

Power in the Union

Trace constitutional conflicts over state and federal power.

8.17.B “explain constitutional issues arising over the issue of states’ rights, including the Nullification Crisis and the Civil War.”

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline statements that describe federal constitutional authority, and circle claims that a state could override federal law or leave the Union.

When State Power Collided with Union

- ① After the Constitution was ratified, Americans disagreed about how power should be shared. The federal government could regulate trade, collect taxes, and make laws listed in the Constitution. States kept powers not given to the national government. Article VI included the Supremacy Clause, which made the Constitution and federal laws made under it the highest law of the land. This created a constitutional question: Could a state reject a federal law it believed was unfair or unconstitutional?
- ② In 1832, South Carolina declared that federal tariffs were null and void within the state. Its leaders argued that states, as parties to the constitutional agreement, could judge and cancel unconstitutional federal laws. President Andrew Jackson answered that the Union was not a loose agreement among independent states. He said a state could not nullify a federal law, and he asked Congress for authority to enforce tariff collection. Congress passed a force bill, while also reducing tariff rates. South Carolina withdrew its nullification ordinance, but the argument over state power remained.
- ③ By 1860, the dispute had grown beyond tariffs. Southern secessionists claimed that a state could leave the Union to protect its interests, especially slavery. Abraham Lincoln argued that the Union was permanent and that secession was unconstitutional. The Civil War tested these opposing views through armed conflict. After the war, the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments expanded federal protection of freedom, citizenship, and voting rights. The conflict showed that states’ rights did not permit a state to cancel federal law, leave the Union, or deny rights guaranteed by the Constitution.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 Explain why the Supremacy Clause could create a conflict between a state and the federal government.

2 How did South Carolina's view of nullification differ from President Jackson's view?

3 What constitutional disagreement did secession raise before the Civil War?

4 According to the passage, what limit did the Civil War and later amendments place on states' rights?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

A state legislature announces that it will not follow a federal law protecting citizens' voting rights because state leaders say elections are a state matter. In 4 or 5 sentences, explain the constitutional conflict, state what the Supremacy Clause suggests, and use one historical event from the reading as evidence.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline statements that describe federal constitutional authority, and circle claims that a state could override federal law or leave the Union. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Explain why the Supremacy Clause could create a conflict between a state and the federal government.	It made the Constitution and valid federal laws the highest law of the land, but some state leaders claimed they could reject federal laws they believed were unconstitutional.
2	How did South Carolina's view of nullification differ from President Jackson's view?	South Carolina claimed a state could judge and cancel an unconstitutional federal law. Jackson argued that the Union was not a loose agreement of independent states and that a state could not nullify federal law.
3	What constitutional disagreement did secession raise before the Civil War?	Secessionists claimed a state could leave the Union, while Lincoln argued that the Union was permanent and that secession was unconstitutional.
4	According to the passage, what limit did the Civil War and later amendments place on states' rights?	States could not cancel federal law, leave the Union, or deny rights guaranteed by the Constitution.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The conflict is between the state's claim to control elections and federal authority to protect voting rights. If the federal law is made under the Constitution, the Supremacy Clause means the state cannot simply refuse it. South Carolina's nullification effort made a similar claim that a state could cancel federal law. President Jackson rejected that claim and supported enforcing the federal tariff.

Accept answers that accurately explain the conflict between claimed state authority and federal constitutional authority. For the open response, accept another accurate event from the passage if the student connects it to the Supremacy Clause or limits on states' rights.