

West Virginia Studies Resource Development

Title of Lesson: The Virginia Secession Convention – Eastern Counties Vs. Western Counties
Grade level: 8th Grade
Summary: On the eve of the outbreak of the American Civil War, southern states found themselves at a crossroads. Would they remain in the United States under a government they viewed as oppressive to their way of life or would they take the bold and unprecedented action of seceding and forming a new nation? Conventions focused on secession were held in all of the southern slaveholding states, including Virginia. In these conventions, county delegates representing the general population would debate and discuss the question of secession. In Virginia, delegates from the eastern and western counties would often find themselves at odds over the ideas of secession. In this lesson, students will examine the texts of the secession proceeding in Virginia to understand the different viewpoints between the representatives of the eastern and western counties.
WV CCR Social Studies Standards: SS.8.22: Demonstrate an understanding of the American Civil War including its causes, effects, and the major events that led to West Virginia statehood. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explain the effect of key events leading to western Virginia’s separation from Virginia after secession (e.g., First and Second Wheeling Conventions and John Brown’s Raid).• Describe the moral, ethical, and legal tensions that led to the creation of the new state of West Virginia and how these tensions were resolved (e.g., Virginia vs. West Virginia 1871).• Compare and contrast the military strategies of the North and South with regard to specific events and geographic locations in West Virginia (e.g., the Battle of Philippi, Rich Mountain, Droop Mountain, Battle of Scary Creek and Battle of Carnifex Ferry).• Identify significant contributions of men and women of West Virginia during the Civil War and identify the roles of ethnic and racial minorities.
Essential Question (content): <ul style="list-style-type: none">- What were the differing opinions between eastern and western Virginia on the idea of secession?- Did all of the counties in western Virginia support or oppose secession or was their a split?- What arguments did each side use to support their view on secession?- What were the outcomes of the final votes on secession in the eastern counties and the western counties?
Students will be able to do (skills): At the conclusion of this lesson, students will understand the differing views between delegates from eastern and western Virginia in regards to the idea of secession from the Union. Students will gain experience researching primary source documents to form opinions and understandings of the various viewpoints on the idea of secession. Students will also further understand the divide which existed between the eastern and western counties of Virginia prior to the Civil War.

Materials & Resources:

- Secession of Virginia article from WV e-Encyclopedia
<https://www.wvencyclopedia.org/articles/2436>
- Virginia Secession Convention online portal from the University of Richmond
<https://secession.richmond.edu/>
- Voices of Secession article from the American Battlefield Trust
<https://www.battlefields.org/learn/articles/voices-secession>

Learning Plan:

1. Students will begin the lesson by defining the term secession. Students will discuss the reasons behind the debate over secession in the southern states.
2. Students will then read the article “Voices of Secession” from the American Battlefield Trust to reinforce their understanding of the process of southern secession.
3. Students will then consider the differing opinions between the eastern and western counties of Virginia regarding secession. Students will read the article “Secession of Virginia” from the West Virginia e-Encyclopedia to further their understanding.
4. Students will then research the arguments of various delegates from the counties of east and west Virginia. Students will utilize the online portal detailing the Virginia Secession Convention from the University of Richmond.
5. Each student will be assigned to research the arguments of a delegate from one county in eastern and western Virginia each. Students will utilize the resources from the University of Richmond to understand the opinions of their delegates regarding the question of the convention.
6. Students will present the information they researched to the class. As the information is presented, students will keep track of the opinions county by county on a provided table worksheet.
7. Students will conclude the lesson by reviewing the differing opinions on secession between the the people of eastern and western Virginia. Students will also make predictions on how these opinions on secession will further the push toward West Virginia statehood.

Checking for Understanding:

At the conclusion of the lesson, students will demonstrate their understanding of the material through their presentations of the material they discovered, as well as through the completion of the charting worksheet on the opinions of the delegates of Virginia on secession. Further student comprehension will be determined through student participation in class discussions.

Accommodations:

Accommodations for this lesson may include assigning students particular delegates/counties to research rather than asking students to choose their own through research. Students could also complete this exercise with a partner. Higher level accommodations for this lesson may include having students research their counties more in-depth in regards to secession. Students could also portray their delegate and create their own speeches for or against Virginia secession from the Union.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Virginia Secession Convention Analysis Worksheet

Directions: Students will complete the chart below by detailing the opinions of delegates from the eastern and western counties in regards to Virginia's potential secession from the Union.

Delegate Name	County	East or West	Opinion on Slavery	Opinion on Secession	Vote Results – For/Against