



How did a growing nation's fight over slavery lead to the Civil War—and how did the war's end renew America's founding promise?

Students run a 19th-century newspaper: they watch the Citizenship 101 episode “1800s U.S. History,” then gather the century’s facts by matching its wars, leaders, and turning points (Level 1), set the “dominoes” of the century’s biggest story in order and write the “because” links between them (Level 2), sit on the editorial board for the Lincoln decision—weighing the evidence for and against the Emancipation Proclamation and committing before the reveal (Level 3), and print the biggest front page their paper will ever run: the end of the Civil War (Level 4)—climbing from recall to creation as they rise through the ranks.

Learning Objectives:

- Identify the Louisiana Purchase, the four wars of the 1800s, Abraham Lincoln, the Emancipation Proclamation, and Susan B. Anthony, as tested on the official U.S. naturalization exam.
- Sequence the chain of events from the Louisiana Purchase through the Civil War to the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments—writing the “because” links that explain why national growth reopened the fight over slavery and why the Proclamation set the amendments in motion.
- Evaluate the arguments for and against issuing the Emancipation Proclamation mid-war—committing to a decision before the reveal, then measuring it against Lincoln’s.
- Create an original front page—headline and opening paragraph—reporting the end of the Civil War: the Union saved, slavery’s fate, and one cause that started it all.

Key Vocabulary:

- **Louisiana Purchase:** The territory bought from France in 1803 under President Thomas Jefferson—it nearly doubled the size of the United States and gave the nation greater access to the Mississippi River.
- **Secede:** To break away from the country—what many southern states attempted in order to preserve slavery.
- **States’ rights:** The southern claim that the federal government and the northern states could not tell them to abolish slavery.
- **Union:** The northern states, fighting to keep the country together—and the name for the United States as one nation.
- **Civil War:** The war between the North and the South, 1861–1865, ending in the defeat of the southern states.
- **Emancipation Proclamation:** President Lincoln’s executive order declaring all slaves in the rebellious states to be free—recalling the principles of freedom and equality championed at America’s founding.
- **13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments:** The amendments set in motion by the Proclamation: they abolished slavery throughout the country, granted citizenship to former slaves, and guaranteed that the right to vote cannot be denied because of race.



- **Susan B. Anthony:** A women's rights advocate whose ardent, passionate work helped win women the right to vote (19th Amendment).

Educational Standards: CCRA.R.1, CCRA.R.3, CCRA.R.4, CCRA.R.7, CCRA.W.2, CCRA.W.4, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.2, CCRA.SL.4, CCRA.L.4, CCRA.L.6

Academic Subject Areas: U.S. History, Civics

What You'll Need

- Video: *Citizenship 101: "1800s U.S. History"* ([Watch Here](#))
- Worksheet: *Citizenship 101: 1800s U.S. History* (Click [Here](#))
- Supplies: Paper, pencils, whiteboard or projector; optional: a U.S. map for the extension

Lesson Plan (45–55 minutes)

Warm Up: The Best Deal in History? (5–7 minutes)

- Display or read aloud: *It's 1803. France offers to sell you enough land to nearly double the size of your country—fertile farmland, access to a mighty river. Do you buy it? What could possibly go wrong?* Take a quick poll and record a few "what could go wrong" guesses on the board.
- Follow with three rapid-fire questions students jot silently: *What territory did the United States buy from France in 1803? Name the U.S. war between the North and the South. Abraham Lincoln is famous for many things—name one.*
- Reveal: all three are real questions from the U.S. naturalization test.
- Deliver the twist: "You've just inherited a newspaper, and it's the 1800s. A land deal, four wars, and the biggest story of the century are about to cross your desk—and the front page is due by the end of class."

Newsroom Orientation: Watch and Gather the Facts (10–13 minutes)

- Distribute the worksheet (one per student). Preview **Level 1 | Apprentice**: students complete the Level 1 matching activity as they watch the "1800s U.S. History" video. Every item is covered directly in the episode.
- **Editor's briefing (direct instruction, 2 minutes):** Before pressing play, frame the century. America entered the 1800s young and growing fast—and growth forced the question the founding had left unresolved: slavery. Every acre the country gained brought the question back: slave or free? Ask students to watch for the following in the episode:
 - The purchase that nearly doubled the country—and what it opened up.
 - The four wars of the century—and which one proved most pivotal for who America is as a nation.
 - The problems that led to the Civil War.
 - What Lincoln did—and what the Emancipation Proclamation set in motion.
- Watch *Citizenship 101: "1800s U.S. History"* (5 minutes, 17 seconds).
- Give students 1–2 minutes to finish the matching with a partner, then rapid-check the letters as a class—the facts must be airtight before layout begins.

Layout Desk: Set the Dominoes (8–10 minutes)

- Students move to **Level 2 | Typesetter**: six scrambled “dominoes” to number in order—Purchase, new states and the slavery fight, secession, war, Proclamation, amendments—followed by writing the two *because* links. Work in pairs so typesetters must defend their ordering.
- **Teacher guardrails for this section:**
 - **Ban “and then.”** The order is the easy part; the links are the learning. “The Purchase led to the slavery fight because every new state reopened the question” shows understanding; “and then there were new states” doesn’t.
 - **Surface the hard idea.** Growth itself caused the crisis: the same purchase that made America a continental power also multiplied the battlegrounds over slavery. The best deal in history came with the century’s biggest bill.

Editorial Board: The Lincoln Decision (8–10 minutes)

- Students advance to **Level 3 | Editorial Board**: it’s 1862, mid-war, and the president is weighing the Emancipation Proclamation. Recruit two volunteers to read the cautious and bold advisors aloud, in character. Students fill the weighing chart (reasons to issue now/reasons to wait), then circle the board’s decision and write their “because”—*before* reading the reveal box.
- **Enforce the commitment.** No reading ahead. The learning is in weighing evidence under uncertainty—the way Lincoln did—and then measuring the decision against history’s.
- **Key idea to surface:** the Proclamation didn’t end the war—soldiers fought two more years—but it recalled the principles of freedom and equality championed at America’s founding, and it was the stake in the ground that set the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments in motion. Some decisions matter because of what they *start*.

Stop the Presses: The Publisher’s Front Page (7–10 minutes)

- Students complete **Level 4 | Publisher**: the April 1865 edition—headline plus a 3–5-sentence opening paragraph covering the outcome (the Union saved), slavery’s fate, and one cause that started it all.
- Invite two or three publishers to read their front pages aloud. Reward headlines that capture the stakes—“THE UNION IS SAVED”—over headlines that merely report (“War Ends”).
- **Teacher tip: two extensions** for early finishers or a second day. (1) **Map the deal**—display a U.S. map; students shade the Louisiana Purchase and trace the Mississippi to see what Jefferson bought. (2) **Wars of the Century gallery**—four teams each design a small front page for one war (1812, Mexican-American, Civil, Spanish-American), post them in order, and tour the century as a gallery walk.

Wrap Up (3–5 minutes)

- Return to the warm-up: *So, was it the best deal in history?* Students should now see both sides: the buyer doubled the country *and* bought the century’s defining crisis.
- Exit ticket (spoken or written): Name one problem that led to the Civil War and one important thing Abraham Lincoln did.

- **Success criteria:** A strong response names slavery (accepting the “states’ rights” framing or economic differences as the episode presents them) and credits Lincoln with saving the Union and/or freeing the slaves through the Emancipation Proclamation.
- Collect worksheets as a formative assessment, or have students keep them as part of a citizenship-test study guide if you plan to use other episodes in the series.

Don’t have time for a full lesson? Quick Activity (25–30 minutes)

Hand out the worksheet and play the episode—the worksheet’s “mission brief” gives students everything they need with no setup. Students complete Level 1 while watching and Levels 2–3 after; assign the Level 4 | Publisher front page as homework. Check answers against the answer key. (The worksheet is written directly to students as a mission, so it works handed out with the video alone—no lesson plan required.)