HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In the decade leading up to the Civil War, Tennesseans experienced the growing political and cultural debates in a variety of ways. East Tennesseans were less dependent on slavery for their economy, while Middle and West Tennesseans were dominated by wealthy, slaveholding plantation owners. The surge in the cotton market and the export of slaves to western states only strengthened plantation owners’ hold on Tennessee economic policy.

Nevertheless, Tennessee had a more diversified economy than states of the Deep South. During the growing secession debates of the 1850s, Tennessee remained steadfastly against the idea, and supported the Constitutional Union candidate, John C. Bell, in the election of 1860. After the South Carolina and other states left the Union in 1860, Tennesseans still voted resoundingly against secession. Once Abraham Lincoln sent Federal troops to Fort Sumter, however, sentiment changed. On June 8, 1861, Tennessee was the last state to join the Confederacy.

SUGGESTIONS FOR EDUCATORS

The politically charged decade of the 1850s provides many good opportunities for classroom debate. Examine the rhetoric of the Dred Scott court case or the Fugitive Slave Law to see how these policies were justified by the American administration. Contrast these legal documents with the personal stories of Jermain Loguen and Louis Hughes to get a better picture of the reality of runaway slaves.

A great way to approach the issues of bias, stereotypes, and allegory with students is by examining political cartoons of the era. Use the cartoons provided in this set, along with the link at left, to find plenty of examples of political cartoons from the election of 1860. Ask students to figure out what the cartoons are really saying, and compare them to present-day cartoons and satire.

For related Webcast information, please see the note on p. 7.
A preliminary agricultural map of Tennessee based on the distribution of geological formations [1896]

Henry Whitehead Place, Townsend vicinity, Blount County, TN [1957]
Left: (under “drawings”). Right: 2. EXTERIOR, NORTH CORNER VIEW OF BOTH CABINS HABS TENN,5-CADCO.V,1-2

The testimony of a refugee from east Tennessee / Bokum, Hermann, 1807-1878 [1863] Courtesy of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Topographical sketch of the environs of Nashville, Tennessee / surveyed in the months of March, September and December, 1862 for the information of the Armies of the Ohio and Cumberland, under the direction of Capt. N. Michler… [1862; detail]
Bear Spring Furance, Dover vicinity, Stewart County, TN [1971]

Unloading cotton, Memphis, Tenn. [between 1900 and 1915]

Colonel McNeal House, Union & Bills Streets, Bolivar, Hardeman County, TN [1974 (photographs)]

Reynolds's political map of the United States, designed to exhibit the comparative area of the free and slave states and the territory open to slavery or freedom by the repeal of the Missouri Compromise [1856]
Family record. Before the war and since the war / Krebs Lithographing Company, Cincinnati. [c. 1880]

Harper's Ferry insurrection - Interior of the Engine-House, just before the gate is broken down by the storming party - Col. Washington and his associates as captives, held by Brown as hostages [1859]

The Rev. J.W. Loguen, as a slave and as a free-man: a narrative of real life / Loguen, Jermain Wesley. [1859]

Thirty years a slave, From bondage to freedom. The institution of slavery as seen on the plantation and in the home of the planter. Autobiography of Louis Hughes. [1897]

The Fugitive slave law. [1850]

The Dred Scott decision : opinion of Chief Justice Taney, with an introduction / [1856]
Senator Isham G. Harris from Tenn. [between 1865 and 1880]

Douglas Schottisch. 1860  Courtesy of Duke University Library.

National Democratic ticket. For President, John C. Breckinridge of Kentucky. [Ohio Campaign ticket] [c. 1860]

Maryland state ticket. Election, Tuesday November 6th, 1860... For President of the United States John Bell of Tennessee. For Vice President of the United States, Edward Everett of Massachusetts. ... [n. p. 1860].

It appears to me very singular that we three should strike "foul" and be "put out" while old Abe made such a "good lick." [c. 1860]

Storming the castle. "Old Abe" on guard. [1860]

Andrew Johnson, half-length portrait, seated, facing left [1860]

Andrew Johnson, residence in Greeneville, Tennessee. House from southwest. [1961]

Isham G. Harris to Abraham Lincoln, Monday, April 29, 1861 (Seizure of ship on Mississippi) 
Note: Transcription available.

Abraham Lincoln to Isham G. Harris, May 11, 1861 (Seizure of C. E. Hillman) 
Note: Transcription available.
Hon. Abraham Lincoln [1860]

Freemen! of Tennessee! The Yankee war is now being waged for "beauty and booty." ... To arms! and let us meet the enemy on the border ... All those who desire to join with us in serving our common country, will report themselves immediately.

J. B [1861]

Secession exploded [1861]

Portrait of Pvt. Robert Patterson, Company D, 12th Tennessee Infantry, C.S.A. [between 1860 and 1865, re-photographed 1961]

This primary source set was created in conjunction with a Webcast, “Teaching with Primary Sources: Prelude to the Civil War in Tennessee,” which broadcast on March 18, 2010.

If you are interested in accessing this Webcast, please visit the Web site of the MTSU Instructional Technology Support Center.
CITATIONS: PRELUDE TO THE CIVIL WAR IN TENNESSEE

TEACHERS: Providing these primary sources without their titles (at first) may enhance the inquiry experience for students. This list of citations (Chicago Manual of Style) is supplied for reference purposes. All links were accessed April 28, 2010.

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“Harper’s Ferry insurrection - Interior of the Engine-House, just before the gate is broken down by the storming party - Col. Washington and his associates as captives, held by Brown as hostages.” Illustration. Frank Leslie’s illustrated newspaper, v. 8, no. 205 (1859 Nov. 5), p. 359. From Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog, Miscellaneous Items in High Demand. [http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2002735881/].


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“It appears to me very singular that we three should strike "foul" and be "put out" while old Abe made such a "good lick."


Neal and Roberts, printers. “Freemen! of Tennessee! The Yankee war is now being waged for "beauty and booty." ... To arms! and let us meet the enemy on the border ... All those who desire to join with us in serving our common country, will report themselves immediately J. B.” Broadside. Morristown, TN: Neal and Roberts, 1861. From Library of Congress, An American Time Capsule: Three Centuries of Broadsides and Other Printed Ephemera. http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/rhpebib:@field(NUMBER+@band(rhpe+17501800)).