

Civil War Tug of War: Seventh Grade Lesson Plan

Objective: The student will demonstrate their understanding of the advantages and challenges faced by the North and South by participating in a Civil War “Tug-of-War” and comparing the experience to historical reality.

TEKS: 113.19(b)(7)(A); 113.19(b)(21)(A)

Materials: rope, duct tape, blue and gray fabric strips, bandana, Civil War Tug of War graphic organizer for notes.

Overview of Activity: The students will participate in a “tug of war” game demonstrating the advantages and challenges the North and South experienced during the Civil War. After the game, students will evaluate their reactions to the activity and debrief the meaning of the game on graphically organized notes.

Preview: Students will begin the activity by completing four questions relating to a Sam Houston quote.

Activity:

1. Students will be taken outside and divided into two equal teams, blue and gray, and given matching strips of fabric to wear on their arms. Students will be asked prediction questions regarding which team might win.
2. Before the game begins, two students will be “planted” on the gray side and given instructions to drop the rope and run to the blue side once the teacher signals them. They will represent runaway slaves. Two other students will drop the rope and not participate. They represent the slave population of the South.
3. A false stop will be called immediately after the students begin pulling. Three students will be pulled from the gray side and placed at some distance from the game. They will have to run to their side to join the team. They represent the Texans coming to the east to fight. Students again will be asked prediction questions regarding which team might win.

4. A second false stop will be called. A bandana will be tied to the center of the rope, with different instructions given for both sides to win. A line of duct tape will be placed on the ground under the bandana. The gray team only has to prevent the bandana from crossing the line into the blue team's territory; the blue team must pull the bandana past that line and cross an additional tape line placed at some distance in the blue team's territory. This will represent the different motivations for the war. More prediction questions will be asked.
5. A third false stop will be called. The teacher will remove 4 students from the gray side and place them on the blue side: representing the 4 distinct advantages the North had over the South (population, money, railroads, and industry). The teacher will ask prediction questions again.
6. A final false stop will be called. Two students from the blue team will be pulled to the gray team. This will represent the advantages of the South (military leadership and knowledge of the land).
7. The game will commence, ideally with the blue side winning.
8. Students will return to the classroom for a discussion comparing the tug of war game to the advantages and challenges faced by the North and South prior to the Civil War. Students will take notes on a graphically organized handout that represents elements of the tug-of-war.

Processing:

1. Students will create two bar graph, each representing the advantages held by either the North or South. These bar graphs then will be color coded by the student to represent the importance of each advantage.
2. Students will write a story about the tug of war from the perspective of the bandana. Students should include all actions of the game and what each action represents.
3. Modified assignment: Students will review their predictions given during the tug-of-war activity and compare those to the in-class discussion. A T-chart will be created for comparison purposes.