

## What caused the beginning of the Civil War?

With the differences between North and South seemingly insurmountable, it seemed just a matter of time before the South would secede. The only question would be what the government would do about it?

Both of the statements below were made by the same man, one in the North and one in the South. What does this tell us about the man? Why do you think he had to make both of these statements?

### Statement A

*"Let us discard all this quibbling about this man and the other man, this race, and that race and the other race being inferior, and therefore they must be placed in an inferior position. Let us discard all these things, and unite as one people throughout this land, until we shall once more stand up declaring that all men are created equal."*

### Statement B

*"I will say, then, that I am not, nor have ever been, in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and black races; that I am not, nor ever have been, in favor of making voters or jurors of Negroes, nor of qualifying them to hold office, nor to intermarry with white people... And inasmuch as they cannot so live, while they do remain together there must be the position of superior and inferior, and I as much as any other man am in favor of having the superior position assigned to the white race."*

The author of both of these statements was Abraham Lincoln. Surprised, don't be. Yes "Honest Abe" was, in fact, a politician. He said what he needed to say in order to get elected. He never said he would abolish slavery, although that was his true desire. In fact the abolition of slavery didn't even become a war goal until after the battle of Gettysburg. These statements tell us that Lincoln recognized that there was only one thing that really needed to be done...keep the Union together. Lincoln wanted to be elected by the nation, not just by one section. In the end, Lincoln failed to achieve this objective just as he failed to keep the Union together peacefully. It would take a war the likes of which we had never known. A war that killed more Americans than any other conflict before or since.

### I. The Beginning of the Civil War?

#### A. How did the Dred Scott decision affect America?

1. The Dred Scott decision brought America into chaos. This had been a much watched and debated verdict, kind of like the OJ trial! The South hailed it as great victory while the North decried the decision. As a result America was further divided, more Northerners became abolitionists and America was further than ever from being a unified.

#### B. What different groups and political parties existed in the mid 1800's and what were their basic positions?

1. Whig Party - The Whigs were founded in response to the policies of Andrew Jackson. Whigs for the most part were the old Federalists. They supported the old guard elite and felt the commoners, like "King Mob" were a danger. The Whigs succeeded in getting two Presidents elected; William Henry Harrison and Zachary Taylor. Eventually the Whig Party disintegrated and most of its members joined the newly formed Republican Party.

2. Free Soil Party - A party originally led by Martin Van Buren, former leader of the the Jacksonian Democrats. They stood for abolition of slavery in the territories and federally funded improvements. They also supported the notion of the government giving free land to settlers, hence the name Free Soil. In 1848 they gained 10% of the vote, proving that an antislavery party could gain popular support.

3. Democratic Party - Split in 1848 by the formation of the Free Soil Party and split again in the election of 1860 into Northern Democrats and Southern Democrats. The original Democratic Party tried to say little about slavery, thus leading to the creation of the Free Soillists. The Northern Democrats supported the idea of popular sovereignty and the Southern Democrats supported slavery.

4. Republican Party - Formed in 1854 when Whigs, Free Soillists and Northern Democrats got together. This Republican Party had no connection to the Democrat-Republican Party formed by Jefferson. It supported high tariffs to protect the Northern Economy and other economic policies. The main issue, however, was the parties pledge to keep slavery out of the territories.

5. Constitutional Union Party - Formed by remnants of the Whigs and American Party, they said little except that they wanted to support the Constitution and protect the Union.

6. Know Nothings - A so called **nativist** group they carried out propaganda and terror campaigns against immigrants, Catholics and Jews. They opposed anyone who was not a native to the United States. What did they think about the real Native Americans, the Indians, well you figure it out! These were the forerunners of what we know as white supremacists and the KKK!

7. Settlers - We don't think about them much but it's their territory everyone was fighting over! For the most part the settlers just wanted to be left alone. They couldn't afford slaves and eked out a living on small farms and cattle ranches.

C. How did Abraham Lincoln become famous?

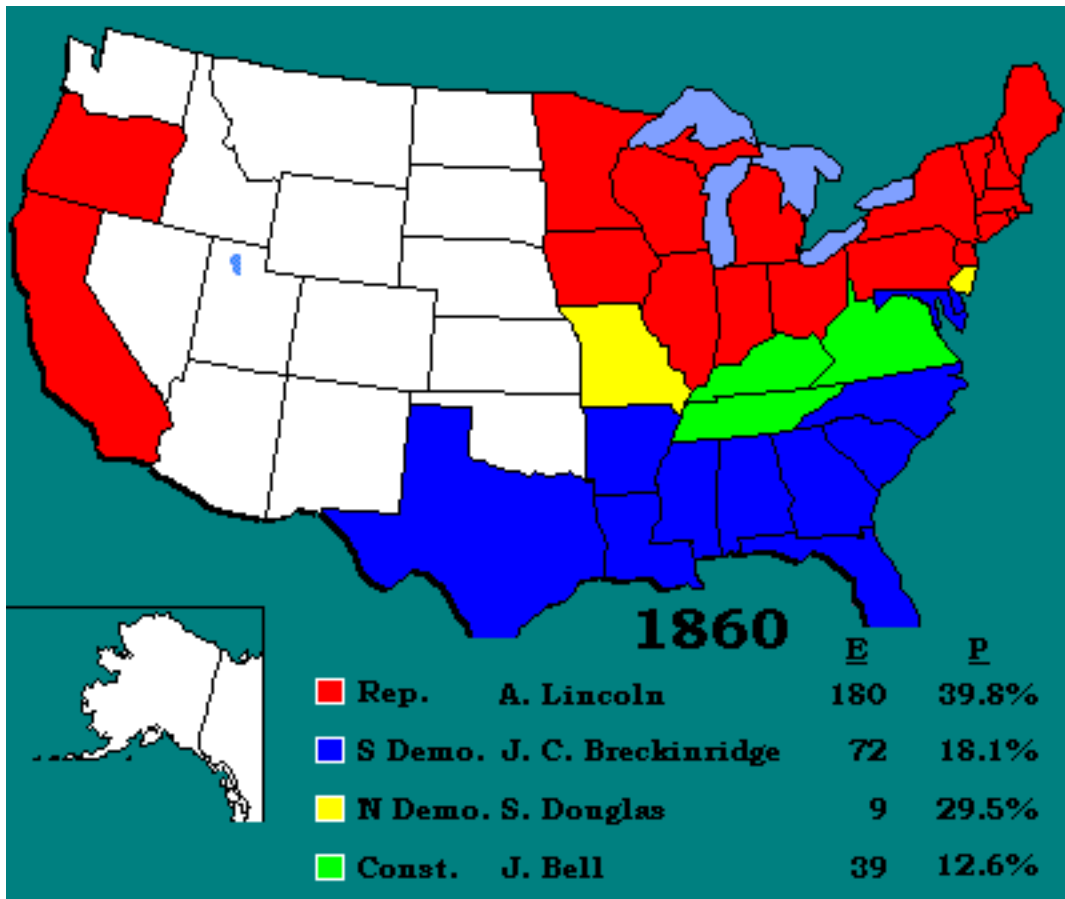
1. Lincoln ran for Senator from Illinois in 1858 opposing Stephan Douglas. The debate pitted a popular and well spoken Democrat in Douglas against the kindly and awkward Lincoln. The nation was already looking at Douglas as a potential Presidential candidate so the election and debate were closely followed.

2. In the so called "Lincoln - Douglas Debates" Lincoln emerged as a well spoken, straightforward and honest man. He developed a national reputation and became prominent in the Republican Party.

3. Lincoln lost to Douglas but they would meet again in the Presidential election of 1860.

D. What happened in the election of 1860?

1. Lincoln won as the Democrats split their vote.



Party	Candidate	Electoral Vote	Popular Vote	%
Republican	Lincoln	180	1,866,000	39.8
Northern Democrat	Douglas	12	1,375,000	29.5
Southern Democrat	Breckinridge	72	848,000	18.1
Constitutional Union	Bell	39	590,000	12.6

E. What was the result of Lincoln's Election?

1. The South realized that they would never have the electoral votes to elect a Southern candidate. This crystallized years of thinking that their entire way of life was in danger, and they were right. They knew Lincoln opposed slavery, even though he never formally said so.
2. This realization left the south with no choice (from their perspective). They felt that the democratic system could not work for them, they felt that they did not have adequate representation. In a sense Southerners felt immensely patriotic. They didn't feel as if they were destroying the country, instead they took the position that

they were doing what our founding fathers and John Locke had intended. The government had ceased protecting them and instead was taking away their natural rights (again as they perceived it). It was their right, even their responsibility to to secede.

3. South Carolina was the first to secede, more soon followed. Lincoln could do nothing, he was not yet the President.

F. What did President Buchanan do to stop the Southern states from seceding?

1. Nothing. Buchanan felt that it was illegal for them to secede and that it was also illegal for him to do anything to stop them.

G. How did the Civil War begin?

1. In February of 1861 representatives from South Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Texas and Louisiana formed the Confederate States of America. They elected Jefferson Davis President and began occupying federal buildings, post offices, forts and other federal government property.

2. When Lincoln took office in March he knew he had to take action. By May another four states had seceded and another four after that were ready to secede.

3. In April, Lincoln received word from the commander of Fort Sumter in South Carolina that he could not hold the fort for more than six weeks without supplies and fresh troops. Not wanting to shed first blood he only sent the supplies. Soon thereafter, Confederate forces opened fire on the fort while the Union fleet stood and watched. Fort Sumter would be sacrificed so that the Confederacy would be the aggressor and not the Union. The Civil War had begun.

Works Cited:

"What Caused the Beginning of the Civil War." *The Social Studies Help Center*. N.p., n.d. Web. 15 Oct. 2013. <[http://www.socialstudieshelp.com/USRA\\_Civil\\_War.htm](http://www.socialstudieshelp.com/USRA_Civil_War.htm)>.

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