

Slavery, the Civil War & Reconstruction

Fort Sumter and the First Shots of the Civil War

In 1860, Lincoln was elected President. Not one single southern state voted for him. Between the time he was elected and the time he took office, seven southern states **seceded**¹ from the union. South Carolina left first. Not long afterwards, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas joined South Carolina.

In his first address to the country, Lincoln reminded everyone of his main goal: to preserve the Union. He said that his duty was to keep the states united. Everyone knew that this would mean war. The Northern states would fight to win the southern states back. Lincoln was telling the *rebel* states that they could not simply leave the Union without any **consequences**.²

However, four southern states had not yet left the Union. These were Virginia, Arkansas, Tennessee, and North Carolina. Lincoln wanted them to stay a part of the Union. He wanted to buy time for himself and avoid any **conflict**³ for as long as possible. Once conflict began, he knew these states would probably join the Confederacy. But Lincoln did not have as much time as he had hoped.

A United States fort was located in South Carolina. The fort had not received supplies for a long time. The men there had very little left to eat. South Carolina would not even allow food to be brought to the Fort because South Carolina believed that Fort Sumter no longer belonged to the U.S. Lincoln knew he could not let this fort collapse. It was one of the last **strongholds**⁴ of Northern power in the South. He had to send a supply ship.

South Carolina saw the ship coming. The state decided to interpret the move as an act of aggression, even though the supply ship had no intention of firing. Before the ship even arrived in South Carolina, the South Carolina troops fired on Fort Sumter. South Carolina demanded that the fort surrender. Because

¹ **secede** – to leave a union or organization

² **consequence** – something that happens as a result of another action

³ **conflict** - fighting

⁴ **stronghold** – a fortress or refuge

of this event, the Civil War had begun. In the months to come, United States would confront its biggest war yet — a war over slavery, unity, and identity.

Name: _____

Date: _____

1. A **rebel** is someone who
 - a. fights for their country.
 - b. tries to find peaceful solutions.
 - c. fights against the government.
 - d. runs for government office.

2. Why didn't South Carolina allow food to be brought to Fort Sumter?
 - a. South Carolina thought it was poisoned.
 - b. Fort Sumter didn't want to accept food from President Lincoln.
 - c. South Carolina felt the fort should no longer belong to the government of the North.
 - d. They actually did allow food to be brought to Fort Sumter.

3. What is considered to be the beginning of the Civil War?
 - a. When Abraham Lincoln was elected President
 - b. When seven southern states left the union
 - c. When South Carolina fired on Fort Sumter
 - d. When President Lincoln declared war

4. Which of the following events happened first?
 - a. South Carolina fires on the Fort Sumter supply ship.
 - b. Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana and Texas seceded from the Union.
 - c. The supply ship arrives in Fort Sumter.
 - d. Lincoln was elected President.

5. The passage "Fort Sumter and the First Shots of the Civil War" is mostly about
 - a. military strategy during the Civil War
 - b. a speech Lincoln gave at Fort Sumter
 - c. how the Civil War started
 - d. slavery in South Carolina

6. Why did Lincoln decide to send a supply ship to Fort Sumter?

7. Explain why, during the Presidential election of 1860, none of the southern states voted for President Lincoln.

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word or phrase that best completes the sentence.

Though President Lincoln wanted to avoid war, _____ he decided to fight.

- a. sometimes
- b. never
- c. likely
- d. ultimately

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

After his election, President Lincoln wanted to preserve the Union so that there wouldn't be war.

Who? President Lincoln

(wanted to do) What? _____

Why? _____

When? _____

10. **Vocabulary Word:** consequences: things that happen as the result of another action.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: _____
