

U.S. History 8

Fueling the Fire: Document Analysis

EQ: Was a civil war inevitable?

Targeted Skills:

Thinking and Reasoning

- Metacognition
 - use expert sources

Information Literacy

- Evaluate information
 - identify definitive sources (expert vs. non-expert)
 - draw conclusions, make inferences and connections based on information

Enduring Understandings:

The struggle to maintain a balance of power was at the heart of the Civil War.

Concepts Important to Know and Understand:

causes of the Civil War, clashes and conflicts

Broad Brush Knowledge:

John Brown, Uncle Tom's Cabin, slavery, Dred Scott Decision

Core Objectives:

1. Identify the traditional historical points of reference in U.S. history through 1877.
7. Evaluate how political, economic, and social factors led to the growth of sectionalism and the Civil War.
8. Describe the individuals, issues, and events of the Civil War.

Instructions: Read the Expert Information and then analyze the attached documents.

Expert Information: The Civil War didn't begin because of just one specific act. Instead, it was the result of many different events that finally erupted, which resulted in the nation being torn apart. Although there were many lawmakers who were busy making compromises to avoid war, there were also some common citizens who were causing change to happen. Three of these people were **Harriet Beecher Stowe**, **John Brown**, and **Dred Scott**. The actions of these three people fueled the fire that finally exploded into war.

Few novels have ever had such great influence on a country as **Harriet Beecher Stowe's** Uncle Tom's Cabin. When President Lincoln met Harriet Beecher Stowe during the Civil War, he supposedly said, "So, you're the little woman who started this big war." His words did, of course, exaggerate the truth. Uncle Tom's Cabin started as a short story and later became a novel. When it was published in 1852, it sold 300,000 copies in the United States and another 1.5 million copies in England. Men, women, and children wept as they read about the horrors of the main character Uncle Tom, a slave beaten to death by his owner. The novel was eventually made into a play that was performed in the North as well as around the world. The novel turned many people in the North against slavery, and it deeply angered many Southerners.

The actions of another common citizen named **John Brown** also fueled the fire between proslavery and antislavery forces. The story of Mr. Brown's political actions began in the mid-1850s when he was a principal figure in the violence of "Bleeding Kansas". He and a small group of militant (warlike nature) abolitionists killed five proslavery settlers. Three years later in 1859, John Brown and a small band of followers captured the federal arsenal at Harper's Ferry, Virginia. Brown hoped to get weapons to use in slave uprisings throughout the South. However, federal troops under the command of Robert E. Lee surrounded Harper's Ferry and forced Brown to surrender. Brown was quickly put on trial and found guilty of treason and hanged.

At his execution, John Brown gave one of his guards a note that stated, "I, John Brown, am now quite certain that the crimes of this guilty land will never be purged (cleansed or eliminated) away but with blood." Many Southerners were outraged at Brown's actions and abolitionists in the North considered him a hero. Newspaper articles, songs, and plays throughout the country retold the story to the citizens.

By the mid-1850s there was a widespread feeling in the country that the slavery question should be settled in the courts. Congress had tried compromises, but there were still so many people who disagreed on how to solve the problem. A court case concerning a slave named **Dred Scott** made its way from the local court of Missouri, to the state court of Missouri, and finally to the Supreme Court of the United States.

Dred Scott, a slave, lived in Missouri where slavery was allowed by the Missouri Compromise. His owner was Dr. John Emerson, an army doctor. However, after a few years, Scott's master took him to live in Illinois and even later to Minnesota. Slavery was prohibited in both Illinois and Minnesota, so Scott lived on "free soil". He lived as a free man from 1834-1838, but then Emerson returned to Missouri and brought Dred Scott back to Missouri with him. However, after Emerson died, his wife claimed that Dred Scott was her property. Scott believed he was a free man, so he sued for his liberty. He argued that he had lived in a free state, so he should be free, no matter where he lived.

His case went through the local Missouri court, the Missouri state court, and then to the U.S. Supreme Court where the final decision became known as the Dred Scott Decision. The official name of the court case was **Dred Scott v. Sandford**. (The "v" in a court case means versus.) The Supreme Court made the following decisions:

1. Slaves were not citizens, so they could not bring suit in court.
2. Slaves were property.
3. Because the 5th Amendment protected property, and slaves were property, Congress could not ban slavery from the territories.
4. The Missouri Compromise, which had banned slavery in certain areas, was unconstitutional.

Chief Justice Roger B Taney said, "A black man had no rights a white man was bound to respect." Southerners were overjoyed and Northerners were very unhappy. Once again different parts of the country disagreed on the important issue of slavery.

At that time there were nearly 4 million slaves in America. The ruling turned back the clock concerning the rights of African Americans, ignoring the fact that black men in five of the original States had been full voting citizens dating back to the Declaration of Independence in 1776.

Expert Information: The following document is a copy of a song, "John Brown's Body". The music was from another tune, but the lyrics are original and were written soon after John Brown was executed.

John Brown Document #1
John Brown's Body

John Brown's body lies a-mouldering in the grave
John Brown's body lies a-mouldering in the grave
John Brown's body lies a-mouldering in the grave
But his soul goes marching on.

John Brown died that the slaves might be free,
John Brown died that the slaves might be free,
John Brown died that the slaves might be free,
But his soul goes marching on.

Chorus:
Glory, Glory, Hallelujah!
Glory, Glory, Hallelujah!
Glory, Glory, Hallelujah!
His soul goes marching on.

The stars above in Heaven now are looking kindly down,
The stars above in Heaven now are looking kindly down,
The stars above in Heaven now are looking kindly down,
On the grave of old John Brown.

Words by: Anonymous (unknown)

Date: 1860s

Which section of the country might have sung this song to honor John Brown? _____

What words in the song tell you that the songwriter thought John Brown was right in his attacks in Bleeding Kansas and Harper's Ferry? _____

Document Analysis

Title of document: _____

Type of primary document: _____

Author/Illustrator of document: _____

Three pieces of historical evidence from the document:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Expert Information: The following is a part of a New York Herald newspaper article about an interview with John Brown on October 21, 1859. When the reporter arrived in the room, Brown was answering questions from Senator Mason, Colonel Faulkner, a member of Congress Mr. Vallandigham, a member of Congress from Ohio; and several other government officials. The title of the newspaper article is unknown.

John Brown Document #2

Mr. Mason: Can you tell us who provided the money for your expedition?

Mr. Brown: I provided most of it myself. I cannot involve the others.

Mr. Vallandigham: Mr. Brown, who sent you here?

Mr. Brown: No person sent me here. It was my own idea and that of my Maker, or that of the devil, whichever you please to blame.

Mr. Vallandigham: Did you organize the expedition yourself?

Mr. Brown: I did.

Mr. Mason: What was your object in coming?

Mr. Brown: We came to free the slaves, and only that.

A young man in uniform: How many men in all did you have?

Mr. Brown: I came to Virginia with 18 men, besides myself.

Mr. Mason: How do you justify your acts?

Mr. Brown: I think, my friend, you are guilty of a great wrong against God and humanity. It would be perfectly right for anyone to interfere with you in order to free those you willfully and wickedly hold in slavery. I do not say this insultingly. I think I did right and that others will do right who interfere with you at all times.

Bystander: Do you consider this a religious movement?

Mr. Brown: It is, in my opinion, the greatest service a person can give to God.

Bystander: Do you consider yourself an instrument in the hands of Providence (God)?

Mr. Brown: I do.

Reporter: Brown, suppose you have every slave in the United States. What would you do with them?

Mr. Brown: Set them free.

Bystander: To set them free would cost the life of every person in the community.

Mr. Brown: I do not think so.

Bystander: I know it. I think you are fanatical.

Mr. Brown: And I think you are a fanatical. "Whom the gods would destroy they first make mad," and you are mad.

John Brown Document #2 (Interview)

Document Analysis

Title of document: _____

Source of document (name of newspaper): _____

Type of primary document: _____

Author/Illustrator of document: _____

Three pieces of historical evidence from the document:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

John Brown Document #3 (Mural, Kansas State Legislature)

Document Analysis

Title of document: _____

Source of document (location): _____

Type of primary document: _____

Author/Illustrator of document: _____

Three pieces of historical evidence from the document:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

John Brown Document #3



"The Tragic Prelude"
Mural at Kansas State Legislature Building, by John S. Curry, painted in 1937-1942

Who might John Brown represent? _____

What might the dark clouds represent? _____

The title of this mural is "The Tragic Prelude." (A prelude is an introduction.) What might be another title for the mural? _____

What two items are in John Brown's hands? _____

Notice the slaves at the bottom of the mural. Why do you think they might support John Brown's actions? _____

Expert Information: The following quotation is from Uncle Tom's Cabin, by Harriet Beecher Stowe. Earlier in the story, slave hunters had surrounded two slaves named George and Eliza. George makes the following statement.

Harriet Beecher Stowe Document #1

Uncle Tom's Cabin, by Harriet Beecher Stowe, 1851

"I am George Harris. A Mr. Harris of Kentucky, did call me his property. But now I'm a free man, standing on God's free soil; and my wife and my child I claim as mine...We have arms to defend ourselves and we mean to do it. You want to send us back to be whipped and tortured, and ground down under the heels of them that you call masters: and your laws will bear you out it...But you haven't got us. We don't own your laws, we don't own your country; we stand here as free, under God's sky, as you are; and, by the great God that made us, we'll fight for our liberty or die."

Who is speaking in this quotation from the book? _____

Who was his master? _____

What was his home state? _____

In the quotation he says that others want to send him back to be whipped and tortured. However, he says that his family stands here "as _____ under God's sky" and that he and his family will "fight for _____ or die."

Document Analysis

Title of document: _____

Type of secondary document: _____

Author/Illustrator of document: _____

Three pieces of historical evidence from the document:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Expert Information: The following quotation is from a biography about Harriet Beecher Stowe. It discusses the impact of Uncle Tom's Cabin on people throughout the country. Since this biography was written in 1993, it is a secondary source. However, it gives valuable information about Stowe. The author also quotes a sidewalk song from the Civil War time period, so the **song is a primary source**.

Harriet Beecher Stowe Document #2

Harriet Beecher Stowe, by Suzanne M. Coil, 1993, page 117

"Even children were affected by the controversy. In Richmond (Virginia), youngsters were chanting a new sidewalk song:

Go, go, go

Ol' Harriet Beecher Stowe!

We don't want you here in Virginny -

Go, go, go!

Despite efforts to ban it, the book continued to sell so fast in the North and elsewhere that booksellers could not keep up with the demand. Meanwhile, a spate (sudden flood) of "anti-Tom" literature began to appear in magazines and bookstores. At least fifteen books with such titles as Aunt Phillis' Cabin, or Southern Life As It Is, and Uncle Robin in His Cabin in Virginia and One in Boston were published by proslavery writers..."

Document Analysis

Title of document: _____

Type of secondary document: _____

Author/Illustrator of document: _____

Three pieces of historical evidence from the document:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Expert Information: After the publication of Uncle Tom's Cabin, many people wrote poems, plays, and songs to honor Harriet Beecher Stowe for awakening the public to the horrors of slavery. Famous black poet Paul Laurence Dunbar wrote the following poem in 1898.

Harriet Beecher Stowe Document #3

Harriet Beecher Stowe

She told the story, and the whole world wept
At wrongs and cruelties it had not known
But for this fearless woman's voice alone.
She spoke to consciences that long had slept:
Her message, Freedom's clear reveille, swept

From heedless hovel to complacent throne.
Command and prophecy were in the tone,
And from its sheath the sword of justice leapt.
Around two peoples swelled a fiery wave,
But both came forth transfigured from the flame.
Blest be the hand that dared be strong to save,
And blest be she who in our weakness came -
Prophet and priestess! At one stroke she gave
A face to freedom, and herself to fame.

Author: Paul Laurence Dunbar
Published in The Century Magazine, November 1898

Vocabulary

conscience - thoughts that cause one to know right from wrong
reveille - signal
heedless - unmindful, not attentive
hovel - small house
complacent - showing satisfaction
prophecy - spokesman of God
sheath - covering for sword blade
transfigured - change in form or appearance

Document Analysis

Title of document: _____

Type of primary document: _____

Author/Illustrator of document: _____

Three pieces of historical evidence from the document:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Expert Information: Even though Dred Scott wanted to be a free man, he didn't have the money or educational background to actually take his case to the courts. However, the Northern abolitionists supported Scott in his fight for freedom. They were looking for a case that would serve as an example to abolish slavery through the courts. The following quotation is from the original document that was filed in the court in Missouri. (In legal documents, a person is named the first time. Then the word "said" is used before the name every other time it is mentioned. For example, Dred Scott is referred to as "said Dred Scott.")

Dred Scott Document #1

Dred Scott's Petition to Sue for Freedom, April 6, 1846

To the Hon. John M. Krum, Judge of the St. Louis Circuit Court.

Dred Scott, a man of color, respectfully states to your honor, that he is claimed as a slave by one Irene Emerson, of the County of St. Louis, State of Missouri, widow of the late Dr. John Emerson, who at the time of his death was a surgeon in the United States army. That the said Dr. John Emerson purchased your petitioner (person who is asking for something in the court; in this case, Dred Scott) in the city of St. Louis, about nine years ago, he then being a slave... and took petitioner with him to... the State of Illinois, and then kept petitioner to labor and service,

...that said Emerson is now dead, and his widow the said Irene claims petitioners services as a slave, and as his owner, but believing that under this state of fact, that he is entitled to his freedom, he prays your honor to allow him to sue said Irene Emerson in said Court, in order to establish his right to freedom...

Who was the judge in the case? _____

Who is the petitioner in the case? _____

At the time of the court case, who claims Scott as a slave? _____

What does Scott hope to be the outcome of his lawsuit and court case? _____

Document Analysis

Title of document: _____

Type of primary document: _____

Date of Document: _____

Three pieces of historical evidence from the document:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Expert Information: In March of 1857, the Dred Scott Decision was settled by the Supreme Court. Seven out of nine Justices declared no slave or descendant of a slave could be a U.S. citizen, or ever had been a U.S. citizen. As a non-citizen, the court stated, Scott had no rights and could not sue in a Federal Court and had to remain a slave. The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court was named Roger B. Taney. He was a former slave owner from Maryland. The following quotation is a part (excerpt) of his written remarks on the Dred Scott Decision.

Dred Scott Document #2

Chief Justice Taney's Remarks on the Dred Scott Decision, 1857, Washington, D.C.

"The question is simply this: Can a negro, whose ancestors were imported into this country, and sold as slaves, become a member of the political community formed and brought into existence by the Constitution of the United States, and as such become entitled to all the rights, and privileges, and immunities, guaranteed by that instrument to the citizen? One of which rights is the privilege of suing in a court of the United States in the cases specified in the Constitution...

And upon a full and careful consideration of the subject, the court is of the opinion, that, upon the facts stated, Dred Scott was not a citizen of Missouri within the meaning of the Constitution of the United States, and not entitled as such to sue in its courts..."

Document Analysis

Title of document: _____

Where was document written?: _____

Date of Document: _____

Three pieces of historical evidence from the document:

1. _____

2. _____

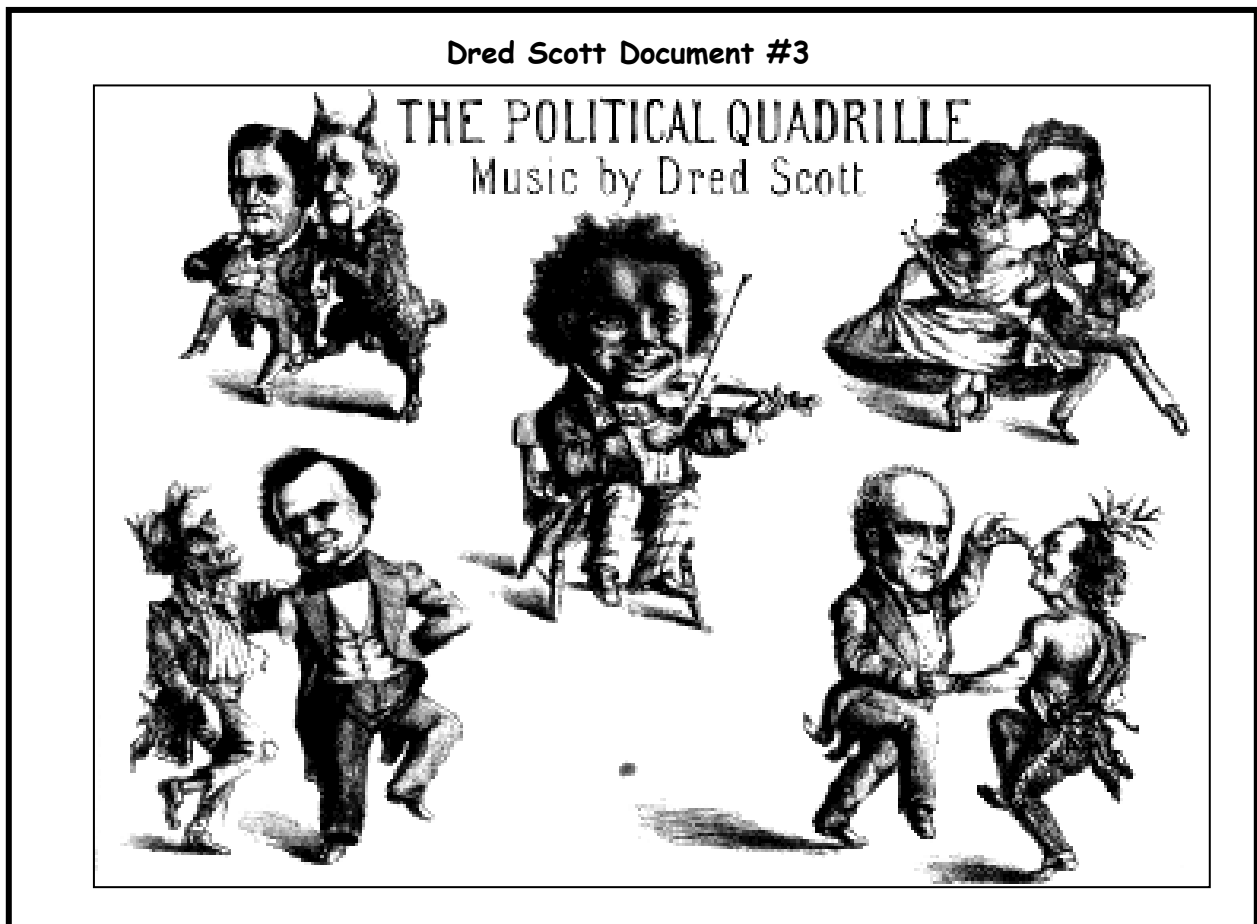
3. _____

Expert Information: The Dred Scott Decision had caused much disagreement. Most Southerners were satisfied with the court's decision, but abolitionists and many Northerners were upset that the court decided slaves were not citizens. As a result, some politicians didn't want to give their opinion on the court's decision for fear of losing votes in elections.

In the presidential election of 1860, there were four candidates, John Breckinridge, Abraham Lincoln, John Bell, and Stephen Douglas. Although the Dred Scott Decision was a controversial issue of the time, the candidates were reluctant to actually take sides on the issue.

In the following political cartoon of the time, the four candidates are shown dancing around Dred Scott, pictured in the middle. The title of the cartoon refers to a quadrille, a type of square dance where the four dancers on the corners dance around another dancer in the center. Each of the candidates is pictured dancing with the people that politically supported him.

- Lower left: Stephen Douglas dances with an Irishman
- Upper left: John Breckinridge dances with President Buchanan, represented as a goat
- Upper right: Abraham Lincoln dances with a smiling African American woman
- Lower right: John Bell dances with a Native American



Document Analysis (Dred Scott Document #3, The Political Quadrille)

Title of document: _____

Type of primary document: _____

Author/Illustrator of document: unknown

Three pieces of historical evidence from the document:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Expert Information: These documents are all reliable sources to use, and they help you better understand the time period. Most of them are primary sources, and those are the BEST kind of sources to use when doing historical research. However, secondary sources such as books from the time period and well-researched biographies can also give you valuable information. Just remember that not all sources are equal. Some information is written by unreliable people, some may be inaccurate, some may be biased, and some may be written long after an event. When doing research, be sure to notice all of these things. (Some information on the web might even be created by elementary school children for class projects. Their information is NOT primary source and probably not very reliable.)

Let the reader beware! Primary sources can also have conflicting information, depending on the viewpoint of the author, speaker, painter, etc. But the primary sources are still the best bet for learning about a historical situation or time period. Just be sure you choose what you think will be the most accurate and reliable sources.

You be the judge!!!