

# Lesson Plan

## “Forming a Constitution in 1855 Kansas: Mock Election”

### Fourth/ Fifth Grade

#### **Overview**

The focus of this lesson is for students to obtain a thorough understanding of the events that led to and followed the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the historical context of answering the “Kansas Question” regarding the decision of allowing or prohibiting slavery in Kansas. Students will gain an understanding of the concept of popular sovereignty, or self-rule, in which people of a territory would decide whether Kansas, once a state, would become a free or slave holding state. This lesson plan will allow students to read and review primary source documents and work together to obtain a greater understanding of Kansas history through participating in a “mock election” that will highlight historical issues in Kansas during its territorial period.

#### **Standards** (Kansas Standards for History, Government, Economics, and Geography)

##### **Civics / Government Standard:**

The student uses a working knowledge and understanding of governmental systems of Kansas and the United States and other nations with an emphasis on the United States Constitution, the necessity for the rule of law, the civic values of the American people, and the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of becoming active participants in our representative democracy.

Benchmark 3, Indicator 3: Describes how the United States Constitution supports the principle of majority rule, but also protects the rights of the minority.

##### **History Standard:**

The student uses a working knowledge and understanding of significant individuals, groups, ideas, events, eras, and developments in the history of Kansas, the United States, and the world, utilizing essential analytical and research skills.

Benchmark 4, Indicator 1-6: Uses historical timelines to trace the cause and effect relationships between events in different places during the same time period, examines multiple primary sources to understand point of view of a historical figure, uses information including primary sources to debate a problem or a historical issue, observe and draw conclusions, uses research skills to interpret a historical person or event in history and notes on the source.

## **Objectives:**

### **Knowledge**

- Students will *distinguish* between the two main factions regarding slavery in Kansas and their influences in Kansas territorial history.
- Students will also be able to *define* the overall function of popular sovereignty in Kansas within a context of its territorial history.

### **Skills**

- Through the use of primary documents, students will be able to *interpret* and *explain* the primary concerns surrounding the Kansas-Nebraska Act.

## **Essential Questions:**

- How did the events that followed the Kansas-Nebraska Act shape the development of Kansas?
- How did popular sovereignty affect the outcome of slavery in Kansas?
- What issues currently divide the nation?
- Who has the right to decide the outcome of controversial issues today?

## **Applicable Teaching Strategies:**

In order to present an effective lesson plan in the classroom, it is essential to note that each student involved has a distinct way of learning and processing information that is unique to them. To connect efficiently with the class, applying Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences will aid in addressing each student's individual learning style. The Intelligences include: verbal linguistic, logical mathematical, visual-spatial, body kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal and intrapersonal. The lesson plan that is included appeals to a majority of these intelligences in one form or another and allows students to exercise their learning styles through the activities. This lesson plan utilizes Gardner's Multiple Intelligences through:

- 1) Linguistics: the students must interact and discuss their observations with each other and respond to questions throughout the duration of the lesson
- 2) Logical/ Mathematical: students must analyze data collected from the mock election
- 3) Kinesthetic: students must actively engage in the activity to make conclusions concerning their interactions by physically moving around the room to convey location and environment
- 4) Visual/Spatial: students must identify concepts of popular sovereignty and main arguments found in primary documents, students will also be able to visually locate on a map the location of historical events
- 5) Interpersonal: the activities included in the lesson plan require students to work cohesively in small groups and share opinions and ideas
- 6) Intrapersonal: questions prompted throughout the lesson encourage students to think and reflect on personal experiences and times when they have encountered related issues within their environment

Through the acknowledgment of Gardner's Intelligences, instructors can ensure that their students' needs are met in the classroom and allow them to have a positive and effective learning experience. The students will be "learning by doing" which will help overall with their knowledge retention and allow them to obtain a greater understanding of the message the instructor hopes to convey.

- Danlons and a ballot box for the mock election
- Primary Documents: excerpts from speeches of Abraham Lincoln (opposing popular sovereignty) and Stephen Douglas (promoting popular sovereignty)
- Pencils and paper for note taking during discussion and writing arguments for a groups specific cause

## **Lesson Plan:**

- 1) Instructor introduces the topic of the lesson by asking students for a definition of the word, “freedom”.
- 2) Have the word “freedom” written on a poster-board. After discussing the students’ interpretation of the definition, hand out
- 3) Explain to students the following hypothetical: “you are attending a school in northern United States and you hear that in Kansas, through popular sovereignty, you can decide through a democratic process of voting, whether your school wants to or does not want to wear uniforms to school”.
- 4) Divide students into two equal groups and have one group represent “Douglas School” in Missouri (supports school uniforms) and the other group represent “Lincoln School” in the new territory of Kansas (does not support school uniforms).
- 5) Provide students with paper and pencils, instruct students from the two “schools” to work together within their designated groups to make arguments concerning why uniforms should or should not be worn in school. Allow adequate time for students to fully discuss various sides of their argument.
- 6) After students have made their points within their group, have the groups participate in a “debate” and argue their points (respectfully taking turns) on why they should or should not wear uniforms in school.
- 7) Once the students have made their arguments to the groups, instruct the students that it is now time to vote in their own territory.
- 8) Have each student from their designated group place a ballot into a ballot box. Be sure to emphasize that the students from the Kansas “Lincoln School” are voting against the use of school uniforms and vice versa for the “Douglas School.”
- 9) As the students began to place their vote, explain to students the historical context of events in the 1855 election in Kansas territory.
- 10) Hypothetically, “The election was influenced by Missourians from the “Douglas School” illegally crossing over the border to vote. Election fraud put the results in dispute resulting in forming two separate schools in Kansas, one that supported uniforms and one that did not.”
- 11) Have group of students from the “Douglas School” in “Missouri” cross the ‘boundary’ and place votes into the “Lincoln School’s” ballot box for their specific cause.
- 12) Have a designated student count the ballots from “Lincoln School”(now more will be in favor of uniforms)
- 13) Explain the events of voter fraud and the First Kansas Territorial Legislature which
- 14) Have students from both sides explain observations of the activity and the implications of popular sovereignty and reflect on how the “mock election” resembles events of the First Kansas Territorial Election.
- 15) Instructor explains, “The First Kansas Territorial Legislature, meeting in 1855, was called the "Bogus Legislature" by its free-state opponents. Its thirty-eight members were chosen for office in an election in which 5,000 Missouri "voters," led by Senator David Atchison and his followers, took over the polls in Kansas Territory. The Bogus Legislature quickly adjourned from its appointed meeting place on the prairie, four days ride to the west, to the more convenient Shawnee Manual Labor School, near the Missouri line. Its pro-slavery members adopted the statutes of Missouri as the law of Kansas; they enacted the infamous "Black Law" with criminal sanctions for helping fugitive slaves, or even advocating that