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.

LINKS:
- Teaching with Primary Sources—MTSU
- Library of Congress
- Library of Congress Teachers Page
- Today in History: June 8
- Resource Guide: Presidential Election of 1860
- Lesson ideas: Abolition, anti-slavery movements and the rise of sectional controversy
A preliminary agricultural map of Tennessee based on the distribution of geological formations [1896]

Henry Whitehead Place, Townsend vicinity, Blount County, TN [1957]
Left: HABS TENN,5-CADCO.V,1- (sheet 5 of 11) - Henry Whitehead Place, Townsend, Blount County, TN
Right: 2. EXTERIOR, NORTH CORNER VIEW OF BOTH CABINS - Henry Whitehead Place, Townsend, Blount

Hermann Bokum, 1807-1878, The Testimony of a Refugee from East Tennessee. [1863]
Courtesy of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
Bear Spring Furnace, 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]

J. W. Loguen (Jermain Wesley), 1814-1872, The Rev. J. W. Loguen, as a Slave and as a Freeman, A Narrative of Real Life. [1859] Courtesy of University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Thirty years a slave. From bondage to freedom. The institution of slavery as seen on the plantation and in the home of the planter [1897; detail, text is on page 71 of the digital book]

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]


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].

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

For president John Bell.
For vice president Edward Everett [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; detail]

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]

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

Secession exploded [1861]

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 May 4, 2015.


“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].” Ephemera. c. 1860. 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/rbpebib:@field(NUMBER+@band(rbpe+0310100a)).


“It appears to me very singular that we three should strike "foul" and be "put out" while old Abe made such a 'good lick.'” Cartoon. c. 1860. From Library of Congress, The Alfred Withal Stern Collection of Lincolniana. http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/scsmbib:@field(DOCID+@lit(scm000343)).


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/rbpecib:@field(NUMBER+@band(rbpc+17501800)).