

CIVIL WAR

ON THE WESTERN BORDER

LESSON PLAN

CIVILWARONTHEWESTERNBORDER.ORG



OVERVIEW

GRADE LEVEL:

8-12

SUBJECT:

U.S. History

Missouri History

Kansas History

ESTIMATED CLASS TIME:

130-180 minutes

Additional time for students to construct written responses

WEBSITE RESOURCES:

[Border War Timeline](#)

[Bleeding Kansas: From the Kansas-Nebraska Act to Harper's Ferry](#)

[Squatter Sovereign Newspaper](#)

[Picturing the War](#)

Territorial Newspapers and Bleeding Kansas

Created by [Michael Wells](#), Kansas City Public Library

Introduction

Thousands flooded into the Kansas Territory from the time it opened to settlement in 1854 until it was officially made the 34th state to enter the Union in 1861. During that time scores of territorial newspapers were being published to keep these people informed of the rapidly changing and often volatile events of the mid-1800s. No single issue divided these people more than that of the expansion of slavery into the territories of Kansas and Nebraska. Newspaper owners of the day began to define their publications as either pro- or antislavery and viciously attacked their opponents using the printed word. The *Squatter Sovereign* is a noteworthy example. It was initially published as a proslavery newspaper in 1855 but adopted an antislavery stance when it was sold to new owners in 1857.



Attchison, Kansas. *Squatter Sovereign*, 1855-1858.

Objectives

This lesson plan introduces students to the issues and ideas that divided Americans along sectional lines prior to the outbreak of the Civil War. Students will investigate a variety of events that affected people living in the Missouri-Kansas border region, and they will compile their own yearly territorial newspaper editions. Students will learn how bias affected primary sources and how historians must take this into account when attempting to make sense of the past. Finally, students will make decisions concerning the significance of the events they investigate and support their position with a written response.

Requirements

It is advised that the instructor become familiar with the years 1854-1860 of the Border War Timeline (<http://www.civilwaronthewesternborder.org/timeline>) and the essays that are listed under Website Resources.

Students will require web accessible computers or tablets for this instructional plan. A printer can be helpful, but not necessary.

Students will require several sheets of 11" x 17" construction paper or a suitable substitute to produce seven newspaper editions per group of 3-4 students. Students will additionally require access to scissors and glue.

Instructional Plan

1. Assign students to read the essay "Bleeding Kansas: From the Kansas-Nebraska Act to Harper's Ferry."
(<http://www.civilwaronthewesternborder.org/essay/bleeding-kansas-kansas-nebraska-act-harpers-ferry>)
2. Introduce students to the *Squatter Sovereign* newspaper. Introduce the topic of bias, and discuss with students how it can affect primary sources.
3. Divide students into small groups consisting of 3-4 members per group. Students will assume the roles of reporters for the *Squatter Sovereign* newspaper.
4. Assign or allow each group to elect one individual to serve as editor for the group.
5. Each group will produce one newspaper for the years 1854-1860. Assign each group to cover six to eight events from each year that can be located and researched using the *Border War Timeline*.
(<http://www.civilwaronthewesternborder.org/timeline>) The editor for the group will be responsible for assigning items to cover to each member of the team, including him or herself. This step may be modified to conserve time by assigning each group an individual year to cover.
6. Display the *Border War Timeline* before the class to familiarize students with its navigation. Demonstrate how to link to encyclopedia entries from the timeline page. Inform students that these entries will provide much of the information required to complete their assigned articles.
7. Provide editors with time to assign items to cover amongst the reporters in their groups.
8. Provide students time to research their assigned topics and to write brief articles to describe the events. Each article should be approximately 50-100 words in length and address the 5 Ws (who, what, where, when, and why). Encourage students to explore content available on the *Civil War on the Western Border* website if additional information is required for their articles. Remind students that the *Squatter Sovereign* newspaper was a proslavery publication through 1856 and became an abolitionist newspaper in early 1857. Articles written for 1854-1856 editions should be written to support the expansion of slavery into the territories. Articles written for 1857-1860 editions should oppose slavery's expansion.
9. Instruct those students who finish writing their articles with time remaining to seek images available upon the *Civil War on the Western Boarder* website to

complement their text. Many images can be found using the *Picturing the War* section of the site. (<http://www.civilwaronthewesternborder.org/gallery>)

10. Each editor is responsible for compiling articles from his or her group members and deciding upon the final layout for each year's edition. Editors will work with their reporters to paste handwritten or printed articles and any gathered images onto sheets of 11" X 17" construction paper. As an alternative, students may utilize Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, or another suitable software program to create electronic editions of their newspapers.
11. Allow each group time to discuss their completed newspaper editions and come to a consensus regarding one story from each year that they view as the most pivotal or important to the history of the Bleeding Kansas Era.
12. Display newspaper editions in your classroom and allow groups to present their creations the class. The editor may speak for the group, or groups may elect speakers as they see fit. Speakers should briefly summarize the article from each year that was previously selected as being the most important and explain each event's significance.
13. Assign students to individually respond to the following essay question:
How did the events that occurred in the Missouri-Kansas border region from 1854-1860 contribute to the outbreak of the Civil War?

Standards Statement

This lesson plan has been designed in keeping with the National Council for the Social Studies' framework for social studies content standards, with focus placed upon the goals of encouraging students to better understand important concepts, such as change over time, historical context, continuity, and bias, so that they may become more effective historical researchers and argumentative writers.

Suggested Assessment Rubricsⁱ

Student Produced Newspaper Editions Assessment Rubric				
Category	4	3	2	1
Newspaper Layout	All articles have headlines that capture the reader's attention and accurately describe the content. The layout is clear and neat.	All articles have headlines that accurately describe the content. The layout is clear.	Most articles have headlines that accurately describe the content. The layout is somewhat clear.	Headlines are missing or many articles do not have adequate headlines. The layout is confusing.
Details added to articles	The details in the articles are clear, effective, and vivid 80-100% of the time.	The details in the articles are clear and pertinent 90-100% of the time.	The details in the articles are clear and pertinent 75-89% of the time.	The details in more than 25% of the articles are neither clear nor pertinent.
Who, What, When, Where, and Why	All articles adequately address the 5 Ws.	90-99% of the articles adequately address the 5 Ws	75-89% of the articles adequately address the 5 Ws.	Less than 75% of the articles adequately address the 5 Ws.

Working as a Group	Each person in the group has contributed the assigned number of articles without prompting from their instructor or editor.	Each person in the group has contributed the assigned number of articles with a few reminders from their instructor or editor.	Each person in the group has contributed the assigned number of articles with some minimal assistance from peers.	One or more students in the group required quite a lot of assistance from peers before contributing the assigned number of articles.
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Individual Written Response Assessment Rubric				
Category	4	3	2	1
Sentence Length	Every paragraph has sentences that vary in length.	Almost all paragraphs have sentences that vary in length.	Some sentences vary in length.	Sentences rarely vary in length.
Flow and Rhythm	All sentences sound natural when read aloud. Each sentence is clear and has an obvious emphasis.	Almost all sentences sound natural when read aloud, but 1 or 2 are difficult to understand.	Most sentences sound natural when read aloud, but several are difficult to understand.	The sentences are difficult to read aloud because they are difficult to understand.
Introduction	The introduction is inviting, states the main topic, and previews the structure of the paper.	The introduction clearly states the main topic and previews the structure of the paper but is not inviting to the reader.	The introduction states the main topic, but does not adequately preview the structure of the paper nor is it inviting to the reader.	There is no clear introduction of the main topic or structure of the paper.
Accuracy of Information	All supportive facts are reported accurately.	Almost all supportive facts are reported accurately.	Most supportive facts are reported accurately.	No facts are reported or most are inaccurately reported.
Conclusion	The conclusion is strong and readers can understand the writer's intent.	The conclusion is recognizable and readers can understand most of the writer's intent.	The conclusion is recognizable, but readers have difficulty understanding the writer's intent.	There is no clear conclusion or intent.

ⁱ Assessment rubrics created using *Rubistar*. <http://rubistar.4teachers.org/>