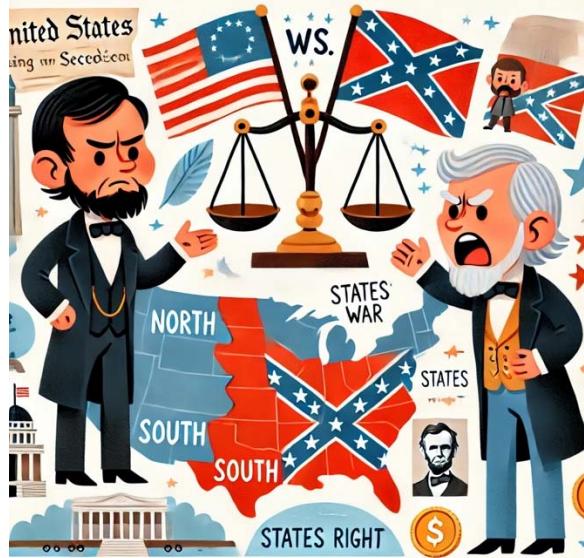


Name _____



A Nation Divided

In 1860, Abraham Lincoln was elected the 16th president of the United States, but not everyone was happy about it. His election caused a crisis in the country, leading to the secession (breaking away) of several Southern states and, eventually, the Civil War.

Why Did the South Fear Lincoln?

Before the election, the United States was already divided over slavery. The North had fewer enslaved people and more factories, while the South depended on plantation farming and wanted to keep slavery. Many

Southerners worried that Lincoln would try to end slavery, which they believed was necessary for their economy.

Even though Lincoln said he would not immediately end slavery, he strongly opposed it spreading to new states. This upset Southern leaders, who feared they would lose their way of life.

The 1860 Election: A Divided Vote

The election of 1860 showed just how divided the country had become. Lincoln was the candidate of the new Republican Party, which wanted to stop the spread of slavery. He ran against three other candidates: Stephen Douglas, John Breckinridge, and John Bell.

The North mostly voted for Lincoln. The South mostly voted for Breckinridge, who supported slavery. Lincoln won the election, but he did not win a single Southern state! Since Lincoln won without any Southern votes, Southern leaders felt they had no voice in the government anymore.

Southern States Secede

Just weeks after Lincoln was elected, South Carolina became the first state to secede from the United States. Other states soon followed, forming the Confederate States of America. They chose their own president, Jefferson Davis, and said they would no longer follow Lincoln's government.

Lincoln believed that the Union (United States) must stay together. He wanted to find a peaceful solution, but the South was ready to fight for their independence. In April 1861, Southern troops fired on Fort Sumter, a U.S. military base in South Carolina. This started the Civil War, a deadly conflict that lasted four years.

Lincoln's election didn't start the war right away, but it was the final breaking point for the South. The fight over slavery, states' rights, and the future of the country led to the most painful war in American history.