

8th Grade MDPT Sample

Activity 1: Reading and Note-Taking

In 1854, the Kansas-Nebraska Act opened Kansas to settlement. The United States moved closer to the dream of westward expansion. The Kansas-Nebraska Act also changed the way the United States decided the issue of slavery in its new lands. For the first time the people of the territory, not the federal government, would decide if a territory would be slave or free. This principle of popular sovereignty and the fight over whether slavery would be legal in Kansas started the chain of events that led the United States down the road to civil war.

The documents, the “Kansas-Nebraska Act” of 1854 and the “South Carolina Declaration of Secession” from 1860 show two different views on a state’s right to regulate itself.

As you read and take notes, think about this questions:

- What issues surrounded the debate over slavery?
- How did the South Carolina state government interpret the Kansas-Nebraska Act?
- Why did Southern states want to secede? Why did the US government want to prevent secession?

For Activity 2, you will write in response to an argumentative prompt.

Document Excerpts

From Kansas-Nebraska Act (1854) An Act to Organize the Territories of Nebraska and Kansas.

SEC. 23. And be it further enacted, That every free white male inhabitant above the age of twenty-one years, who shall be an actual resident of said Territory, and shall possess the qualifications hereinafter prescribed, shall be entitled to vote at the first election, and shall be eligible to any office within the said Territory; but the qualifications of voters, and of holding office, at all subsequent elections, shall be such as shall be prescribed by the Legislative Assembly . . .

SEC. 32. . . . the true intent and meaning of this act not to legislate slavery into any Territory or State, nor to exclude it therefrom, but to leave the people thereof perfectly free to form and regulate their domestic institutions in their own way, subject only to the Constitution of the United States . . .

From the South Carolina Declaration of Secession

Declaration of the Immediate Causes which Induce and Justify the Secession of South Carolina from the Federal Union

. . . These ends it endeavored to accomplish by a Federal Government, in which each State was recognized as an equal, and had separate control over its own institutions. The right of property in slaves was recognized by giving to free persons distinct political rights, by giving them the right to represent, and burthening them with direct taxes for three-fifths of their slaves; by authorizing the importation of slaves for twenty years; and by stipulating for the rendition of fugitives from labor.

We affirm that these ends for which this Government was instituted have been defeated, and the Government itself has been made destructive of them by the action of the non-slaveholding States. Those States have assume the right of deciding upon the propriety of our domestic institutions; and have denied the rights of property established in fifteen of the States and recognized by the Constitution; they have denounced as sinful the institution of slavery; they have

permitted open establishment among them of societies, whose avowed object is to disturb the peace and to eloign the property of the citizens of other States. . .

For twenty-five years this agitation has been steadily increasing, until it has now secured to its aid the power of the Common Government. Observing the forms of the Constitution, a sectional party has found within that Article establishing the Executive Department, the means of subverting the Constitution itself. A geographical line has been drawn across the Union, and all the States north of that line have united in the election of a man to the high office of President of the United States, whose opinions and purposes are hostile to slavery. He is to be entrusted with the administration of the Common Government, because he has declared that that "Government cannot endure permanently half slave, half free," and that the public mind must rest in the belief that slavery is in the course of ultimate extinction. . .

We, therefore, the People of South Carolina, by our delegates, in Convention assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, have solemnly declared that the Union heretofore existing between this State and the other States of North America, is dissolved, and that the State of South Carolina has resumed her position among the nations of the world, as a separate and independent State . . .

Adopted December 24, 1860

Activity 2: Writing

Read the prompt and then write your response.

Remember, a strong argumentative response:

- States a clear argument related to the resources and the prompt, and maintains it throughout the work
- Uses relevant and accurate details/evidence from two or more resources to support argument
- Consistently uses grade-appropriate strategies to clarify relationships between and among ideas, and to connect evidence to argument
- Consistently and accurately uses domain-specific words to develop and support argument
- Is readable, with most grade-level conventions used correctly

Prompt Type: Argumentative

Prompt: Using your understanding of how the issue of slavery affected the decisions made before and during the Civil War, outline a process that might have ended slavery without the need for war. What evidence and arguments support your plan?