



## **Two Perspectives on the Approaching Civil War: A Document Analysis Exercise**

### **A Lesson Plan for 8<sup>th</sup> Graders**

by

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Background: On the eve of the civil War, how did Northerners and Southerners view one another? The two texts below provide a firsthand look at such perspectives. The larger purpose here is for students to begin to understand some of the differing attitudes the two sides held towards each other.

Lesson Sequencing: Students are given the two texts, one at a time. Students are invited to read the texts and address the questions posed following each text. After they have read the accounts and addressed the questions, students are asked to turn to a neighbor and answer the question posed above: How did Northerners and Southerners view one another according to these two accounts? (Teachers may wish to hold a whole-class discussion following the paired discussion students do.)

### **A Southern View**

M.A. Pratt, Letter of April 23, 1861

*“Dear Sir, I was somewhat surprised to hear that you had been south and returned so soon. I judge you have changed your opinion with regard to the Southern institution. I am somewhat surprised at it; you once took such a decided stand in favor of the south. Well, the war has broke out and I fear many bloody battles will be fought before the south conquers. Let me tell you [that] this government is broken up forever and the north will never whip the South, for that is as impossible to do as for the British to whip few pilgrims that were fighting for their freedom, their homes, and their all.”*

1. What does M.A. Pratt foresee happening in the Civil War?  


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2. What war is Pratt referring to when he states “for that is as impossible to do as for the British to whip few pilgrims that were fighting for their freedom, their homes, and their all”?  


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3. How would this war be inspirational to southerners fighting for the confederacy? \_\_\_\_\_  


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4. What does Pratt seem to think is wrong with northerners? \_\_\_\_\_  


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### A Northern View



**J.J. Knox, Letter of May 4, 1861**

*“Because I am in no favor of having the best government on earth torn to pieces without a cause, and would not sanction the seizing of a United States vessel, the plundering and stealing the U.S Property by a lawless band of ruffians, the repudiation of Northern debts, the hanging and mobbing of northern men because they were so unfortunate as to have been raised in a free state instead of a Negro quarter.... Now sir, with regard to the braggadocio part of your letter saying the South will conquer and the northern people can’t fight ...let us see where your men are to come from to conquer the North....”*

1. Describe how J.J. Knox views the Southerners’ actions? \_\_\_\_\_  


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2. What are Knox's reasons for not being in favor of secession?

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3. What does Knox seem to think is wrong with northerners? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Understanding Perspective by Reading the Tone of Letters**

In letters like these, TONE deals with the emotion in how a person is speaking to another. How do the two letters' tone and emotion explain the Southern and Northern views toward each other?

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Note: This work was produced through an educational collaboration between Clarke County (GA) School District and the T.R.R. Cobb House Museum.

