# A Nation Divided

Read how a tariff dispute exposed divisions across and within the nation.

**8.C.8.2.C** "Examine how the Nullification Crisis illustrated the growing tensions between sections of the nation and the public."

NAME _____ DATE _____

## 1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

**YOUR JOB** Underline one reason northern manufacturers supported tariffs and one reason southern planters opposed them. Circle two details that show how the conflict divided people or governments.

### The Tariff Dispute Spreads

1. In 1832, a merchant in Charleston, South Carolina, might have heard neighbors argue over a federal tax on imported goods. Congress had passed a high tariff in 1828 and another in 1832. Many northern manufacturers favored tariffs because they made foreign goods more expensive than products made in American factories. Many southern planters objected because they bought imported goods and feared the federal government was favoring northern industry. The argument was about more than prices: who should decide when a federal law was unfair?

2. South Carolina's leaders took a bold step. At a state convention in November 1832, delegates declared the federal tariffs of 1828 and 1832 "null and void" in their state. They said a state could reject a federal law it judged unconstitutional. Some South Carolinians backed this claim and demanded resistance. Others, called Unionists, feared that defying federal law could break the country apart. Newspapers and public meetings spread the dispute beyond the convention hall. Even within one southern state, people disagreed about how far a state should go.

3. President Andrew Jackson, himself a southerner, rejected South Carolina's claim and warned that the Union must hold. Congress passed a Force Bill in 1833 allowing him to use federal power to collect tariffs. Yet Congress also passed a compromise tariff that would lower rates over time. South Carolina withdrew its rejection of the tariff laws, though its convention then symbolically rejected the Force Bill. The immediate clash ended without war, but the dispute exposed a lasting fault line: many Americans disagreed about the balance between state authority and national power.

## 2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the different interests of northern manufacturers and southern planters create tension over tariffs?

2. How does the disagreement between South Carolina's nullification supporters and Unionists show that the public was divided?

3. How did South Carolina's decision and Jackson's response turn a tariff dispute into a conflict over government power?

4. Why did the crisis still reveal a lasting division even though Congress passed a compromise tariff?

## 3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a public meeting in South Carolina during the crisis. In 5 or 6 sentences and 70 to 95 words, write an exchange between two invented speakers who disagree about nullification, then explain how their disagreement connects to a wider national divide.

ANSWER KEY

# A Nation Divided

GRADE 8 · 8.C.8.2.C

## PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one reason northern manufacturers supported tariffs and one reason southern planters opposed them. Circle two details that show how the conflict divided people or governments. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

## PART 2 · ANSWERS

| # | QUESTION | ANSWER |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | How did the different interests of northern manufacturers and southern planters create tension over tariffs? | **Tariffs helped northern manufacturers compete with foreign goods, while southern planters who bought imported goods believed the tariffs favored northern industry.** |
| 2 | How does the disagreement between South Carolina's nullification supporters and Unionists show that the public was divided? | **Supporters wanted the state to reject the tariffs, but Unionists feared that defying federal law could break the country apart.** |
| 3 | How did South Carolina's decision and Jackson's response turn a tariff dispute into a conflict over government power? | **South Carolina claimed it could reject federal laws it judged unconstitutional. Jackson rejected that claim and sought to enforce the tariffs.** |
| 4 | Why did the crisis still reveal a lasting division even though Congress passed a compromise tariff? | **Lower rates ended the immediate clash, but Americans still disagreed about whether a state could reject a federal law.** |

## PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

At a Charleston town meeting, Clara said South Carolina should refuse the tariffs because they seemed to favor northern factories over southern buyers. James answered that letting each state reject federal laws could tear the Union apart. Clara argued that state leaders had to defend their people when Congress would not listen. James replied that the president's demand for federal enforcement showed the country could not work under separate rules. Their exchange showed that the tariff dispute split both regions and neighbors, even when a compromise lowered rates.

Accept different invented speakers and wording if their positions reflect the passage and the final explanation connects their disagreement to sectional interests or the struggle over state and national power.