# From Ballots to Battle

Read how the election of 1860 led to civil war.

**8.C.12.1** "Analyze major issues of the presidential election of 1860 and its immediate consequences. Describe the fragmentation of the national party system during the election of 1860 and its role in sectional division..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

## 1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

**YOUR JOB** Circle the four presidential candidates named in paragraph 1, underline the sentence beginning "At Cooper Union," and number the sentences beginning "In December 1860," "In February 1861," and "On April 12, 1861," from 1 to 3 to trace the path from election to war.

### A Nation Divides

1 In 1860, voters faced four major presidential candidates. The Republican Party chose Abraham Lincoln, who opposed the spread of slavery into western territories. Northern Democrats supported Stephen Douglas, who said settlers should decide the slavery question in their territories. Southern Democrats backed John C. Breckinridge, who wanted federal protection for slavery in the territories. The Constitutional Union Party nominated John Bell, who urged loyalty to the Union while avoiding a clear stand on slavery. Splits within the Democratic Party showed how strongly slavery divided North and South; Lincoln won without carrying a southern state.

2 At Cooper Union in February 1860, Lincoln argued that the nation's founders had allowed Congress to restrict slavery in federal territories, and he called for stopping its spread there. He did not call for abolishing slavery in states where it already existed; he wanted to preserve the Union. After his election, leaders in slaveholding southern states feared that limits on slavery's expansion would threaten slavery itself. Mississippi's secession declaration stated, "Our position is thoroughly identified with the institution of slavery." This statement named slavery, rather than a vague disagreement, as central to secession.

3 In December 1860, South Carolina seceded, and six more states followed before Lincoln took office. In February 1861, those seven states formed the Confederate States of America and chose Jefferson Davis as president. Border states such as Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri allowed slavery but remained in the Union; people there disagreed sharply over which side to support. Maryland mattered because it bordered Washington, D.C., while Kentucky and Missouri controlled important routes. On April 12, 1861, Confederate forces attacked the U.S. fort at Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor, beginning armed civil conflict.

## 2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the candidates' different positions on slavery show that the national party system was dividing?

2. How did Lincoln's position at Cooper Union differ from what southern leaders feared after his election?

3. Which words in Mississippi's declaration show why slavery was central to its secession?

4. Why were the border states both important to the Union and a source of tension?

## 3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a five-sentence newspaper report dated April 13, 1861, linking the divided election, Lincoln's position, slavery in a secession declaration, the new Confederate government, and the attack on Fort Sumter. Include one border state's dilemma and why that state mattered.

ANSWER KEY

# From Ballots to Battle

GRADE 8 · 8.C.12.1

## PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Circle the four presidential candidates named in paragraph 1, underline the sentence beginning "At Cooper Union," and number the sentences beginning "In December 1860," "In February 1861," and "On April 12, 1861," from 1 to 3 to trace the path from election to war. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

## PART 2 · ANSWERS

| # | QUESTION | ANSWER |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | How did the candidates' different positions on slavery show that the national party system was dividing? | **Democrats split between Douglas, who favored letting settlers decide, and Breckinridge, who wanted federal protection for slavery in the territories. Lincoln opposed its spread, while Bell avoided a clear stand.** |
| 2 | How did Lincoln's position at Cooper Union differ from what southern leaders feared after his election? | **Lincoln called for stopping slavery's spread into federal territories, not abolishing it in states where it existed. Southern leaders feared that limits on expansion would threaten slavery itself.** |
| 3 | Which words in Mississippi's declaration show why slavery was central to its secession? | **Mississippi said its position was "thoroughly identified with the institution of slavery," directly naming slavery as its concern.** |
| 4 | Why were the border states both important to the Union and a source of tension? | **They remained in the Union but had people who disagreed over which side to support. Maryland bordered Washington, D.C., and Kentucky and Missouri controlled important routes.** |

## PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Four major candidates ran in 1860 as Democrats split over slavery in the territories, and Abraham Lincoln won without carrying a southern state. At Cooper Union, Lincoln opposed slavery's spread but did not demand its end in states where it existed. Mississippi's declaration said its position was "thoroughly identified with the institution of slavery," showing why it left the Union. Seceding states formed the Confederacy under Jefferson Davis, and Confederate forces attacked Fort Sumter yesterday, beginning armed conflict. Maryland remains in the Union, but its people disagree over which side to support, and it borders Washington, D.C.

Accept responses that accurately connect the parties' split to disagreement over slavery, rather than claiming the split alone determined the election. In the report, accept any border state named in the passage if the student explains its importance using a passage detail.