

Michael Gross -

Title of Lesson Plan:

A Tale of Two Alexander Stephens and the Birth of the “Lost Cause”

Lesson Overview:

Students will look and analyze two primary documents written by the Vice President of the Confederacy: Alexander Stephens. They will examine what Stephens said was the cause of the Civil War prior to the war and shortly after. They will note how Stephens changes his mind and how the collective memory of the “Lost Cause” originated.

Lesson Objectives:

- 1. Students will get a better grasp of the cause of the Civil War.**
- 2. Students will learn about the collective memory of the “Lost Cause”.**
- 3. Students will learn how the Civil War is viewed today.**

Number of Class Periods:

1

Grade Level:

8

Standards:

(Texas) 8.7. Events Leading to Civil War

B)

Compare political, economic, and social effects on slaves and free blacks

C)

**Analyze the impact of slavery on
different sections of the United States**

Historical Context:

The causes of the Civil War, the immediate aftermath of the war and how we view it today.

Materials:

Students will have access to excerpts of two documents of Alexander Stephens. One is his famous “corner stone” speech in which he makes the point that slavery was the cause of the war and that African Americans are not the equal of white Americans. This was written shortly before the war started. The other document will be excerpts from his book, *A Constitutional View of the Late War Between the States*. In this book, written after the Civil War, he steps away from claiming that slavery was a cause of the war and puts more emphasis on state rights and the worthiness of the Confederate cause.

Procedures:

Students will be placed in small groups. They will look at the two documents described above. I will read (model) the excerpts to the groups. Then I will ask a student to reread them. All the other students will follow along. Key words and difficult vocabulary will be defined. They will note when each document was written in relationship to the Civil War. Each group of students will be given questions to answer related to the documents. Discussion will follow.

Assessment and Summary:

Students will be given an essay as an assessment. The essay question will be: Why do you think Vice President Stephens changed his mind about the cause of the Civil War and how does he latter view establish the collective memory of the “Lost Cause” and our understanding of the Civil war today?