



Supplemental Lesson Plan: Examining Letters of Zebulon B. Vance, North Carolina's Civil War Governor

In this lesson for Grade 8, students will read letters written by Governor Vance to gain knowledge about the issues he faced as North Carolina's governor during much of the war. Students will learn to analyze and interpret primary sources and understand that they provide firsthand accounts of our past. Students will gain a personal understanding of the hardships of war faced by the people of North Carolina as well as the difficult job that the governor had in conducting business and orchestrating the state government's response to those hardships.

Goals

NCSCOS Social Studies grade 8: 4.02; 4.03; 4.04
NCSCOS English/Language Arts grade 8: 1.02a, 1.04a
2.01a-h; 2.02a-d, 3.01a-d, f-h; 4.01a-d

Objectives

After classroom discussion, historical background reading, and examination of the 1863 letters of Gov. Zebulon B. Vance, students should be able to:

- summarize some of the problems faced by North Carolina in 1863.
- use critical thinking skills to analyze the purpose and impact of Vance's letters.

Teacher Planning

Provide the following materials either through web access to the Educational Unit or through handouts downloaded via the web site.

Site Narratives – *Zebulon Baird Vance: Childhood and Early Political Career*
Zebulon Baird Vance: Military Career
Zebulon Baird Vance: North Carolina's Civil War Governor

North Carolina Civil War Experience chapters: The Road to Secession and Wartime North Carolina

Time Requirement

If reading is done as pre-lesson homework, this lesson should last 1-2 class periods.

Teacher Input

- A. Have students read the site narratives and North Carolina Civil War Experience chapters as homework prior to class discussion. These will give vital background information on the hardships of life during the Civil War and the efforts of Governor Vance to address them. Summarize the historical background of Governor Vance.
- B. Provide copies of or access to the Vance letters in this lesson. Explain to students that these letters to Gen. D. H. Hill were written by Governor Vance and copied into a letter book by his secretary. The letter book is preserved in the State Archives in Raleigh. The letter to the "Cotton Manufacturers of North Carolina" is preserved as part of the Samuel A'Court Ashe Papers in the State Archives.

Classroom Activities - Guided Practice

- A. Have students summarize the hardships faced by North Carolinians described in the chapter of *The North Carolina Civil War Experience* on **Wartime North Carolina**. Ask students to list some of the efforts of Governor Vance to address those hardships.

- B. Distribute copies of the three letters provided in this lesson. If time permits, you may have students attempt to transcribe one of the two letters that Vance wrote to Hill. The letter to the cotton manufacturers is not of high quality and would probably be too hard to transcribe. This exercise will demonstrate the difficulty of transcribing nineteenth-century script. Transcriptions of all letters are provided for the remainder of the lesson.
- C. After reading the transcripts of the letters, lead students in a class discussion (Socratic Seminar, if applicable) to outline the problems or issues that Vance is addressing. Answers could include:
- the problem of desertion and how to remedy it
 - need for restoration of law and order
 - the confiscation of property by Confederate troops
 - the need to stop the press from inciting panic
 - the need for wool to produce cloth for the army
- D. Ask students to answer the following questions:
1. In the letter to General Hill dated April 22, 1863:
 - a. What is the main issue being addressed?
 - b. What is Vance's tone in this letter?
 - c. What exactly did Lieutenant Pugh do?
 - d. What does Vance want to do with Lieutenant Pugh?
 - e. What does Vance want to do with the horses?
 2. In the letter to General Hill dated April 23, 1863:
 - a. What is the main issue being addressed?
 - b. Why does Vance recommend that the militia not be called out at this time?
 - c. What does Vance state in regards to his appeal to the press?
 - d. How does the tone of this letter differ from the previous letter?
 3. In the letter to the cotton manufacturers dated May 16, 1863:
 - a. What is the main issue being addressed?
 - b. What will happen if this issue isn't resolved?
 - c. What solution does Vance propose?
 - d. What is the tone of this letter?

Classroom Activities - Independent Practice

After reading the site narratives and the letters, students should have some understanding of the personality of Zebulon Vance. He could be very volatile

and passionate about an issue. He could also be very level-headed and matter-of-fact about issues. He was often very persuasive and appealed directly to the citizenry for their support.

- A. Have the students write a “State of the State” speech that Vance might have given in 1863, using the knowledge gained from the background reading and the letters.
- B. Have them discuss the purpose (objective) of their speech (reporting, persuading, building support) and the intended audience for the speech (the General Assembly, the public, the military). Their speech may be an appeal for some action, a rally for support, or simply a statement of the facts about some issue.

Closure

- A. After students have completed their speeches, ask for two or three volunteers to read their speeches before the class. Ask the class to critique the speech (not the delivery) as to whether it met its objective.
- B. Bring the students together as a class to review the issues facing North Carolina in 1863.

Assessment

Have students write an essay on how issues we face today are similar or different to those faced by North Carolinians during the Civil War. How would we respond if we found ourselves in a Civil War facing the same issues that Vance writes about? What kind of sacrifices would we be willing to make under these circumstances today?