

Nat Turner's Rebellion (1831) Nat Turner, a slave, led a rebellion of slaves in Virginia that resulted in 60 white deaths. The rebellion was quickly put down and many involved, including Turner, were executed. New restrictions were put on slaves, but it provoked a national debate on slavery which was blamed by abolitionists (those who wanted to get rid of slavery) for the rebellion.

The issue of secession from (leaving) the Union When, in 1777, 13 colonies joined together to form the United States of America, each individual State kept its 'sovereignty, freedom and independence' but there was no agreement about if, and how, a State could secede from the Union if they disagreed with the policies of the central government in Washington.

Uncle Tom's Cabin (1852) was an anti-slavery novel by American author Harriet Beecher Stowe which showed the reality of slavery. It was the best-selling book of the 19th century, after the Bible. It caused a storm of protest from defenders of slavery while the book was praised by abolitionists. It is claimed that when Lincoln met Stowe in 1862 he said 'So this is the little woman who started this great war!'

Lincoln's election victory (1860) On 6 November, 1860, Abraham Lincoln was elected as the first Republican president of the United States. He believed that the Union should be preserved, opposed secession, and had campaigned to stop the expansion of slavery into the new territories and to introduce several economic policies to help Northern industry. He was elected with almost no support from the Southern states.

The Tariff of 1828 put high taxes on goods imported into the United States. It was designed to protect Northern industry from foreign competition but it made goods more expensive for the southern states which, not having an industrial economy, relied on imported goods. The tariff also meant that less money went to foreign countries so they bought fewer raw materials such as cotton or tobacco from the southern states.

Fort Sumter guarded the sea approach to Charleston, South Carolina's major port. When the state seceded from the Union in 1861 the Fort was occupied by 85 Union soldiers. In April 1861 the Confederate commander of the area demanded the Fort's surrender which was refused. Confederate canon opened fire on the Fort which surrendered the next day. The Civil War had begun!

Establishing the Confederacy (1860-61) In December 1860 South Carolina seceded from the United States and over the next four months was joined by 10 other southern states to form the Confederacy. These 11 Confederate states elected Jefferson Davis from Mississippi as their President, and hoped to establish a new nation which would protect the Southern way of life, based as it was on slavery.

Slavery By the mid-19th century an estimated 450,000 Africans had been brought to North America as slaves. Slavery had always been controversial and by 1804 the Northern states (which became known as 'Free states') had outlawed slavery while it continued to flourish in the slave states of the south. The issue of slavery became a major source of tension as new areas of America were opened up for settlement. Should these territories be slave or free states ... and who should decide?

The Kansas-Nebraska Act (1854) opened up new lands for settlement by creating the territories of Kansas and Nebraska. It allowed white male settlers to decide whether they would allow slavery in the territories. This led to pro- and anti-slavery supporters flooding into Kansas with the goal of voting for or against slavery, resulting in violent clashes between the two sides during which over fifty people were killed.

John Brown's Raid (1859) was an attempt by the white abolitionist John Brown, with 22 other men, to start an armed slave revolt by seizing a United States weapons store at Harpers Ferry in Virginia. Seven people were killed but the uprising was defeated by a small force of U.S. Marines. Brown was convicted of treason, murder, and conspiracy to incite slave rebellion and was hanged. To the south, he was a murderer who wanted to deprive them of their slave property but to many abolitionists he was a martyr.

Differences between northern and southern states. The north, (with a population of 23 million) had an industrial economy based on large cities which became centres of trade, manufacturing and transport. These cities dominated the political and cultural life of the north. The south (with a population of 9 million) had an agricultural economy based on large plantations growing crops such as cotton or tobacco and worked by slave labour. Here it was the wealthy upper class plantation owners who ran political and cultural life.

Timeline

Long term causes

1.

2.

3.

Medium term causes

1828:

1831:

1852:

1854:

1859:

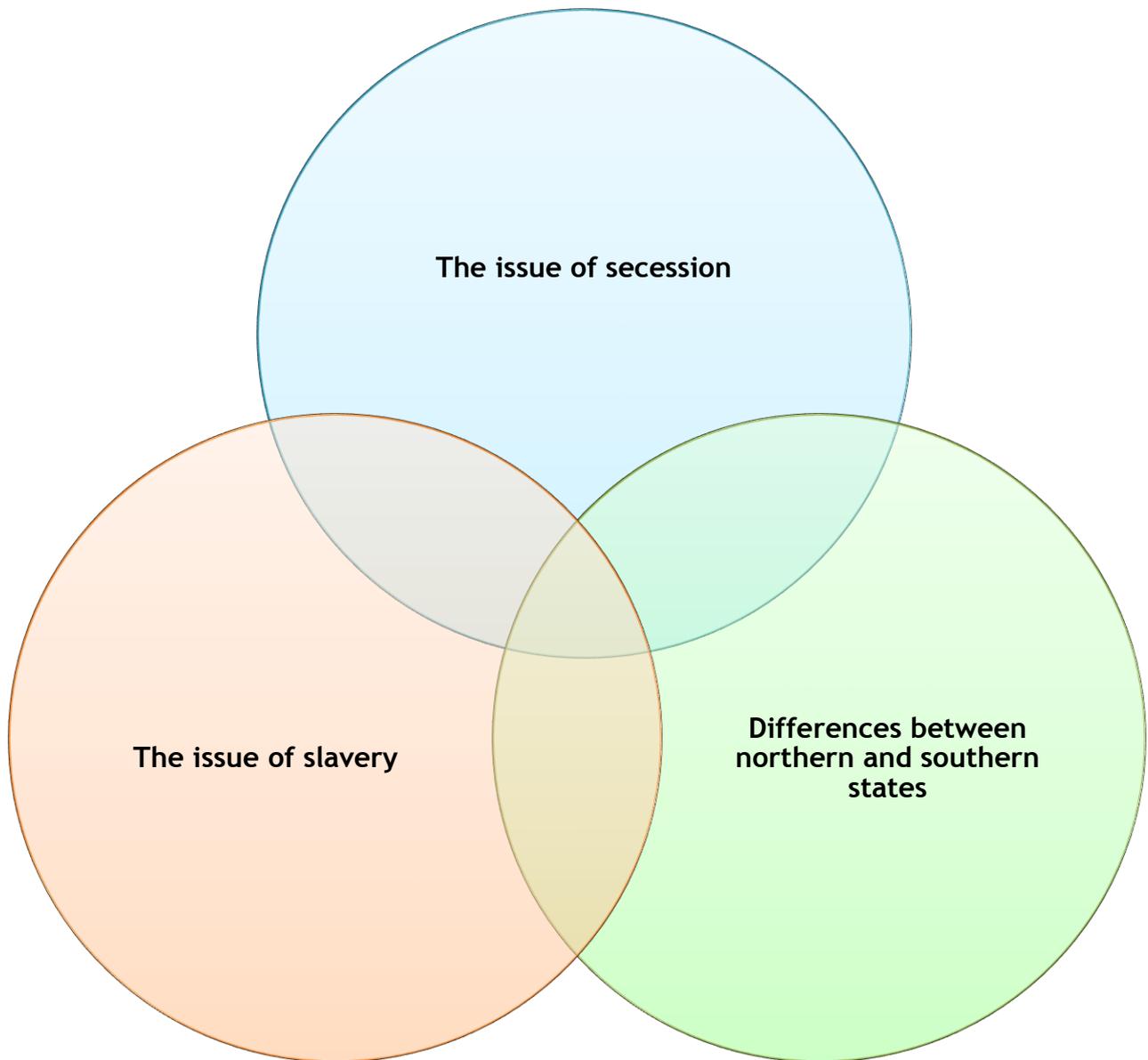
Short term causes

1860:

1860-61:

April 1861:

Venn diagram showing the links between causes of the American Civil War



Teaching notes

This card sort activity could be used in a variety of ways:

1. They could be used to establish a chronology of the events/issues leading up to the outbreak of the Civil War. The timeline on p.3 could be used to structure this activity.
2. They could be used to identify long term (pre-1820), medium term (1820-1859), and short term (1860-1861) causes of the Civil War.
3. Having identified the 3 long term causes (i.e. the issue of secession, differences between north and south and slavery), students can link the other 8 cards to the appropriate long term issue, bearing in mind that some cards may link to more than one of the underlying issues. This linkage could be shown by:
 - colour coding
 - a 3 set Venn diagram, using the template on p.4.
4. Students could use the cards (and previous activities) to decide:
 - Which was the most important issue/cause of the American Civil War?
 - Was there one particular event after which the American Civil War became inevitable?
5. Students could consider different ways of planning for a teacher generated essay on the causes of the American Civil War by selecting the appropriate cards, and moving them around to decide on the best order for that particular question. For example, is the answer better being organised:
 - chronologically
 - by types of cause/issues
 - by leaving some cards out?
6. The cards could be used as a revision aid on the causes of the American Civil War:
 - Students work in pairs, placing the cards face down between them.
 - Each student in turn takes a card and, in a sentence but without reading directly from the card, gives a clue to the cause which their partner then has to identify. They should not use any words from the title of the card. Alternatively, instead of speaking the clue, they could draw a quick cartoon/picture to illustrate the cause which their partner has to guess.