A Nation Divides

Trace how disputes over slavery became a war.

8.H.22 "Analyze the causes and effects of events leading to the Civil War, and evaluate the impact issues such as states' rights and slavery had in developing America's sectional conflict."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two causes of sectional conflict, circle two effects, and number the attack on Fort Sumter, secession, and Lincoln's election in the order they happened.

From Dispute to War

1. In 1850, Congress tried to calm a growing dispute over slavery with a package of laws called the Compromise of 1850. One law, the Fugitive Slave Act, gave federal officials stronger power to capture people accused of escaping slavery, even in free states. Federal commissioners could order their return, and people who helped fugitives faced penalties. Many northern residents saw this as the federal government forcing them to support slavery. Slaveholders argued that the law protected their property rights. Instead of settling the dispute, enforcement stirred resistance and distrust.

2. In 1854, the Kansas-Nebraska Act let settlers in two new territories vote on whether to allow slavery, undoing an earlier limit on slavery's spread. Both supporters and opponents of slavery moved to Kansas, hoping to control the vote. Election fraud and armed clashes followed. Supporters called the vote local choice, but Kansas was a territory, not a state. Many northerners feared that slavery could spread into places once closed to it. Southern leaders also argued that states had the right to govern slavery within their own borders.

3. In November 1860, Abraham Lincoln won the presidential election without carrying a southern state. He opposed the spread of slavery into territories, though he did not call for immediately ending it in states where it existed. Fearing the loss of political power and future limits on slavery, seven slaveholding states seceded before he took office. Their leaders spoke of states' rights, but several secession declarations explicitly defended slavery. In April 1861, Confederate forces fired on Fort Sumter, a federal fort in South Carolina. The attack began the Civil War.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the Fugitive Slave Act deepen conflict even though Congress meant to calm it?

2. How did the Kansas-Nebraska Act lead to violence in Kansas?

3. How did local choice in Kansas differ from the southern leaders' states' rights argument described in the passage?

4. How did Lincoln's election lead to secession, and what happened after the states seceded?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four- or five-sentence museum caption arguing whether slavery or a general desire for states' rights better explains the growing sectional conflict. Use evidence from two different paragraphs and explain how the effects of those events support your claim.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 8 · 8.H.22

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two causes of sectional conflict, circle two effects, and number the attack on Fort Sumter, secession, and Lincoln's election in the order they happened. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the Fugitive Slave Act deepen conflict even though Congress meant to calm it?	**Its federal enforcement made many northern residents feel forced to support slavery, stirring resistance and distrust.**
2	How did the Kansas-Nebraska Act lead to violence in Kansas?	**The act allowed settlers to vote on slavery, so supporters and opponents moved to Kansas to influence the vote. Election fraud and armed clashes followed.**
3	How did local choice in Kansas differ from the southern leaders' states' rights argument described in the passage?	**Local choice meant settlers voting on slavery in a territory. The states' rights argument concerned a state's power to govern slavery within its borders.**
4	How did Lincoln's election lead to secession, and what happened after the states seceded?	**Seven slaveholding states seceded because their leaders feared losing political power and facing future limits on slavery. Confederate forces then attacked Fort Sumter, beginning the war.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Slavery, rather than a general desire for states' rights, best explains why the sections grew apart. The Fugitive Slave Act used federal power to return people accused of escaping slavery, which stirred northern resistance. After Lincoln won, seven slaveholding states seceded because they feared limits on slavery, and Confederate forces later attacked Fort Sumter. Leaders argued about government power in different ways, but these events and their effects centered on protecting or resisting slavery.

Accept different underlined causes and circled effects when students can explain the cause-and-effect link. For the caption, look for a supported claim, evidence from two paragraphs, and an explanation of effects.