Secession Stations

Station questions:

1. Does this document support or oppose secession? How do you know?
2. On a scale of 1-5 (with 5 being the most) how well does this document support its position? Explain.

Final Question

3. Was secession the proper choice for the Southern States? Write an ARE paragraph using evidence from the stations to prove your answer.

Station 1: Article from the Charlestown Mercury, 1860

The leaders of the United States have put us down as tyrants and unprincipled heathens through the whole civilized world. They have preached it from their pulpits. They have declared it in the halls of Congress and in their newspapers. In their schoolhouses they have taught their children to look upon the slaveholder as a follower of the devil himself....They have established Abolition Societies for the purpose of raising funds--first to send troops to Kansas to cut the throats of all the slaveholders there, and now to send emissaries among us to incite our slaves to rebellion against the authority of their masters.... And in every conceivable way, the whole Northern people, as mass, have shown great hostility to us and our most sacred rights; and this, too, without the slightest provocation on the part of the South....

All admit that an ultimate dissolution of the Union is inevitable, and we believe the crisis is not far off. Then let it come now; the better for the South that it should be today; she cannot afford to wait.

Station 2: Speech by Alexander Stephens of Georgia, 1861

The great truth upon which our system rests is the inferiority of the African. The enemies of our institutions ignore this truth. They set out with the assumption that the races are equal; that the negro is equal to the white man. Most of that fanatical spirit of the North on this subject, which would upturn our society and lay waste our fair country, springs from this false reasoning.

I believe myself in the higher law. We stand upon that higher law. I would defend and support no Constitution that is against the higher law. I mean by that the law of nature and of God. Human Constitutions and human laws that are made against the law of nature or of God, ought to be overturned; and if Seward was right the Constitution which he was sworn to support, and is now requiring others to swear to support, ought to have been overthrown long ago. It ought never to have been made. ....

Stations 3: Article from the Dubuqe Herald, 1860

The Constitution makes no provision for secession.... Constitutionally, there can be no such thing as secession of a State from the Union. But it does not follow that because a State cannot secede constitutionally, it is obliged under all circumstances to remain in the Union....If for any cause the Government...should become inimical to the rights and interests of the people, instead of affording protection to their persons and property, and securing the happiness and prosperity, to attain which it was established, it is the natural right of the people to change the Government regardless of Constitutions.

What then is the South to do? Suffer the compact which brought them into the Union to be

violated with impunity, and without means of redress; submit to incursions into their territory and trespass upon their property by northern abolitionists?...Who expects, who desires the South to submit to all this?

Station 9: Article from The Boston Daily Traveler, 1860

No state can legally leave the Union. What is called "the right of secession" has no existence. It means the right of revolution, which belongs to every people....If the revolution succeeds, history justifies them; if they fail, it condemns them, even while not condemning their motives of action....If South Carolina should rebel,--and secession is rebellion,--and if other states should join her, it would be the duty of the general government to compel them to observe the law....

Station 5: President Lincoln's First Inaugural Address

I hold that, in contemplation of universal law and of the Constitution, the Union of these States is continuous and unbreakable....There needs to be no bloodshed or violence; and there shall be none, unless it be forced upon the national authority. The power confided to me will be used to hold, occupy, and possess the property and places belonging to the government, and to collect the duties and imports; but beyond what may be necessary for these objects, there will be no invasion, no using of force against or among the people anywhere....

We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.

Station 6: Article from the London Times, 1861

Would it not be better to recognize at once the formation of the Southern Confederacy, and to think a little less of constitutional powers and decorums which can end in nothing but civil war, and a little more on negotiation and arrangement, by which alone that civil war can be averted? It would be an intelligible course were the President to say that he is going to negotiate for peace, or that he is going to enforce a return to the Union by arms, but to say that he is going to exercise the powers of the Constitution, ignoring altogether the fact of secession, is to make war certain while cutting off any opportunity for negotiation.

The contest is really for empire on the side of the North, and for independence on that of the South, and in this respect we recognize an exact analogy between the North and the Government of George III, and the South and the Thirteen Revolted Provinces.

Station 7: Declaration of Independence

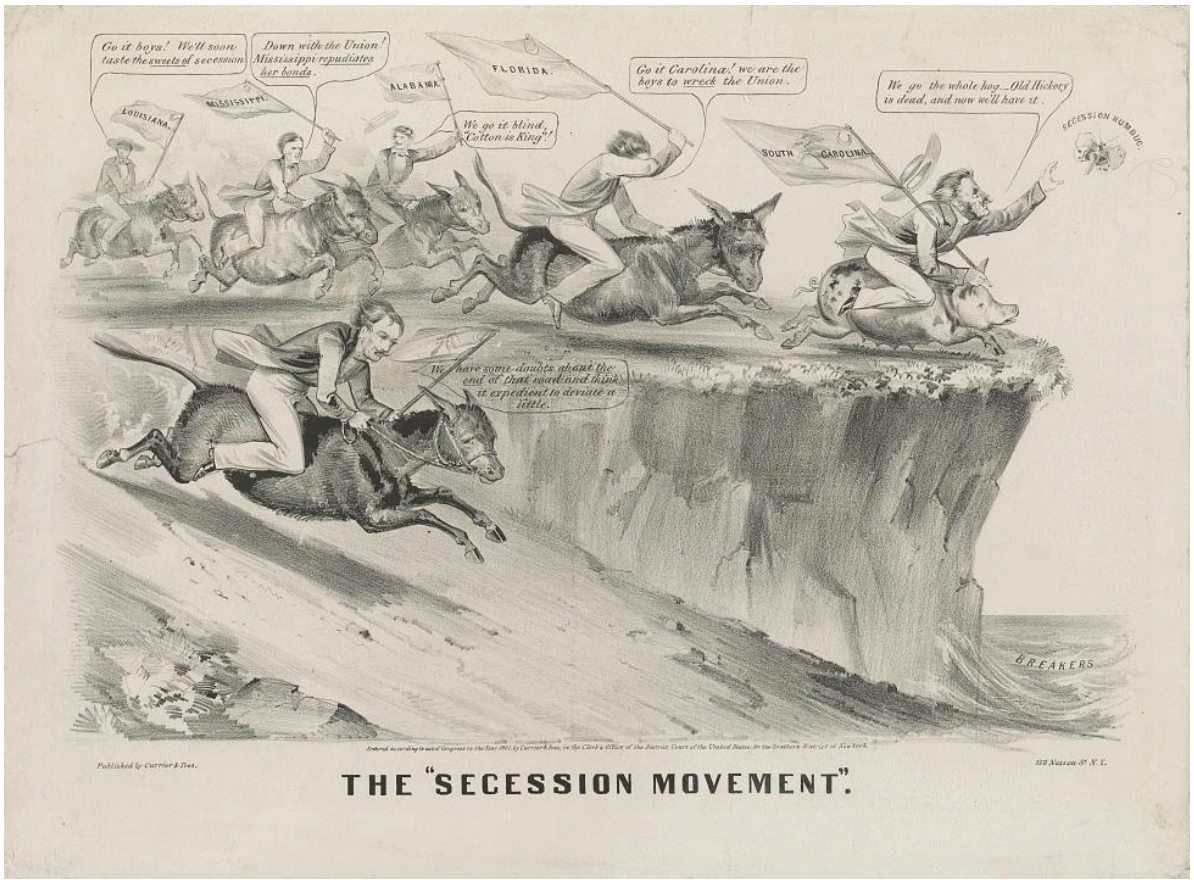
"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.

Station 4: Political Cartoon, 1861



SECESSIONISTS LEAVING THE UNION

Station 8: Political Cartoon “The Secession Movement”, 1861



The artist shows Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana, all represented by men riding donkeys, following the lead of South Carolina toward a cliff. South Carolina, who rides a pig, pursues a butterfly "Secession Humbug." A sixth man, Georgia, rides down an inclined path rather than follow the group, confessing, "We have some doubts about "the end" of that road and think it expedient to deviate a little." Florida, immediately behind South Carolina, cries, "Go it Carolina! we are the boys to "wreck" the Union." Next follows Alabama, who declares, "We go it blind, Cotton is King!'" Mississippi says, "Down with the Union! Missippi "repudiates her bonds."" Last is Louisiana, who says, "Go it boys! We'll soon taste the "sweets" of secession," alluding to the state's domination of the sugar trade.