

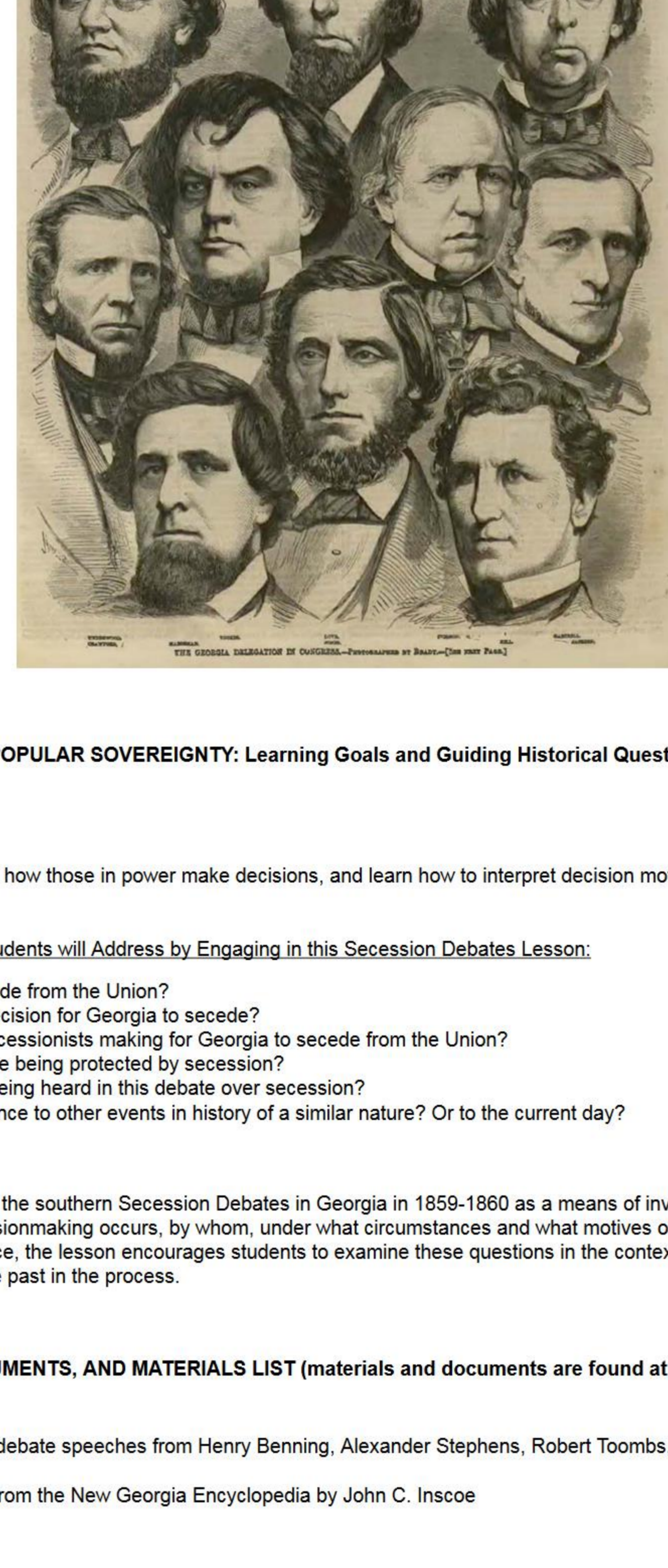
MOTIVES FOR SOUTHERN SECESSION In The Best Interest of All?

A LESSON PLAN FOR SECONDARY HISTORY TEACHERS

By Amy Lamb

In the question of Georgia's standpoint during the secession debates, it is important to understand who had relevant political influence to actually make a decision on whether Georgia should secede or not, and whose voice was not being heard. The influence of interest groups has always been a central aspect of political decision making, and is today more than ever.

This lesson plan for middle and high school American history students suggests ideas and provides resources for exploring reasons for Georgia to secede from the Union, the question of who got to make political decisions, and who did not, and the relevance for other historical or present events.



POPULAR SOVEREIGNTY: Learning Goals and Guiding Historical Questions

Overall Learning Goal:

The students will understand how those in power make decisions, and learn how to interpret decision motives.

List of Specific Questions Students will Address by Engaging in this Secession Debates Lesson:

- Why did the South secede from the Union?
- Who got to make the decision for Georgia to secede?
- What arguments are secessionists making for Georgia to secede from the Union?
- Whose best interests are being protected by secession?
- Whose voices are not being heard in this debate over secession?
- Can we relate this instance to other events in history of a similar nature? Or to the current day?

Note to Teachers:

This is the topic of the southern Secession Debates in Georgia in 1850-1860 as a means of riveting students to consider the larger questions of how decisionmaking occurs, by whom, under what circumstances and what motives often drive that decisionmaking process. As readers will notice, the lesson encourages students to examine these questions in the context of their own lives while also learning something about the past in the process.

ACCOUNTS, DOCUMENTS, AND MATERIALS LIST (materials and documents are found at the end of the lesson)

1. Excerpts from secession debate speeches from Henry Benning, Alexander Stephens, Robert Toombs, and T.R.R. Cobb
2. "Georgia in 1860" article from the New Georgia Encyclopedia by John C. Insoce

Investigating the Past, Learning American History: A Research-Based Approach to Lesson Design

The approach and design of this lesson plan is rooted in several decades of research on how students learn history. It has been customary for history teachers to tell students the story of the past as a means of getting them to reproduce what they hear. However, research consistently presents evidence that such an approach seldom succeeds. Simply put, students seem to quickly forget what they hear.

In studying how students learn history more deeply, researchers have found that students are for more likely to understand the past and therefore reproduce their understandings later if they have authentic opportunities to investigate the past themselves (i.e., to do history). As a result, history teachers who structure lessons around questions, accounts (firsthand and secondary), and investigations into those accounts as a means of answering the questions posed are far more likely to help students attain strong understandings of the past.

This lesson is designed to draw from the research by structuring its sequencing in an investigative way. It poses crucial questions for students to address, invites them to dig into the accounts that might help provide answers to those questions, draw evidence from them, and make claims about what the past means and what happened next, then. Such claims represent students' growing understandings of history. By "doing history" themselves, students come to understand it much more deeply and are prone then to remember what they learn.

Lesson Sequence

Timeframe for the Sequence: 2 class periods, 55 minutes each

LESSON ONE

Introducing the Lesson Sequence (13-14 minutes)

Write the word "secession" on the whiteboard. As students are coming into the classroom, call their attention to the whiteboard and tell them to define the word secession on a piece of paper.

After a minute or two, ask students what they wrote down. Write their answers on the white board as they give them. Work on making sure they all develop roughly the same working definition of the word "secession."

Next, ask students to use that same piece of paper to write down what they already know about the South's secession. Again, after a couple minutes for writing responses, ask them to read what they said and write their answers on their whiteboard.

From there, invite students to get out their notebooks. Picking up from previous lessons (e.g., expansion of American territory and the question of whether or not slavery should be allowed to expand as well), ask them to note that for this lesson they will be answering a series of questions and discussing what led up to the South seceding from the Union.

Introduce via the whiteboard what questions will become the focus of their attention during the two-part lesson sequence (see the List of Specific Questions). Have them copy the questions into their notebooks. Then tell students that for this lesson they are going to take a closer look at why the South, in particular Georgia, decided to secede.

Note to Teachers:

Don't "give away" answers to the questions; keep that space open so students can wrestle with the questions themselves in the following Activity.

Activity – Secession Debates Examined (30 minutes)

Divide the class up into groups of 4. Each person in the group will get an excerpt from one of the 4 Georgia secession debaters. Everyone in the group should have a different speech. The directions for each step of the assignment (see below) will be written on the whiteboard for students, or they could be given to each group as a handout out. Students can choose their own groups of four. They will rearrange their desks into small clusters while you distribute their speech excerpts (see the Resources provided at the end of the lesson plan).

Instructions to Students:

Initially, read your own excerpt, and then in the margins, translate it into your own words. This demonstrates your understanding of the excerpt. Once you have translated the excerpt, at the bottom write a short paragraph (minimum 4-5 sentences) that sums up the argument the secession debater was making in the excerpt you read.

Note to Teachers:

Scaffolds such as SOAPSTone (Advanced Placement, http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/ap/public/prepare/teacher_multiple/45200.html) or PAIRe (The Challenge of Rethinking History Education, ch.5) might also be valuable here when students read, compare excerpts and to keep track of various ideas, their authors, and account reliability.

When each group member is done with their own excerpt, invite all members of each group to come together and compare and contrast the arguments students think the secessionists made in the four speeches by the different men. At this step, the teacher is looking for students to describe the common arguments across all the speeches. Students should make a list as a group of the common arguments they find. (Responses might include ideas such as the North's refusal to reinforce the Fugitive Slave Law, the problem with election of Lincoln, the need to protect slavery, and the need to protect Southerners' rights).

Note to Teachers:

Here you are trying to help students understand the powerful "grievance narrative" the southerners had developed about northern intrusion into their affairs.

While students are working individually, and then with their groups, circulate about the room to make sure students stay on task and know what they are supposed to be doing. As they are managing the class's behavior, as group activities sometimes can get out of hand if not monitored well. It also lets students know that you are available and willing to guide them as needed.

Concluding the Lesson (12 minutes):

Call class together and ask students to send a representative to the board to write one strong reason for secession the group determined from evidence in the debater's speeches.

Then examine all the ideas on the board and discuss them as a class. The discussion is aimed at fleshing out a range of motives by talking them through together.

Note to Teachers:

This is a tricky process. How can we be sure of motives? We need to guess at them at some level, insist that students back up their claims with evidence from what they've read. You want students to eventually see that the debaters and their claims and grievances may have actually represented only a small fraction of the overall population in Georgia, that monumental decisions can sometimes be made by a small interested party that does not represent the whole, as the lesson title suggests.

Lesson One Assessment (4 minutes):

After finishing the discussion of motives for secession, ask students to get out a piece of paper and answer the question: Which one of the motives discussed today do you think played the biggest role in making Southerners want to secede from the Union? Why? Support your answer with evidence from the excerpts we've looked at today.

If students do not finish the short essay in class before the bell rings, assign it as homework, due at the beginning of the next class.

LESSON TWO

Introducing the Lesson Sequence (6-7 minutes)

Write the term "popular sovereignty" on the whiteboard before students come in. As they enter, ask them to define the term on a sheet of paper, and remind them to turn in their assignment from yesterday.

Note to Teachers:

I commonly begin class by asking students to define a vocabulary word that will feature heavily in a lesson. If I am assuming that I get to secede from the Union, I have a strong opinion about what that word means. I believe that the word "secession" is probably a word they were already familiar with, "popular sovereignty" is probably not. I would ask them to use context clues to figure out what it could mean. What does popular mean? What does sovereignty mean? When do you hear the word "sovereign" and what does it refer to when you hear it?

After students have had a couple minutes to think about popular sovereignty, ask them how they responded, and write them on the whiteboard. Then give them a working definition of the term, and have them copy it into their notes. Ask them next to skim the notes they took from Lesson One on the motives for secession. Pass out the reading for the activity for Lesson Two.

Activity (30 minutes)

At this point, hand out the article "Georgia in 1860" (see Resources List at the end of the Lesson) to students. I will ask students to read the section on class and wealth, then answer questions I've put on the board when they are done.

Note to Teachers:

It might make sense to begin here by asking students about how their own voices and interests are represented in key decisions that affect their lives. This could connect the part of the investigation that follows next to students' thinking about the idea of "popular sovereignty" and their own lives. And the election of Lincoln by a purely sectional vote, and upon a platform of no-secession, is a great example of their voices rarely matter, that others are making decisions for them. Questions about voice and whether it matters might give students a link into understanding how power flows, how policy outcomes tend to be dominated by the powerful at the expense of those without voice, as we see in the debates and subsequent vote.

Put the following guiding questions on the whiteboard for students to address as they read "Georgia in 1860". Ask students to copy them into their notebooks.

- Identify the four social classes the article describes.
- Which of these social classes held all the wealth? Property?
- What do the statistics about slave ownership tell you?
- Which of these social classes benefitted the most from slavery? Why?
- Which of these social classes do you think Benjamin, Toombs, Cobb, and Stephens belonged to?
- What does any of this have to do with the idea of "popular sovereignty"?

When students are done reading and addressing the questions, discuss their responses in a whole-class context, and focus particularly on the last one. The accusation of tyranny as well as "popular sovereignty" has to do with power and wealth. Students will hopefully come to understand the idea that, especially in 1860, whoever held the wealth and property usually held political power as well. That power allowed the holders to make decisions (e.g., to secede from the Union) if it suited their interests, though it did not necessarily need to reflect everyone's interests.

Concluding the Lesson (24 minutes):

Continue the class discussion, but attempt to direct it by asking whose voices have not been heard in these Georgia Secession Debates. Discuss how allowing the secessionists to secede would affect the lives of the poor, the enslaved, and the non-slaveholding whites. What matters is that they were not asked because their opinions did not figure directly into the decisionmaking.

If time, raise a question about whether if this event—the secessionist debates and the decision that followed—was an isolated occurrence. Also ask students to think about how the secessionist debates and the decision that followed fit into the larger story of American history, and how it still happens today. If they suggest a yes response to this question, ask students to name other instances in history in which this may have been the case, or add an instance from the present day.

Note to Teachers:

One example here might be this: With all the money currently flowing into politics from wealthy donors, do the money-less voices actually get heard or represented? Some people report that they don't vote because they have become cynical about outcomes, that power lies with the wealthy, and their ideas and "little" voices really aren't heard. So if you get into this discussion, you could side into the question: "Well, if we wanted to change things, what would we do?"

Concluding Assessment:

Ask students to write 2 paragraphs for homework. These two paragraphs should explain to what the principle of "popular sovereignty" is, and if it was at work during the secession debates in Georgia in 1860. If students claim it was, then he/she must explain how, and if it wasn't, why not. Ask them to support their positions by addressing these questions in the essay:

Was everyone's best interests considered in making the decision to secede? If not, whose were? Who was excluded? What does this event in history reveal to us about the nature of power and wealth? Is this lesson still relevant to the way power and wealth operate today?

Lesson Resources

Note to Teachers:

The following excerpts are quite long to provide a better sense of the time period and the arguments. Individual teachers are encouraged to further excerpt from them, and slightly modify them to fit the needs of the readers in their classrooms.

1. Excerpts from Henry Benning, Georgia Secession Debate Speech, 1860 (Retrieved from <http://georgiainfo.galileo.usg.edu/thisday/cvhistory/11/19/henry-lewis-benning-speech-supporting-secession>)

Fellow Citizens: The points for our consideration are, what is the disease – the precise disease under which the South is laboring, and what is the remedy for that disease. ... I propose to endeavor to maintain several propositions showing, I think, what that disease is, and also what the remedy is for that disease. ...

My first proposition is that the election of Mr. Lincoln to the Presidency of the United States means the abolition of slavery, as soon as the party which elected him shall acquire the power to do the deed. ...

My second proposition is that the North will soon acquire that power, unless something is done to prevent it. I dare say everyone present will agree that this is almost a self-evident proposition. The North has now eighteen States, and the South fifteen. The whole of the public territory of the United States may at this time be said to be Northern Territory. ... The Constitution, with that party, is already a dead letter – a thing void, under the operation of the "higher law." The only question, therefore, is, how can Mr. Lincoln obtain a Cabinet which will do this? ...

My third is that abolition would be to the South one of the direst evils of which the mind can conceive. ... The cotton States will, at that time, have a larger population of slaves, perhaps a larger population of slaves than of whites, but the population of the whites it will be respectable. The decree will excite an intense hatred between the whites on one side, and the slaves and the North on the other. Very soon a war between the whites and the blacks will spontaneously break out everywhere. It will be in every town, in every village, in every neighborhood, in every road. It will be a war of man with man – a war of extermination. Quickly the North will intervene, and of course take sides with the party is friendly towards them – the blacks. The coalition will exterminate the white race, or expel them from the land, to wander as vagabonds over the face of the earth. ...

Am I not right then in saying that abolition is one of the direst evils that the mind can imagine? Thus then we have data from which we may announce this position: that abolition, dire evil as it is, is inevitable, unless something is done either to mollify this hostility to slavery on the part of the North, or to prevent the North from acquiring the power to abolish slavery. ...

Now here are the remedies suggested or supposed to prevent the North from abolishing slavery? ... It follows that there is not within the Union any remedy by which we can escape abolition, and therefore if we wish for a remedy, a remedy we must seek outside the Union. ... I say that a separation from the North would be a complete remedy for the disease – a complete remedy for both diseases, a remedy not merely to prevent abolition, but also to heal the North's slave laborer. ...

If you were to separate from the North, the power to abolish slavery by the fugitive would be taken away. ...

... I say that if we separate from the North, the power to abolish slavery by the North would be taken away. ...

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5. "Georgia in 1860" article from the New Georgia Encyclopedia by John C. Insoce (<http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/georgia-1860>)

1. Excerpts from Henry Benning, Georgia Secession Debate Speech, 1860 ([Link to full document](#))

Fellow Citizens: The points for our consideration are, what is the disease – the precise disease under which the South is laboring, and what is the remedy? I propose to endeavor to maintain several propositions showing, I think, what that disease is, and also what the remedy is for that disease. ... My first proposition is that the election of Mr. Lincoln to the Presidency of the United States means the abolition of slavery, as soon as the party which elected him shall acquire the power to do the deed. ... My second proposition is that the North will soon acquire that power, unless something is done to prevent it. I dare say everyone present will agree that this is almost a self-evident proposition. The North has now eighteen States, and the South fifteen. The whole of the public territory of the United States may at this time be said to be Northern territory. ... The Constitution, with that party, is already a dead letter – a thing void, under the operation of the “higher law.” The only question, therefore, will be one of physical power. And that power they are rapidly acquiring, and will soon acquire, unless something is done to prevent it. And this is my second proposition.

My third is that abolition would be to the South one of the direst evils of which the mind can conceive. ... The cotton States will, at that time, have a large population of slaves, perhaps a larger population of slaves than of whites; but the population of the whites will be respectable. The decree will excite an intense hatred between the whites on one side, and the slaves and the North on the other. Very soon a war between the whites and the blacks will spontaneously break out everywhere. It will be in every town, in every village, in every neighborhood, in every road. It will be a war of man with man – a war of extermination. Quickly the North will intervene, and of course take sides with the party friendly towards them – the blacks. The coalition will exterminate the white race, or expel them from the land, to wander as vagabonds over the face of the earth.

... Am I not right then in saying that abolition is one of the direst evils that the mind can imagine? Thus then we have data from which we may announce this position: that abolition, dire evil as it is, is inevitable, unless something is done either to mollify this hostility to slavery on the part of the North, or to prevent the North from acquiring the power to abolish slavery. ...

What now are the remedies suggested or supposable to prevent the North from abolishing slavery? ... It follows that there is not within the Union any remedy by which we can escape abolition, and therefore if we wish for a remedy, a remedy we must seek outside the Union. ... I say that a separation from the North would be a complete remedy for the disease – a complete remedy for both diseases, a remedy not merely to prevent abolition, but also to heal the fugitive slave ulcer.

... If you were to separate from the North, the power to abolish slavery by the North would be taken away. That is clear. The will to do so would also cease. ... I say, then, that whenever the South is separated from the North, and in its stead other questions will spring up which will occupy all their time and attention ... If we separate from the North, we could put an end to the alarming process by which the slave population is draining off into the cotton States. The mere act of separation would have that tendency. Fear – the fear that slaves will escape to the North by the under-ground railroad, and otherwise, is the chief cause of the drain. After a separation, stock in the under-ground railroad would cease to pay, and the road would suspend business. ... The separation from the North would then be a remedy for all diseases. ... I say that if one or two of the cotton States go out, all the cotton States will go out, and that if all the cotton States go out, all the border States will soon follow. ... the North cut off from Southern cotton, rice, tobacco, and other Southern products would lose three-fourths of her commerce, and a very large proportion of her manufactures. And thus those great fountains of finance would sink very low. I say then that we would have ample power to maintain our independence in spite of the North.

... But indeed there will be no war. The effect at the North of our separation would be a commercial crisis, a bankruptcy greater than has ever prevailed there before. ... I go further, gentlemen, and deny that the election of Mr. Lincoln was not an overt, or to speak in their own language an unconstitutional act. I question that – I venture to question it come, come from what source it may.

The Constitution says in the preamble, that it was made to form a more perfect Union, to establish justice and to insure domestic tranquility. The intent of the Black Republican Party in electing Mr. Lincoln was to make a less perfect union, to establish injustice, and to organize domestic strife. The intent with which he was elected, was, therefore, directly in the teeth of the intent of the Constitution. ... Why, then, will you not disregard the objections and adopt that remedy? Is there any other course left to you? If so, what is it? But surely there is none. Why hesitate? the question is between life and death. Well, if these things be so, let us do our duty; and what is our duty? I say, men of Georgia, let us lift up our voices and shout, “Ho! for independence!” Let us follow the examples of our ancestors, and prove ourselves worthy sons of worthy sires!

2. Excerpts from Alexander Stephens, Georgia Secession Debate Speech, 1860 ([Link to full document](#))

But it is said Mr. Lincoln's policy and principles are against the Constitution, and that, if he carries them out, it will be destructive of our rights. Let us not anticipate a threatened evil. If he violates the Constitution, then will come our time to act. Do not let us break it because, forsooth, he may. If he does, that is the time for us to act. (Applause.) I think it would be injudicious and unwise to do this sooner. I do not anticipate that Mr. Lincoln will do anything, to jeopardize our safety or security, whatever may be his spirit to do it; for he is bound by the constitutional checks which are thrown around him, which at this time render him powerless to do any great mischief. This shows the wisdom of our system. The President of the United States is no Emperor, no Dictator— he is clothed with no absolute power. He can do nothing, unless he is backed by power in Congress. The House of Representatives is largely in a majority against him. In the very face and teeth of the majority of Electoral votes, which he has obtained in the Northern States, there have been large gains in the House of Representatives, to the Conservative Constitutional Party of the country, which I here will call the National Democratic Party, because that is the cognomen it has at the North. There are twelve of this Party elected from New York, to the next Congress, I believe. In the present House, there are but four, I think. In Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Ohio, and Indiana, there have been gains. In the present Congress, there were one hundred and thirteen Republicans, when it takes one hundred and seventeen to make a majority. The gains in the Democratic Party in Pennsylvania, Ohio, New Jersey, New York, Indiana, and other States, notwithstanding its distractions, have been enough to make a majority of near thirty, in the next House, against Mr. Lincoln. Even in Boston, Mr. Burlingame, one of the noted leaders of the fanatics of that section, has been defeated, and a Conservative man returned in his stead. Is this the time, then, to apprehend that Mr. Lincoln, with this large majority of the House of Representatives against him, cannot carry out any of these unconstitutional principles in that body?

In the Senate, he will also be powerless. There will be a majority of four against him. This, after the loss of Bigler, Fitch, and others, by the unfortunate dissensions of the National Democratic Party in their States. Mr. Lincoln can not appoint an officer without the consent of the Senate — he can not form a Cabinet without the same consent. He will be in the condition of George the Third (the embodiment of Toryism), who had to ask the Whigs to appoint his ministers, and was compelled to receive a Cabinet utterly opposed to his views; and so Mr. Lincoln will be compelled to ask of the Senate to choose for him a Cabinet, if the Democracy or that Party choose to put him on such terms. He will be compelled to do this, or let the Government stop, if the National Democratic Senators (for that is their name at the North), the Conservative men in the Senate, should so determine. Then how can Mr. Lincoln obtain a Cabinet which would aid him, or allow him to violate the Constitution? Why, then, I say, should we disrupt the ties of this Union, when his hands are tied— when he can do nothing against us?

3. Excerpts from Robert Toombs, Georgia Secession Debate Speech, 1860 ([Link to full document](#))

... we are told that secession would destroy the fairest fabric of liberty the world ever saw, and that we are the most prosperous people in the world under it. The arguments of tyranny as well as its acts, always reenact themselves. The arguments I now hear in favor of this Northern connection are identical in substance, and almost in the same words as those which were used in 1775 and 1776 to sustain the British connection. We won liberty, sovereignty, and independence by the American Revolution – we endeavored to secure and perpetuate these blessings by means of our Constitution. The very men who use these arguments admit that this Constitution, this compact, is violated, broken and trampled under foot by the Abolition Party. Shall we surrender the jewels because their robbers... have broken the casket? Is this the way to preserve liberty? I would [prefer to] surrender it back to the British crown as to the Abolitionists. I will defend it from both. Our purpose is to defend those liberties. What baser fate could befall us or this great experiment of free government than to have written upon its tomb: "Fell by the hands of Abolitionists and the cowardice of its natural defenders." If we [fall] now, this will be its epitaph.

We are said to be a happy and prosperous people. We have been, because we have hitherto maintained our ancient rights and liberties – we will be until we surrender them. They are in danger; come, freemen, to the rescue. If we are prosperous, it is due to God, ourselves, and the wisdom of our State government. We have an executive, legislative, and judicial department at home, possessing and entitled to the confidence of the people. I have already vainly asked for the law of the Federal Government that promotes our prosperity. I have shown you many that retard that prosperity – many that drain our coffers for the benefit of our bitterest foes. I say bitterest foes – show me the nation in the world that hates, despises, villifies, or plunders us like our abolition "brethren" in the North. There is none. I can go to England or France, or any other country in Europe with my slave, without molestation or violating any law. I can go anywhere except in my own country, whilom called "the glorious Union;" here alone am I stigmatized as a felon; here alone am I an outlaw; here alone am I under the ban of the empire; here alone I have neither security nor tranquillity; here alone are organized governments ready to protect the incendiary, the assassin who burns my dwelling or takes my life or those of my wife and children; here alone are hired emissaries paid by brethren to glide through the domestic circle and intrigue insurrection with all of its nameless horrors.

My countrymen, "if you have nature in you, bear it not." Withdraw yourselves from such a [union]; it is your right to do so – your duty to do so. I know not why the Abolitionists should object to it, unless they want to torture and plunder you. If they resist this great sovereign right, make another war of independence, for that then will be the question; fight its battles over again – reconquer liberty and independence. As for me, I will take any place in the great conflict for rights which you may assign. I will take none in the Federal Government during Mr. Lincoln's administration.

4. Excerpts from Thomas R.R. Cobb, Georgia Secession Debate Speech, 1860 ([Link to full document](#))

...I have been publishing in Northern newspapers, article after article, arguing, reasoning, urging, persuading, yea, begging our Northern fellow-citizens not to force upon the South the terrible issue of Disunion, or Dishonor. And candidly, can I say to-night that I would have illuminated my house with enthusiasm and shoutings, had either one of the candidates urged in Georgia been elevated to the Presidential chair. ... In times like these, passion should not rule the hour; calm and dispassionate deliberation should be brought to the consideration of every question.

...The practical issue before us is the triumph of the sectional Black Republican party of the North, and the duty of Georgia in the present emergency. To this I address myself. Is the election of Lincoln a sufficient ground for the dissolution of the Union? Can it be supposed that our fathers intended to allow our national elections to be controlled by men who were not citizens under the National Constitution? Never, never! Yet to elect Abraham Lincoln, the right of suffrage was extended to free negroes in Vermont, Massachusetts, Ohio, New York and other Northern States, although the Supreme Court has declared them not to be citizens of this nation. Yes! Our slaves are first stolen from our midst on underground Railroads, and then voted at Northern ballot-boxes to select rulers for you and me. The memory of our fathers is slandered when this is declared to be according to the Constitution. ... it is true that counting the unanimous votes of the Southern States and the large minorities in the North against the Black Republicans, a majority amounting to perhaps a million or more votes, have declared against Abraham Lincoln for the next Presidency.

Is not this according to the forms of the Constitution? I may be asked. I answer it is. But will my objecting friend answer, is it according to its spirit? I may be told that other Chief Magistrates have been elected by popular minorities. This I admit, but never against such an overwhelming majority, and never by a sectional party based upon the prospect and avowal of a continuation of the same results in every future election. The truth is, that we have lived to see a state of things never contemplated by the framers of the Constitution. At that time we were all slaveholding States – a homogenous people, having a common origin, common memories – a common cause, common hopes – a common future, a common destiny.

... the Constitution is full of checks to protect the minority from the sudden and excited power of a majority, no provision was suggested for the protection of the majority from the despotic rule of an infuriated, fanatical, sectional minority. The experience of eight years in the Presidential Chair, and the almost more than human wisdom of Washington gave him a glimpse of the fatal omission thus made in the Constitution, and hence we find in that wonderful document – his Farewell Address – a note of solemn warning against such a perversion of the Government, by the formation of sectional parties.

... What liberty have we secured by the Constitution of the United States? Our personal liberty is protected by the broad aegis of Georgia's sovereignty. To her we never appealed in vain. What liberty does the Union give us? The glorious liberty of being robbed of our property, threatened in our lives, abused and vilified in our reputation on every forum from the grog-shop to the Halls of Congress, libeled in every vile newspaper, and in every town meeting, deprived of all voice in the election of our Chief

Magistracy, bound to the car of a fiendish fanaticism, which is daily curtailing every vestige of our privileges, and by art and cunning, under the forms of the Constitution, binding us in a vassalage more base and hopeless than that of the Siberian serf. This is “glorious” liberty secured by a “glorious” Union. And the election of Lincoln by a purely sectional vote, and upon a platform of avowed hostility to our rights and our liberty, is the cap-stone – nay, the last magna carta – securing us to these wonderful privileges.

... Equality among the states is the fundamental idea of the American Union. Protection to the life, liberty and property of the citizen is the corner-stone and only end of Government in the American mind. Look to the party whose triumph is to be consummated in the inauguration of Lincoln – The exclusive enjoyment of all common territory of the Union, is their watchword and party cry. The exclusion of half the States of the Union has been decreed, and we are called upon to record the fiat. Will you do it, men of Georgia? Are you so craven so soon? But protection – whence comes it to us? Dare you to follow your fugitive into a Northern State to arrest him? The assassin strikes you down, and no law avenges your blood; your property is stolen every day, and the very attempt to recover it subjects you to the insults of the North... Georgia extends her sovereign arm over us, and our lives, our property, our liberty and our reputation are safe under her protection. Loyalty and fidelity have their reason for their growth and food for their sustenance when we turn to this good old Commonwealth. But when we look to this Union – oh, tell me – why owe we allegiance to it? ... As a legal question, I am compelled to decide that the election of Lincoln is in violation of the spirit of the Constitution of the United States. ... Fanaticism is madness, is insanity.

... We call it blind, because it cannot see; we call it deaf, because it cannot hear; we call it foolish, because it cannot reason; we call it cruel, because it cannot feel. By what channel, then, can you reach its citadel? Firmly planted therein, with every avenue closed to ingress, and yet every door of evil influence open to the bitter issues which flow without, the deluded victim glories in his own shame, and scatters ruin and destruction, in the mad dream that he is doing God’s service. ... All history speaks but one voice. Tell me when and where the craving appetite of fanaticism was ever gorged with victims; when and where its bloody hands were ever stayed by the consciousness of satiety; when and where its deaf ears ever listened to reason, or argument, or persuasion, or selfishness; when and where it ever died from fatigue, or yielded except in blood. ... We have seen, then, that this election is legally unconstitutional, and that politically the issue on which it is unconstitutional is both vital in its importance and permanent in its effects. What, then, is our remedy? ... I fear not to say I have gone to the God I worship, and begged Him to advise me. On the night of the 6th of November, I called my wife and little ones together around my family altar, and together we prayed to God to stay the wrath of our oppressors, and preserve the Union of our fathers. The rising sun of the seventh of November found me on my knees, begging the same kind Father to make that wrath to praise Him, and the remainder of wrath to restrain. I believe that the hearts of men are in His hands, and when the telegraph announced to me that the voice of the North proclaimed at the ballot-box that I should be a slave, I heard in the same sound, the voice of my God speaking through his Providence, and saying to his child, “Be free! Be free!” Marvel not then that I say my voice is for immediate, unconditional secession.

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