

Maryland: A Middle Ground?

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Grade Level: Middle

Duration of Lab: Two to three ninety-minute class periods (depending on the number of documents used and if students are assigned homework)

Overview:

Located at 39⁰ N, 76⁰ W, Maryland is a Border State. Positioned south of the Mason-Dixon Line, Maryland is the northernmost state in the South and the southernmost state in the North. As such, “The Old Line State” has an identity crisis. It is caught between two regions: one urban, industrial, and based on free labor and the other rural, agrarian, and dependent on enslaved labor. In the early to mid 1800s Maryland’s geographic and topographic diversity resulted in a state whose regions were very different economically, socially, and politically. Consequently, depending on the selected criteria, Maryland can be labeled both North and South. Yet, when viewed as a complete entity, Maryland is best described as a “middle ground.”

By examining maps, lithographs, photographs, letters, paintings and other types of sources, students will apply the concept of regions by placing Maryland in the North, the South, or the “middle ground” and providing justification for their choice. By doing this the students will demonstrate the ability to evaluate factors that contributed to the growing sectionalism in the early to mid 19th century that ultimately lead to the Civil War.

History Standards

National History Standards

Content Standard: Era 4: Expansion and Reform (1801-1861)

Standard 2: How the industrial revolution, increasing immigration, the rapid expansion of slavery, and the westward movement changed the lives of Americans and led toward regional tensions.

Historical Thinking Standards:

Standard 2: Historical Comprehension

- A. Identify the author or source of the historical document or narrative and assess its credibility.
- B. Reconstruct the literal meaning of a historical passage.
- G. Draw upon data in historical maps.
- H. Utilize visual, mathematical, and quantitative data.

Standard 3: Historical Analysis and Interpretation

- C. Consider multiple perspectives.

Maryland Curriculum Standards

Standard 1.0: Political Science

- A. The Foundations and Functions of Government
 - 2. Analyze the impact of historical documents and practices that became the foundations of the American political system during the early nation al period.

- g. Evaluate the significance of the Civil War Amendments and how they protected individual rights.

Standard 2.0: Peoples of the Nation and World

C. Conflict and Compromise

1. Analyze the factors that affected relationships in the United States prior to 1877.
- b. Describe how cultural, economic, and political difference contributed to sectionalism.

Standard 3.0: Geography

B. Geographic Characteristics of Places and Regions

1. Analyze how geographic characteristics influence the location and development of regions in the United States prior to 1877.

Standard 6.0: Social studies Skills and Processes

A. Read to Learn and Construct Meaning about Social Studies

2. Use strategies to prepare for reading.
3. Use strategies to monitor understanding and derive meaning from text and portions of text.
4. Use strategies to demonstrate understanding of the text.

B. Write to Learn and Communicate Social Studies Understandings

3. Use formal writing, such as multi-paragraph essays, historical investigations, editorials, and letters to persuade.

E. Organize Social Studies Information

2. Organize information from print sources.

F. Analyze Social Studies Information

1. Interpret information from primary and secondary sources.
2. Evaluate information from a variety of sources.

Purpose

Using Maryland as a case study, the purpose of this History Lab is to evaluate factors that contributed to the growing sectionalism in the early to mid 19th century that ultimately lead to the Civil War.

- Students will begin by creating a list of adjectives describing either the North or South.
- Next, the students will read a background essay to get a general sense of the context and preview the historical question, “Is Maryland more northern, more southern, or should be called a middle ground?”
- Then, each student will read and analyze a series of documents and either complete a graphic organizer or answer guided questions.
- The class will then discuss the documents and students will refine his/her definition of a region, the concept of sectionalism, and where Maryland should be placed.
- The class will review the historical question and discuss the prewriting organizer and the scoring rubric.
- The final step in this research-based investigation is to write a well constructed five-paragraph essay based on the documents.

History Lab Objectives

- Students will define and apply the term, region.
- Students will analyze primary and secondary sources to determine if Maryland is in the North, the South, or a “middle ground” and be able to justify their choice.
- Students will write a well-constructed essay arguing Maryland’s regional placement during the early to mid 19th century.

Topic Background

Is Maryland more northern, more southern, or should it be called a middle ground?

Located at 39^o N, 76^o W, Maryland is a Border State. Positioned south of the Mason-Dixon Line, Maryland is the northernmost state in the South and the southernmost state in the North. (Morse, 1856) As such, “The Old Line State” has an identity crisis. It is caught between two regions: one urban, industrial, and based on free labor and the other rural, agrarian, and dependent on enslaved labor. In the early to mid 1800s Maryland’s geographic and topographic diversity resulted in a state whose regions were very different economically, socially, and politically. Consequently, depending on the selected criteria, Maryland can be labeled both North and South. Yet, when viewed as a complete entity, Maryland is best described as a “middle ground.”

In many ways, the state had Southern characteristics. Similar to Virginia, early Maryland colonists intended to make their fortunes through the cultivation and sale of tobacco. (Brugger, 1990) On the eve of the Civil War, tobacco agriculture still dominated the economies of Southern Maryland and some parts of the Eastern Shore. Intertwined with the tobacco economy was the institution of slavery. Initially, white indentured servants had been used to cultivate the cash crop, but a convergence of economic factors ensuing in the lack of emigration from England around the 1680s led to the decline of indentured servitude and the rise of African slavery on Maryland’s tobacco plantations. In addition, many Marylanders were tied to Virginia by family, friendships, and business relationships. (Taylor, 2001) Like the South, in general, Southern Maryland and the Eastern Shore also had relatively few towns. Although tobacco was becoming less profitable by the Civil War and the number of enslaved African Americans was marginally decreasing by the commencement of the internal conflict, the plantation culture still defined Southern and Eastern Maryland. (Fields, 1985)

In the more recently settled Northern and Western regions of the state, tendencies were more Northern. Wheat, rather than tobacco, was the predominant crop, and because labor needs associated with wheat cultivation are less intensive than those connected with tobacco, the regions had far fewer slaves than Southern Maryland and the Eastern Shore (see figure 1). The populations of these regions were also much more diverse, including growing numbers of free blacks and German and Scotch-Irish immigrants. (Fields, 1985)

Figure 1
Percentage of White, Free Black, and Slave Populations by Regions in Maryland

	Percentage of Total, 1790	Percentage of Total, 1850
White		
Eastern Shore	31.2	18.6
Southern MD	26.8	12.1
Northern and Western MD	42.0	69.3
Free Black		
Eastern Shore	48.6	33.1
Southern MD	26.7	14.9
Northern and Western MD	24.7	52.0
Slave		
Eastern Shore	37.4	28.8
Southern MD	47.3	52.9
Northern and Western MD	15.3	18.3

From

Barbara Jeanne Fields' *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground*, 1985.

Source: Calculated from U.S. 7th Census, 1850, *Population* (Washington, D.C., 1853) and from U.S. 9th Census, 1870, *Population* (Washington, D.C.)

Although Northern and Western Maryland remained overwhelmingly rural, manufacturing enterprises such as gristmills, textile mills, iron and glass works, and breweries flourished, as did towns. Switching from land and labor intensive tobacco to wheat, farmers in Maryland, Pennsylvania, and surrounding areas played a vital role in Baltimore City's growth, the largest urban area in the state. As tobacco profits became unreliable, flour production became a major source of income in the Mid-Atlantic region. Upwards of 50 mills along the roads and waterways leading to Baltimore turned grain into flour by the late 1700s. The flour was exported not only up and down the eastern seaboard, but to Europe, South America, and the Caribbean. Places like the Fairview Inn, located on the Old Frederick Road, catered to farmers bringing their wheat, flour, and produce to the city. (Maryland Historical Society, c. 1827) Between 1815 and 1827 Baltimore merchants shipped more flour to South America than did any other American city. (Rockman, 2009)

One example of industrial growth in Northern Maryland lies in the development of Ellicott's Mills. In 1772, John, Andrew and Joseph Ellicott of Bucks County, Pennsylvania, chose the scenic wilderness upstream from Elk Ridge Landing to establish a flour mill. The Quaker brothers helped revolutionize farming in this area by persuading farmers like Charles Carroll to plant wheat instead of tobacco and by introducing fertilizer to revitalize the depleted soil. It was to Carroll's estate that the Ellicott brothers built the first part of a road that was later to become the National Road, America's first interstate highway. (Sharp, 2001)

The Ellicotts made significant contributions to the area and the era. They helped create Ellicott's Mills, one of the paramount milling and manufacturing towns in the east at that time. They built roads, bridges and a wharf in Baltimore, introduced the wagon brake and plaster as a fertilizer, erected iron works, a furnace, rolling mills, schools, a meeting house, shops and beautiful granite houses. (Sharp, 2001) In 1830 America's first railroad, the Baltimore and Ohio, completed its initial 13 miles of track along the Patapsco River from Baltimore to Ellicott's Mills. The railroad line also ran parallel to the Patapsco from Ellicott's Mills upstream to its headwaters, fostering industrialization and new settlements in an age of expansion to the Ohio River Valley and beyond by rail. (Dilts, 1993)

Baltimore resembled Northern cities in many respects. Between 1790 and 1840 Baltimore was the nation's third-largest city behind New York and Philadelphia. (Maryland Historical Society, 1841; Library of Congress, c.1862) In the first decades of the 1800s, people

of color accounted for more than 20 percent of the population of the city compared to roughly 10 percent of the population in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. By 1818, Baltimore had the largest black population – more than New Orleans, Charlestown, Philadelphia, or New York – in part due to the migration of freed people from the countryside where economic advances was minimal. For instance, in 1829 Governor Ridgely manumitted all of slaves at the time of his death. Even though all 339 enslaved individuals were not immediately given freedom based on the state laws to protect the young and old, many were freed. (Lancaster, 2000) It is likely that many of the newly freed went to Baltimore since most lacked the capital to purchase land. Remaining in the countryside also meant prolonging the indignities of slavery, such as annual labor contracts to white employers and encounters with roving patrollers. The city, in contrast, promised better wages, personal autonomy, the resources of a growing free African American community, while still being close to family members who may still be held in bondage in the countryside. (Rockman, 2009)

Baltimore's freed population exploded between 1790 and 1840. By 1820, African Americans were primarily free, but two of every five people of color in the city remained enslaved. By 1840 close to 18,000 free African Americans lived in the city. This is in stark contrast to the city's adjacent neighbors to the north. Areas like Baltimore County, home to the Ridgely family, had at least twice as many slaves as free people of color. John Ridgely inherited Hampton in 1829 from his father. Even though the Governor manumitted his slaves, John Ridgely hired his sister's slaves and relied on the ex-slaves who were not immediately freed to work the estate. Eventually, he bought approximately seventy-seven slaves who were in bondage until 1864. (Lancaster, 2000)

Even though most of the states in the North banned slavery by the late 1700s, Maryland does not end enslavement until 1864 with the revised state constitution. (Maryland State Archives, *1864 Maryland State Constitution*) The vote in 1864 was extremely close. The deciding factor was the votes cast by soldiers. All the counties except for two in Southern Maryland and the Eastern Shore voted against ratification. Northern Maryland was split three counties each. Baltimore City overwhelmingly voted for ratification. Those counties who moved away from slave labor and towards industry primarily were in favor of the new state constitution. (Maryland State Archives, *Vote on the 1864 Maryland State Constitution*)

Large portions of the remaining population of Baltimore were immigrants, mostly of Irish and German descent. Some came as indentured servants although this practice of servitude quickly disappeared. Between 1820 and 1826, one-tenth of European arrivals to the United States entered through Baltimore. During the early 1830s, Baltimore attracted more immigrants than Boston, Philadelphia, and New Orleans. (Rockman, 2009) Despite these Northern tendencies, however, some of Baltimore's most powerful residents were members of old, distinguished families like the Howards and viewed Maryland as a Southern state. (Brugger, 1990)

As the sectional crisis intensified in the 1850s, most Marylanders wanted to remain neutral, although some sympathized with the South. The election of 1860 illustrates this point. Southern Democrat John Breckinridge, who supported the extension of slavery into the territories, received 45.9% of the vote in Maryland. John Bell of the Constitutional Union Party, which took no position on slavery and supported peace and the Union, received 45.1% but carried all but six counties, albeit by narrow margins. Both candidates were from Border States and were viewed as moderates who wanted to restore peace. Northern candidates Abraham Lincoln (Republican) and Stephen Douglas (Northern Democrat) received just 9% of the

Maryland vote combined. The Baltimore Sun reported “as we cannot offer to the readers of *The Sun* one word of congratulation on so inauspicious a result, we are disposed to do no more than announce the fact this morning.” (Brugger, 1990)

Despite Maryland's sympathy for the South, the state never seceded. Even when Southern sentiment reached its zenith after a secessionist mob attacked Northern troops passing through the city in April 1861, Maryland did not move to secede, although it was much discussed. Division within households was common. The Davis family of Montgomery County supported the North, the South, and the position to stay neutral (see figure 2).

Figure 2
“I am glad that Maryland is still in the Union – it would be utter ruin and devastation for her to attempt to secede [sic]. The South could not protect her and she would be prey to the northern hordes.”
Source: A letter from Allan Bowie Davis to Rebecca [Davis], May 14, 1861, A.B. Davis Papers
“For your benefit I hereby announce myself, henceforth, a straight out “Southern Rights’ man . . . I remained by the Union as long as I could, but when I saw it was the intention of Lincoln & his crew, to convert into a despotism [tyranny], the fairest, & best government ever instituted by mortal man I can no longer support a man whose avowed intention is to subjugate [defeat] the South.”
Source: A letter from W. W[ilkins] Davis to [Rebecca D. Davis], May 22, 1861, A.B. Davis Papers
“To my mind we are living in the World’s Saturday night, that you and perhaps I will witness most extraordinary and unlooked for changes in the aspect of things . . . and yet many in our state helpless, unarmed, and entirely surrounded by the U States troops at the risk of having Baltimore sacked and burned (which I think she narrowly escaped) the whole country devastated, even the wealthy utterly impoverished, the poor made poorer, thousands abused and massacred in cold blood . . . we may not like the present [Lincoln] administration, nor endorse its acts, but we had better bear the ills we have than fly to others that we know not of. Let Maryland remain neutral and she may ride out safely this awful storm.”
Source: A letter from Hester Ann (Wilkins) Davis to Rebecca Davis, May 24, 1861, A.B. Davis Papers Source: <i>Maryland Voices of the Civil War</i> by Charles W. Mitchell, 2007.

The state followed the path Maryland governor Thomas H. Hicks laid when he wrote to the Honorable S. Cameron, Secretary of War, “I care nothing for the Devilish Nigger difficulty, I desire to save the union, and will cooperate with the Administration in everything tending to that important result that is proper.” (Hicks, 1861) After the riot, President Lincoln established de facto martial law in Maryland, suspending the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus and occupying the city with Federal troops. This act ended any chance that the state would actually join the Confederacy. (Library of Congress, *The Baltimore Riot, 1861*; Mitchell, 2007) This did not deter men in joining the Rebel cause. Approximately 16,000 enlisted with the Confederacy while more 46,000 Marylanders served with the Union forces. (Soderberg, 1996) Some women also participated in the conflict by nursing the ill, helped with camp life, or like Rose O’Neal Greenhow or Elizabeth Van Lew, became spies. (Special Collections Library, Duke University, 1864; Harper’s Weekly, 1861)

Not surprisingly, the split between Union supporters and Secessionists continued to manifest itself in the decades after the war when public monuments were erected to both sides

throughout the state. Presently, Maryland boasts more than 60 Civil War monuments, erected between 1865 and 1996. The monuments are divided almost equally between Confederate and Union, and three of them honor both sides in one monument. Ten of the Union monuments and six of the Confederate monuments were financed all or in part by the state, and three of the Confederate monuments were paid by the national government. Three of the four major sites in Baltimore honor Dixie. (Soderberg, 1996)

Since Maryland is located south of the Mason-Dixon Line and over half of the state relied on tobacco production and slave labor in the early to mid 19th Century, the state should be classified as southern. Given that Baltimore was one of the fastest growing urban and industrial centers in that same period and the surrounding counties supported this development with mostly free labor, the state should be categorized as northern. Yet politically, the state divided with wanting to stay neutral, while being sympathetic to both the North and South. Men and a few women volunteered on each side in the war between the states. Thus, Maryland as “The Old Line State” should embrace both its northern and southern characteristics and resolve to be just “the middle ground.”

Conducting the History Lab

Day 1

Context Setting/Anticipatory Set (whole group):

Have students think about adjectives that would describe either the North or the South. Have students pair up and share their answer with his/her partner. Elicit responses from the class and record on the board. Students will refer back to this list later in the lesson.

Framing the Historical Question (whole group):

Have students read the Student Background Essay (RS# 19) together as a class. The essay addresses the concept of regions and where Maryland should be placed: the North, the South, or the “middle ground.” Pre-teach the bold face vocabulary: region, Union, border state, urban, rural, and the concept of a middle ground.

Teacher Modeling of Resource Analysis (whole group):

Option 1: Give out the graphic organizer (RS# 20) and the document set selected by the teacher (RS#'s 01-13). The set must include the Sample Document (RS# 01) and at least one document from each topic (geographic, economic, political, and social). Read the sample document, “Talk of the Town” aloud as a class. Discuss the article and complete the chart. Although the difficulty level of this option is higher than Option 2 because the students need to fill in the main idea without questions prompting them to the answer, the chart will help the students in organizing their thoughts for the final written response.

Option 2: Give out the Resource Set Questions (RS# 21) and the document set selected by the teacher. The set must include the sample document (RS# 01) and at least one document from each topic (geographic, economic, political, and social). Read the sample document, “Talk of the Town” aloud as a class. Discuss the article and complete the questions.

Note: This activity can be completed using all or some of the documents based on time and the students reading ability. Use the following guide to select the documents.

Reading Level:

Advanced readers: Documents H, J, K, L

Proficient readers: Documents A, B, C, F, G, I

Basic readers: Documents D, E

Topic:

Geographic: Documents A, B

Economic: Documents D, E

Political: Documents H, I, J, L

Social: Documents C, F, G, K

*Some documents can be placed in more than one topic.

Student Work with Resource Analysis:

Give students time to read and analyze each document. For advanced readers with strong critical thinking skills this part of the activity can be completed independently. For on-grade and below grade readers students can be arranged in pairs or groups of three.

Day 2-3**Students Develop Interpretations:**

As a class discuss the graphic organizer/resource set questions. Allow students to edit their responses and insert additional details where needed.

Go back and review the list of adjectives for the North and South. Discuss and edit if necessary.

Create three “stations” in the room: “North,” “South,” and the “Middle Ground.” Have students stand by the station that they believe best represents Maryland. Have students discuss their choice at each station. Have each station report out to the class reasons for their choice. They should refer to the information from the documents as they speak. After a few minutes, invite the students to switch stations if they have changed their mind. If a student switched, give them an opportunity to explain their decision.

Development of the Historical Essay:

Review the historical question and the rubric for the essay. An eight point rubric has been provided.

Give out the graphic organizer so students can independently complete their prewriting.

Write the Historical Essay:

Give students time to independently write the essay.

Optional Writing Activity:

Have the student write a letter to Governor Thomas Hicks recommending that Maryland either remain loyal to the Union or secede and join the Confederacy. The response should

include their decision on where Maryland stands: as a Northern state, as a Southern state, or a middle ground. Students could assume the role of a wheat farmer, tobacco farmer, a wife of textile mill owner, a free African American working on the Baltimore docks, or an enslaved individual working the fields in Southern Maryland and write in the perspective of that person.

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