

## Unit 8

# Deconstructed DBQ Document Set and Teacher Context

## Teacher Resource

### Resource Overview

This document provides teacher support for implementing the Unit 8: Civil War Deconstructed DBQ in the middle school classroom. It includes seven documents, each designed to help students explore connections to the DBQ question while understanding the relevant historical context.

Use the context in this document to guide your students in making these connections and help them engage with the primary sources effectively.

**Scaffolding note:** For students who need additional support, you can assign or allow them to choose 2-3 documents. For students who need more of a challenge, provide all documents and require them to use each source at least once in their analysis.

### Document Exposure Table

This table shows where each primary source in the Deconstructed DBQ appears throughout the unit. Use this overview to help with lesson planning, reinforce key concepts, or activate prior-knowledge before students engage with the full DBQ.

**Teacher note:** As students move through the curriculum, they encounter more documents overall, but each one appears fewer times. This gradual decrease in exposure is intentional—it helps shift the responsibility for document analysis to the student, supporting the development of independent thinking and source analysis skills over time.

Document	New or Repeated Exposure	Unit Resources Using the Document
<b>Document A:</b> Excerpt from the Republican Party Platform (1860)	New	
<b>Document B:</b> Excerpt from Daniel Webster’s “7th of March” Speech (1850)	Repeated	1. <i>Underlying and Immediate Causes of the Civil War</i> Primary Source 2. <i>Views of Slavery</i> Primary Source Set

<b>Document C:</b> Excerpt from the Secession Statement from South Carolina (December 24, 1860)	New	
<b>Document D:</b> Excerpt from the Secession Statement from Georgia (January 29, 1861)	New	
<b>Document E:</b> Excerpt from Jefferson Davis Inaugural Address (February 18, 1861)	New	
<b>Document F:</b> Excerpts from Abraham Lincoln's First Inaugural Address (March 4, 1861)	New	
<b>Document G:</b> Excerpts from Alexander Stephens' Cornerstone Address (March 21, 1861)	New	

## Document Set with Teacher Context

Each Deconstructed DBQ document includes background information to help teachers understand each source. The information is organized by key concepts addressed in the DBQ question.

**Scaffolding note:** You can share some or all of this information with students to help them better understand the documents.

### **Document A: Excerpt from the Republican Party Platform (1860)**

That the normal condition of all the territory of the United States is that of freedom: That, as our Republican fathers, when they had <b>abolished</b> slavery in all our national territory, <b>ordained</b> that “no persons should be deprived of life, liberty or property without due process	<p><b>abolished-</b> ended</p> <p><b>ordained-</b> officially established</p>
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of law,” it becomes our duty, by legislation, whenever such legislation is necessary, to maintain this **provision** of the Constitution against all attempts to violate it; and we deny the authority of Congress, of a territorial legislature, or of any individuals, to give legal existence to slavery in any territory of the United States.

**provision-** part of, section

### **Historical Significance**

The Republican Party Platform of 1860 was a clear declaration against the expansion of slavery into U.S. territories, marking a major political shift. This platform positioned the Republican Party as at odds with Southern demands for the right to bring enslaved people into new territories. This strong opposition to slavery’s expansion became a cornerstone of Abraham Lincoln’s campaign and set the stage for Southern resistance.

### **How It Shows Fundamental Disagreements**

The platform argued that the “normal condition of all the territory of the United States is that of freedom,” denying Congress or territorial governments the authority to legalize slavery. This belief directly opposed Southern interests, which saw the spread of slavery as essential for maintaining economic and political power. The Republican Party’s commitment to block slavery’s spread represented a direct challenge to Southern states’ powers and economic interests.

### **How It Led to Civil War**

By taking a firm stance against the expansion of slavery, the Republican Party heightened sectional tensions. Southern states viewed this as a threat to their way of life and economic stability, fueling distrust and increasing calls for secession. The Republican victory in the 1860 election was seen by many Southern leaders as the final confirmation that their interests would no longer be protected in the Union.

### **Document B: Excerpt from Daniel Webster “7th of March” Speech (1850)**

Mr. President, three things are quite clear as historical truths. One is, that there was an expectation that, on the **ceasing** of the **importation** of slaves from Africa, slavery would begin to run out here. That was hoped and expected.

**ceasing-** stopping

**importation-** to bring in

Another is, that, as far as there was any power in Congress to prevent the spread of slavery in the United States, that power was executed in the most absolute manner, and to the fullest extent. . . . [The] **Ordinance** prohibiting slavery for ever northwest of the Ohio has the hand and seal and every Southern member in Congress. It was therefore no **aggression** of the North on the South.

The other and third clear historical truth is, that the **Convention** meant to leave slavery in the State as they found it, entirely under the authority and control of the States themselves.

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**Ordinance-** law, in this case the Northwest Ordinance

**aggression-** hostility

**Convention-** the Constitutional Convention

## Historical Significance

Daniel Webster's speech addressed the deepening sectional divide over slavery and its spread into new territories. He emphasized the historical expectation that slavery would gradually disappear and defended Congress's right to regulate its expansion into new territories, citing the Northwest Ordinance as evidence of federal power. However, he notes that the Founders intended to allow states that already had slavery to decide for themselves its legality, and that the federal government had no authority on the question. His speech attempted to appeal to moderation and compromise to prevent conflict but also exposed the deep disagreements over federal authority and states' powers.

## How It Shows Fundamental Disagreements

Webster's assertion that Congress historically acted to prevent the spread of slavery countered Southern arguments that slavery should expand freely into new territories. His defense of federal regulation over slavery's expansion was a direct contradiction to Southern beliefs in state sovereignty and property rights. This difference highlighted the growing divide between Northern and Southern interpretations of the Constitution.

## How It Led to Civil War

Webster's speech illustrated the broader conflict between federal authority and states' powers that fueled sectional tensions. His call for compromise in stopping the expansion of slavery while allowing Southern states to continue to have it if they chose was ignored as Southerners increasingly viewed any restrictions on slavery as an existential threat, pushing them closer to secession. The inability to find common ground on slavery's expansion contributed directly to the path toward civil war.

## Document C: Excerpt from the Secession Statement from South Carolina (December 24, 1860)

...We affirm that these ends for which this Government was instituted have been defeated, and the Government itself has been made destructive of them by the action of the non-slaveholding States. Those States have assumed the right of deciding upon the **propriety of our domestic institutions**; and have denied the rights of property established in fifteen of the States and recognized by the Constitution; they have denounced as sinful the institution of slavery; they have permitted open establishment among them of societies, whose avowed object is to disturb the peace and to **eloign** the property of the citizens of other States. They have encouraged and assisted thousands of our slaves to leave their homes; and those who remain, have been **incited** by **emissaries**, books and pictures to servile insurrection...

**propriety of our domestic institutions**- status of institutions such as slavery

**eloign**- to remove

**incited**- encouraged

**emissaries**- people on special missions

### Historical Significance

South Carolina's secession statement marked the first formal withdrawal of a state from the United States, setting the stage for the Civil War. South Carolina accused the federal government and Northern states of undermining their constitutional powers, particularly the right to own enslaved people. This declaration emphasized the protection of slavery as a primary reason for secession, revealing the state's deep economic and social dependence on the institution.

### How It Shows Fundamental Disagreements

South Carolina claimed Northern states had actively interfered with Southern property rights by denouncing slavery, refusing to return fugitive enslaved people, refusing to allow slavery to expand into western territories, and encouraging abolitionist activities. The state saw these actions as unconstitutional and a violation of their sovereignty. This represented a core disagreement: the North viewed slavery as morally wrong and opposed its spread to new territories, while the South demanded federal protection for its expansion and continuation.

## How It Led to Civil War

South Carolina's secession set a precedent for other Southern states, providing a model for separating from the Union to preserve slavery. The bold step of leaving the United States reflected a belief that the federal government could no longer be trusted to protect Southern interests. This secession was the spark that would eventually lead to the formation of the Confederacy and the outbreak of war.

### **Document D: Excerpt from the Secession Statement from Georgia (January 29, 1861)**

The people of Georgia having dissolved their political connection with the Government of the United States of America, present to their confederates and the world the causes which have led to the separation. For the last ten years we have had numerous and serious causes of complaint against our non-slave-holding confederate States with reference to the subject of African slavery. They have **endeavored** to weaken our security, to disturb our domestic peace and tranquility, and persistently refused to comply with their express constitutional obligations to us in reference to that property...

Similar to the Declaration of Independence, Georgia is announcing they are leaving the United States and the reasons why.

**endeavored-** to try hard to achieve

## Historical Significance

Georgia's secession statement outlined its reasons for leaving the Union, focusing heavily on the defense of slavery as essential to its economy and society. Georgia accused Northern states of undermining its security by inciting slave rebellions like Harpers Ferry. It also complained of the Union violating constitutional obligations by refusing to enforce fugitive slave laws and attempting to restrict slavery's expansion. This document served as a justification for secession and a call for other Southern states to leave the union as well.

## How It Shows Fundamental Disagreements

Georgia argued that the North's actions against slavery, including abolitionist movements and resistance to pro-slavery laws, threatened Southern prosperity and stability. This represented a clash between Northern views of slavery as unjust and Southern views of it as a constitutionally protected right. Georgia's insistence that its security depended on slavery highlighted the deep divide over the institution's future in America.



How It Led to Civil War

Georgia's secession further solidified the South's collective belief that slavery was under attack. By joining South Carolina in secession, Georgia contributed to the rapid formation of the Confederacy. This momentum pushed the nation closer to open conflict as the South prepared to defend its interests by force.

Document E: Excerpt from Jefferson Davis Inaugural Address (February 18, 1861)

<p>...As a necessity, not a choice, we have resorted to the <b>remedy</b> of separation; and henceforth our energies must be directed to the conduct of our own affairs, and the <b>perpetuity</b> of the Confederacy which we have formed. If a just perception of mutual interest shall permit us peaceably to pursue our separate political career, my most earnest desire will have been fulfilled. But, if this be denied to us, and the integrity of our territory and jurisdiction be <b>assailed</b>, it will but remain for us, with firm resolve, to appeal to arms and invoke the blessings of Providence on a just cause...</p>	<p><b>remedy-</b> solution</p> <p><b>perpetuity-</b> continuation</p> <p><b>assailed-</b> attacked</p>
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Historical Significance

Jefferson Davis's Inaugural Address marked the beginning of his leadership over the Confederate States of America. In his speech, Davis justified secession as a necessary action to protect Southern powers and institutions, particularly slavery. His words provided a rallying cry for the South to preserve its way of life and sovereignty.

How It Shows Fundamental Disagreements

Davis argued secession was a remedy for Northern aggression and that the Confederacy's separation was justified by constitutional principles. He claimed the Southern states were forced to leave the Union to protect their society and economy from federal interference. His insistence on independence demonstrated the Southern commitment to slavery as a foundational part of its identity.

How It Led to Civil War

By framing secession as an act of self-defense, Davis solidified the Confederacy's resolve to resist Northern influence. His address made clear that the South would protect its decision to secede—even if it required war—setting the stage for armed conflict.

## Document F: Excerpts from Abraham Lincoln's First Inaugural Address (March 4, 1861)

But if destruction of the Union by one or by a part only of the States be lawfully possible, the Union is less perfect than before the Constitution, having lost the vital element of <b>perpetuity</b> . ...It follows from these views that no State upon its own mere motion can lawfully get out of the Union; that resolves and ordinances to that effect are legally void, and that acts of violence within any State or States against the authority of the United States are <b>insurrectionary</b> or revolutionary, according to circumstances.	<b>perpetuity</b> -continuation  <b>insurrectionary</b> - an act of revolt or rebellion
In your hands, my dissatisfied fellow-countrymen, and not in mine, is the momentous issue of civil war. The Government will not <b>assail</b> you. You can have no conflict without being yourselves the aggressors. You have no oath registered in heaven to destroy the Government, while I shall have the most solemn one to “preserve, protect, and defend” it.	<b>assail</b> - assault or attack

### Historical Significance

Abraham Lincoln's First Inaugural Address was a plea to the Southern states to reconsider secession and maintain the Union. Lincoln emphasized that secession was illegal and declared his commitment to preserving the nation, regardless of Southern resistance. His speech underscored the federal government's refusal to recognize the Confederacy's legitimacy.

### How It Shows Fundamental Disagreements

Lincoln asserted the Union was perpetual and that states did not have the right to unilaterally secede. His refusal to acknowledge Southern claims of sovereignty illustrated the deep constitutional divide between North and South. This opposition to secession was a direct challenge to the Confederacy's claims of independence.



## How It Led to Civil War

Lincoln's firm stance against secession made conflict nearly inevitable. Southern states, unwilling to return to the Union under Northern terms, saw war as their only path to maintaining independence and protecting slavery. His commitment to preserving the Union without compromise drove the North and South toward open conflict.

### **Document G: Excerpts from Alexander Stephens' Cornerstone Address (March 21, 1861)**

Our new government is founded upon exactly the **opposite idea** [of the **Declaration of Independence**]; its foundations are laid, its **cornerstone rests**, upon the great truth that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery **subordination** to the superior race is his natural and normal condition. This, our new government, is the first, in the history of the world, based upon this great physical, philosophical, and moral truth. This truth has been slow in the process of its development, like all other truths in the various departments of science...

**opposite idea** [of the **Declaration of Independence**]- The Confederacy proclaims itself in opposition to the principle that "all men are created equal" from the Declaration of Independence.

**cornerstone**- the key building block of something; here, it symbolizes the most important idea supporting their government

**subordination**- the state of being lower in status or under someone else's control

They assume that the negro is equal, and hence conclude that he is entitled to equal privileges and rights with the white man. If their **premises** were correct, their conclusions would be logical and just but their premise being wrong, their whole argument fails... They were attempting to make things equal which the Creator had made unequal...

**premises**- basic statement upon whose truth an argument is based

## **Historical Significance**

Alexander Stephens, the Vice President of the Confederacy, openly declared that slavery and white supremacy were the "cornerstone" of the Confederate government. His speech outlined the South's ideological commitment to slavery as a permanent and justified institution, and contrasted it with the Declaration of Independence, which in his eyes falsely stated that all men, regardless of race, are equal.

## **How It Shows Fundamental Disagreements**

Stephens argued the Confederate government was the first in history explicitly built on the principle of racial inequality. This clear commitment to slavery was a stark contrast to Northern beliefs in freedom and equality. His speech revealed that the Southern cause was deeply rooted in the protection and expansion of slavery.

## **How It Led to Civil War**

By publicly framing slavery as the foundation of the Confederacy, Stephens justified secession and armed conflict. His address removed any doubt that slavery was at the heart of the Civil War, solidifying the ideological divide.

