

STUDENT GUIDE SHEET

What Caused the Civil War?

Directions: In April 1861, the 33 states that made up the United States of America went to war against each other. The war was to last four long, heart-wrenching years and cost the lives of more than 600,000 Northern and Southern soldiers. The reasons for the war have been debated by historians and citizens ever since. This DBQ asks the classic question, “What Caused the Civil War?”

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It is suggested that you follow these steps:

1. Do the Hook Exercise.
2. Read the Background Essay.
3. Skim through the 11 documents to get a sense of what they are about.
4. Read the documents slowly. In the margins, or on a Document Analysis Sheet, record the main idea of each document.
5. Organize the documents by analytical category or bucket.
6. Develop a thesis and, using the evidence in the documents, argue what caused the Civil War.

The Documents:

- Document 1: Railroads and Slave Density / Cotton (Maps)
- Document 2: Resources of the Union and the Confederacy, 1861: (Chart)
- Document 3: Two Economies: The Impending Crisis of the South
- Document 4: Frederick Douglass
- Document 5: Cannibals All!
- Document 6: The Reaction to John Brown
- Document 7: Kansas - Nebraska Act (Map)
- Document 8: The Caning of Charles Sumner (Cartoon)
- Document 9: The Dred Scott Decision
- Document 10: House Divided
- Document 11: The Election of 1860 (Map)