

4

The Nation Splits in Two

As You Read

Explore These Questions

- Why was Abraham Lincoln able to win the election of 1860?
- How did the South react to Lincoln's election victory?
- What events led to the outbreak of the Civil War?

Identify

- John Breckinridge
- John Bell
- John Crittenden
- Confederate States of America
- Jefferson Davis
- Fort Sumter

SETTING the Scene

In May 1860, thousands of people swarmed into Chicago for the Republican national convention. They filled the city's 42 hotels. When beds ran out, they slept on billiard tables. All were there to find out one thing. Who would win the Republican nomination for President—William Seward of New York or Abraham Lincoln of Illinois?

On the third day of the convention, a delegate rushed to the roof of the hall. There, a man stood waiting next to a cannon. "Fire the salute," ordered the delegate. "Old Abe is nominated!"

As the cannon fired, crowds surrounding the hall burst into cheers. Amid the celebration, a delegate from Kentucky struck a somber note. "Gentlemen, we are on the brink of a great civil war."

The Election of 1860

The Democrats held their convention in Charleston, South Carolina. Southerners wanted the party to support slavery in the territories. However, Northern Democrats refused to do so.

In the end, the party split in two. Northern Democrats chose Stephen Douglas to run for President. Southern Democrats picked **John Breckinridge** of Kentucky.

Some Americans tried to heal the split between North and South by forming a new party. The Constitutional Union party chose **John Bell** of Tennessee, a Whig, to run for President. Bell was a moderate who wanted

to keep the Union together. He got support only in a few southern states that were still trying to find a compromise.

Senator Douglas was sure that Lincoln would win the election. However, he believed that Democrats "must try to save the Union." He pleaded with southern voters to stay with the Union, no matter who was elected.

When the votes were counted, Lincoln had carried the North and won the election. Southern votes did not affect the outcome at all. Lincoln's name was not even on the ballot in 10 southern states. Northerners outnumbered southerners and outvoted them.

The Union Is Broken

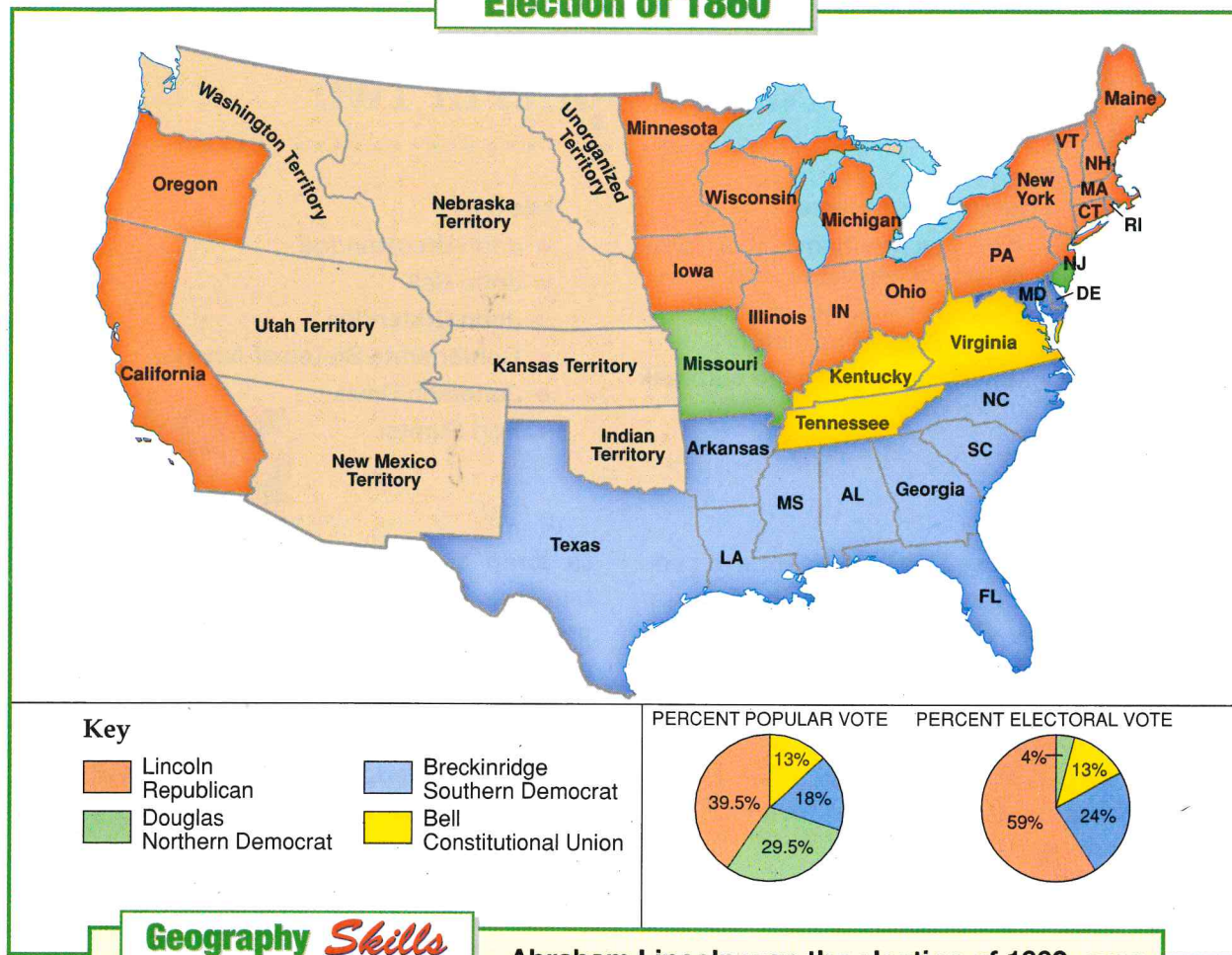
Lincoln's election brought a strong reaction in the South. A South Carolina woman described how the news was received:

“The excitement was very great. Everybody was talking at the same time. One . . . more moved than the others, stood up saying . . . ‘The die is cast—No more vain regrets—Sad forebodings are useless. The stake is life or death—’ . . . No doubt of it.”



Republican campaign banner

Election of 1860



Geography Skills

Abraham Lincoln won the election of 1860, even though he received less than 40 percent of the popular vote.

- Location** On the map, locate: (a) Kentucky, (b) Illinois, (c) South Carolina.
- Region** (a) Which political party did the northern states support? (b) Which party did most southern states support?
- Critical Thinking** Did the popular vote results probably weaken or strengthen Lincoln's chances of effectively leading the nation? Explain.

To many southerners, Lincoln's election meant that the South no longer had a voice in national government. They believed that the President and Congress were now set against their interests—especially slavery. Even before the election, South Carolina's governor had written to other southern governors. If Lincoln won, he wrote, it would be their duty to leave the Union.

Secession

Senator **John Crittenden** of Kentucky made a last effort to save the Union. In December 1860, he introduced a bill to extend

the Missouri Compromise line to the Pacific. He also suggested adding an "unamendable" amendment to the Constitution to forever guarantee the right to hold slaves in states south of the compromise line.

The compromise bill received little support. Slavery in the West was no longer the issue. Many southerners believed that the North had put an abolitionist in the White House. They felt that secession was their only choice. Most Republicans also refused to compromise. They were unwilling to surrender what they had won in the national election.

Skills FOR LIFE

Critical
Thinking

Managing
Information

Communication

Maps, Charts,
and Graphs

Comparing Points of View

How Will I Use This Skill?

When two or more people describe the same event, their descriptions of the event often differ. That is because each person's point of view is subjective, or influenced by personal experiences and feelings. By comparing different sources, you can learn objective information, or facts, as well as subjective points of view regarding those facts.

LEARN the Skill

You can compare points of view by following the steps below.

- 1 Identify the author of each source. Consider how each report might be affected by the author's point of view.
- 2 Find objective information common to two or more sources.
- 3 Identify subjective statements that reflect the author's point of view.
- 4 Draw conclusions about the historical event and different points of view on it.

PRACTICE the Skill

The newspaper articles above give different viewpoints on Abraham Lincoln's victory in the election of 1860. Compare the two viewpoints by answering the following questions.

- 1 (a) Which source is a southern newspa-

Bullying the Free States

November 19, 1860
The New York Tribune

Abraham Lincoln has been designated for next President of this Republic by the popular vote of nearly every Free State, and the ruling politicians of the Slave States are not pleased with the selection. We can fancy their feelings, as we felt much the same when they put a most undesired President upon us four years ago. Moreover, we...advise them to do as we did—Bear it with fortitude, and hope to do better next time.

Devotion to the Union Is Treason to the South

November 19, 1860
Oxford Mississippi Mercury

We have at last reached that point in our history when it is necessary for the South to withdraw from the Union....

[A] powerful sectional majority are now about to seize upon the Government...to destroy the institution of Slavery....We cannot stand still and quietly see the Government pass into the hands of such an infamous crew.

South Carolina,...Georgia, Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, Texas, and Arkansas, will soon be united as brothers to defend each other from the inroads of the fanatics of the North.

per? (b) Which source is a northern newspaper? (c) Why would you expect the two to have different opinions about Lincoln?

- 2 What factual information do you find in both articles?
- 3 How do the two articles describe the election result differently?
- 4 (a) Why did the election cause conflict between North and South? (b) What did the *Tribune* think the South should do? (c) What did the *Mercury* recommend?

APPLY the Skill

In two or more newspapers or news magazines, find different points of view on some issue or event. Use the steps you have learned to compare the various viewpoints.



Fort Sumter

The Civil War began in 1861 when Confederate forces bombarded and captured Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor, South Carolina. Later in the war, Union gunships reduced Sumter to rubble. The fort was rebuilt, and it remained part of the seacoast defenses until 1947. Today, Fort Sumter is a national monument. Tour boats to the fort leave regularly from downtown Charleston.

★ To learn more about this historic site, write: Fort Sumter National Monument, Sullivan's Island, SC 29482.



◀ Union flag from Fort Sumter

The first state to secede was South Carolina. On December 20, 1860, delegates to a convention in Charleston voted for secession. "The state of South Carolina has resumed her position among the nations of the world," the delegates proudly declared. By late February, 1861, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas had seceded.

The Confederacy

The seven states that had seceded held a convention in Montgomery, Alabama. There, the southern states formed a new nation, the **Confederate States of America**. To lead the new country, they named **Jefferson Davis** of Mississippi as the first president of the Confederacy.

Most southerners believed that they had every right to secede. After all, the Declaration of Independence said that "it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish" a government that denies the rights of its citizens. Lincoln, they believed, would deny white southerners their right to own slaves.

Lincoln Speaks to the Nation

When Abraham Lincoln took office on March 4, 1861, he faced a national crisis. Crowds gathered in Washington, D.C., to hear him take the presidential oath of office. In his Inaugural Address, the new President assured Americans of both the North and the South that he had two goals. He hoped to maintain the Union and avoid war.

On the first goal, preserving the Union, Lincoln would not compromise. Secession of states from the Union, he said, was unconstitutional. Lincoln believed that his duty as

Connections With Civics

Texas voters chose secession, but Governor Sam Houston refused to swear allegiance to the new Confederacy. He was replaced by a new governor. Houston sadly warned his fellow Texans that the North would "move with the steady momentum and perseverance of a mighty avalanche; and... overwhelm the South."

President was clear. He would take strong action to preserve national union.

“In view of the Constitution and the law, the Union is unbroken; . . . I will take care . . . that the laws of the Union be faithfully executed in all the States.”

At the same time, however, Lincoln tried to reassure the South. He promised that there would not be war with the South unless southern states started it:

“We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection.”

Civil War

The Confederacy, however, had already started seizing federal forts in the South. It felt that the forts were a threat because the United States was now a “foreign power.”

Lincoln’s difficult decision

President Lincoln faced a difficult decision. Should he let the Confederates take over federal property? If he did, he would seem to be admitting that states had the right to leave the Union. On the other hand, if he sent troops to hold the forts, he might start a civil war. He might also lose the

support of the eight slave states that had not seceded from the Union.

In April, the Confederacy forced Lincoln to make up his mind. By then, Confederate troops controlled nearly all forts, post offices, and other federal buildings in the South. The Union held only three forts off the Florida coast and Fort Sumter in South Carolina. **Fort Sumter** was important to the Confederacy because it guarded Charleston Harbor.

Bombardment of Fort Sumter

President Lincoln learned that food supplies at Fort Sumter were running low. He notified the governor of South Carolina that he was going to ship food to the fort. Lincoln promised not to send troops or weapons.

The Confederates could not leave the fort in Union hands, however. On April 11, 1861, they asked for Fort Sumter’s surrender.

Major Robert Anderson, the Union commander, refused to give in. Confederate guns then opened fire. Anderson and his troops quickly ran out of ammunition. On April 13, Anderson surrendered the fort.

When Confederate troops shelled Fort Sumter, people in Charleston had gathered on their rooftops to watch. To many, it was like a fireworks display. No one knew that the fireworks marked the beginning of a civil war that would last four terrible years.

★ Section 4 Review ★

Recall

1. **Identify** (a) John Breckinridge, (b) John Bell, (c) John Crittenden, (d) Confederate States of America, (e) Jefferson Davis, (f) Fort Sumter.

Comprehension

2. Why were there two Democratic candidates for President in 1860?
3. Why did many southerners feel that secession was necessary after Lincoln won the Presidency in 1860?

4. How did the Civil War begin at Fort Sumter in 1861?

Critical Thinking and Writing

5. **Making Inferences** How do you think the split in the Democratic party helped Lincoln win the election of 1860?
6. **Solving Problems** Write a compromise plan that tries to save the Union in 1861. Your plan should offer advantages to both the North and the South.



Activity Writing Slogans You are a famous political campaign manager of the mid-1800s. Write a campaign slogan for each of the four candidates in the presidential election of 1860.