little ethnic diversity among whites, people identified more with their state than with the United States

2. Distribute the hand-out "Worksheet: Maryland, 1860", along with the tables entitled "[Economic Activities of Maryland Counties](#)" and "[Percentage of County Populations Made Up Of Enslaved African Americans in 1860](#)". (Note: These links are in PDF format and may take a few minutes to open.)

3. On the first map, instruct students to use the table "Economic Activities of Maryland Counties" to color in the map.

- **RED** - Counties that grow tobacco
- **BLUE** - Counties that grow wheat, operate mills, OR operate ironworks
- **YELLOW** - Counties that grow tobacco AND do one of the following: grow wheat, operate mills, or operate ironworks

4. On the second map, instruct students to use the table "Percentage of County Populations Made Up Of Enslaved African Americans" to color in the map.

- **RED** - Counties that are 20% or more enslaved
- **YELLOW** - Counties that are 7% to 19% enslaved
- **BLUE** - Counties that are 0% to 6% enslaved

5. Show students the transparency of the first map (keeping the second map covered) and review.

6. Ask students to recall whether tobacco was grown in the northern or southern United States. Ask whether growing wheat and operating mills and ironworks were economic activities more common in the North or the South.

7. Ask students if, using their map, they can make any generalizations about economic activities in different regions of Maryland.

- Which areas of Maryland were more like the South? (southern Maryland)
- Which were more like the North? (northern, central, and western Maryland)
- How would they characterize eastern Maryland? (a mix of North and South)

8. Reveal the transparency of the second map. Cover up the first map.

9. Ask students if they can make generalizations about where in Maryland slavery was most popular. (Most popular in southern Maryland, then in the east. Least popular in central and western Maryland).

10. Explain that, in the Deep South, an average of 45 % of the population was made up of enslaved African Americans. In the Upper South, which includes Maryland, an average of 22% of the population was made up of enslaved African Americans. (Source: Peter Kolchin, *American Slavery, 1619-1877*, New York: Hill and Wang, 1993, p. 242)

11. Uncover both maps. Ask students if they notice any similarities. (southern Maryland colored red; northern, central, and western Maryland colored blue; eastern Maryland colored yellow)

12. Explain that the areas colored blue have the characteristics of Northern states, areas colored red have characteristics of Southern states, and the areas colored yellow have mixed characteristics.

13. (Eighth grade only) Ask students what they think the correlation between tobacco-growing regions and slave-holding regions means.

- Explain that growing tobacco was very labor intensive. The plants needed to be tended constantly, and it was a year-round process. You needed a lot of workers to grow tobacco, and the system of slavery provided the needed workers relatively cheaply because you didn't have to pay them. Growing wheat and corn required much less labor, and the plants only needed to be tended periodically. It made no sense to buy a permanent labor force when you only needed the workers once in a while.

14. Explain to students that Maryland was a border state during the Civil War. It had some characteristics of Northern states (industry, focus on grain farming) and some characteristics of Southern states (tobacco farming, slavery). Many Marylanders supported the Southern Confederacy, but Maryland never seceded. Maryland remained loyal to the United States government, in part because President Abraham Lincoln sent United States troops to Maryland soon after the war started to make sure that the state did not secede.

Closure/Assessment:

Students should imagine that it is March 1861, just before the start of the Civil War, and they are living in the county in which their school is currently located. South Carolina and many other Southern states have already seceded. First, students should assume one of the following identities that is appropriate for the area in which they live:

- Tobacco farmer
- Wheat farmer
- Ironworks owner
 - Mill owner

Students should write letters to Governor Thomas Hicks recommending that Maryland either remain loyal to the Union or secede and join the Southern Confederacy. They should explain why they feel the way that they do. Students should tell Governor Hicks whether they believe Maryland is more a Northern or Southern state and why.



This project was made possible by a grant from the Maryland Humanities Council, through support from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this program do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities or the Maryland Humanities Council.