

John W. Ellis

Henry T. Clark

Zebulon B. Vance

William W. Holden

## Lesson Plan: North Carolina's Wartime Governors

In this lesson for grade 8, students will learn about the four men who served as governor of North Carolina during the Civil War. Students will work in groups to research one of North Carolina's wartime governors and present their findings to the class in a format of their choosing.

### Competency Goals

This lesson can be used in partial fulfillment of the following:

NCSCOS Social Studies grade 8: 4.01 4.02; 4.04.

### Objectives

Students will:

- synthesize a variety of primary and secondary source material to research the life, career, and possible motivations of their assigned governor.
- produce and present their findings to the class in various formats (skit, web-based, multi-media, audio, or video).

### Teacher Planning

Provide the following materials either through web access to *The North Carolina Civil War Experience* website or through downloaded handouts.

**Site Narrative** – *The North Carolina State Capitol in the Civil War*  
*At a Glance: North Carolina's Wartime Governors*

### **Materials Needed -**

Computer(s) with internet access

*Dictionary of N.C. Biography*, by William Powell

Primary source materials available on web resources such as:

UNC's *Documenting the American South*

(<http://docsouth.unc.edu>)

ECU's *Eastern North Carolina Digital Library*

(<http://digital.lib.ecu.edu/historyfiction>)

The State Library of North Carolina Digital Repository

(<http://digitalstatelibnc.cdmhost.com/cdm4/index.php>).

Other materials will vary depending on presentation format

### **Time Requirement**

Research can be conducted outside class as homework or in class for a multi-day lesson. Teachers should allow one full class period for student presentations of their projects.

### **Teacher Input**

- A. Have the students read the site narrative and *At a Glance: North Carolina's Wartime Governors* information as homework prior to the lesson.
- B. Divide the class into four groups with each assigned one of the four governors, or divide the class into eight smaller groups with two groups each assigned to one of the four governors. If multiple groups are assigned to the same subject, teachers should encourage groups to choose different media methods. This should also result in multiple viewpoints of each governor.
- C. Explain to the students that they will be working in teams to explore North Carolina's four Civil War governors: John Ellis, Henry Toole Clark, Zebulon Baird Vance, and William Woods Holden. They will learn about the contributions each governor made and how their actions shaped the state between 1861 and 1865. Based on primary and secondary sources, groups will suggest possible motivations for the governors' actions and weigh objective and subjective information about each man.

## Classroom Activities

While researching their assigned governor, groups should use research questions to guide their study. The teacher may ask groups to come up with these on their own, or assign questions that must be answered. Some appropriate questions might include:

- a. What region of the state is he from and how might this have affected his governing priorities or principles during the Civil War?
- b. Is this governor remembered for anything in particular?
- c. Is there any record of this governor's beliefs on slavery, states' rights, or secession in his own words?
- d. What struggles did this governor have while in office?
- e. What successes did he enjoy?
- f. Are there any records of what his contemporaries thought about him?
- g. Is it easier to find subjective information or objective information on this person?

After each group has had sufficient time to conduct its research (this can take place during class time or as homework), students will discuss and choose the five most important things they learned about their governor. Groups will then determine how they want to present their governor and those five facts to the class. Some ideas include:

- a. Students interview their governor in a talk show format. Groups will need to choose someone to play the governor and interviewer. The rest of the group will develop the interview questions and make sure that the "governor" is prepared to answer a variety of questions. Alternative: if this lesson needs to be shortened, the teacher may elect to act as the "talk show host," while each group sends a representative "governor" to participate in the panel discussion.
- b. Students may choose to design a web page based on how this person would want to be represented on the internet. For example, if students made a Facebook page for Governor Ellis, what sort of information would he display on his profile? Who would his friends be? What would he be a fan of? What groups would he belong to?

- c. Make up a song and perform it in front of the class, or make a music video to go along with it.
- d. Perform a skit.
- e. Make a comic book.

## Closure

- A. Students share their research projects with the entire class.
- B. Compare and contrast the governorship of each of these men.

## Assessment

Students will demonstrate their knowledge of their governor through their group work and presentation (the teacher should be able to easily identify the five facts they aimed to highlight). A quiz may be given to the class to test their retention of the information they found on their governor and how well they paid attention to their classmates' presentations on the other governors.

## Lesson Plan Glossary

**objective information** – information that deals with facts or conditions as perceived without distortion by personal feelings, prejudices, or interpretations

**primary source** – a source of information that is direct or firsthand knowledge; can be a document or object that was written or created at the time that is being studied.

**secondary source** – a source of information that relates or discusses information originally presented elsewhere; a secondary source studies or interprets primary sources and is not of the immediate time or event being studied.

**subjective information** – information that is modified or affected by personal views, experience, or background

**Fire-Eater** - a person who displays very militant or aggressive partisanship; in this time period, it refers to a group of extremist pro-slavery politicians who urged secession.

**writ of habeas corpus** – a legal concept that requires authorities to justify why a prisoner is being held; a protection against illegal imprisonment

## At a Glance: North Carolina's Wartime Governors

### John W. Ellis (1859-1861)



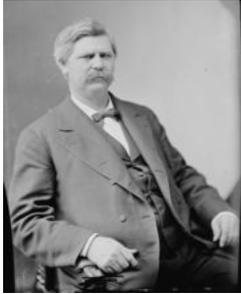
- Born in eastern Rowan County (now part of Davidson County)
- From a planter family
- Advocated for the rights of slaveholders
- Democrat
- Lawyer
- Strong proponent of internal improvements, especially for transportation through the development of the N.C. Railroad
- During the 1850s, he feared the influence of abolitionists, who he viewed as undermining the U.S. Constitution
- Believed that secession was unnecessary to preserve institution of slavery
- Became a secessionist when Lincoln called for troops to put down the rebellion at Fort Sumter. Famously declared, "You can get no troops from North Carolina."
- Governor when North Carolina seceded from the Union on May 20, 1861
- Died in office on July 7, 1861

### Henry Toole Clark (1861-62)



- From a prominent Edgecombe County planter family
- Owned thousands of acres of land and scores of slaves
- Lawyer
- Whig, then Democrat
- Supported the Mexican War and "southern rights," and he considered slaves to be private property protected by the U. S. Constitution. Also supported the expansion of slavery into the territories
- Believed secession was a legal right held by the states, but he was never a **Fire-Eater**.
- Believed Lincoln's election an inadequate excuse for leaving the Union and supported secession only after the firing on Fort Sumter
- As war governor, was a Confederate nationalist and rigidly enforced such unpopular Confederate policies as conscription
- Resisted "radical" Congressional Reconstruction and as a state senator voted against ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment to the U. S. Constitution.

### Zebulon Vance (1829-1875)



- Born in Buncombe County. His family is known to have owned a relatively large number of slaves
- Lawyer
- Whig, then Democrat
- Did not want North Carolina to secede from the Union but supported the call for a state convention to vote on the matter
- As colonel of the 26<sup>th</sup> North Carolina Regiment, engaged in battle in New Bern on March 1862, and conducted an orderly retreat. Also led the 26<sup>th</sup> at Richmond.
- As governor, was a major proponent of states' rights which often put him at odds with the Confederate government of Jefferson Davis.

### William W. Holden (1818-1896)



- Born in Durham, began an apprenticeship at age 10 at the *Hillsborough Recorder* newspaper
- Lawyer
- Whig, then Democrat, then Republican
- In 1843, became owner and editor of the *North Carolina Standard* newspaper, and changed party affiliation from the Whig to the Democratic party
- Throughout the 1840s and 1850s, advocated Southern rights to expand slavery and at times championed the right of secession
- By 1860, had shifted his position to support the Union
- As war went on, became an outspoken critic of the Confederate government, and also a leader of the North Carolina peace movement.
- In 1864, was the unsuccessful "peace candidate" against incumbent Governor Vance
- Appointed as the state's first provisional and first Republican governor by Pres. Andrew Johnson in 1865
- Elected by voters in 1868
- Impeached in 1870 for trying to suppress Klan activity in Alamance County (charged with illegally suspending writ of habeas corpus)
- Removed from office in 1871.