

# Lincoln's First Inaugural Address

## ENRICHMENT ACTIVITY

### Chapter 13, Section 4

Directions: Read the information below. Then answer the questions.

One of the most important inaugural addresses ever given was delivered by Abraham Lincoln on March 4, 1861. At that time the nation was in a state of crisis. Six southern states had already seceded from the Union, so Lincoln faced a dilemma that no other President has experienced.

Prior to inauguration day Lincoln had remained quiet about his plans, so Americans everywhere were anxious to learn what direction he would take. After being sworn in as President, Lincoln issued his first inaugural address. An excerpt from that speech follows.

Apprehension seems to exist among the people of the Southern states that their property and their peace and personal security are to be endangered. There has never been any reasonable cause for such apprehension. Indeed, the most ample evidence to the contrary has all the while existed. It is found in nearly all the published speeches of him who now addresses you. I do but quote from one of those speeches when I declare that "I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the states where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so."

In your hands, my dissatisfied fellow countrymen, and not mine, is the momentous issue of civil war. The government will not assail you. You can have no conflict, without being yourselves the aggressors. You have no oath registered in Heaven to destroy the government, while I have the most solemn one to "preserve, protect, and defend" it.

We are not enemies but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave, to every living heart and hearthstone, all over the broad land will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touch, as surely they will, the better angels of our nature.

Lincoln went on to warn that he would use the full power of the nation to "hold, occupy, and possess" all forts, arsenals, and customhouses belonging to the federal government. Thus, though the new President said that North and South were "not enemies but friends," he clearly laid out in his inaugural address the guidelines that would govern his later actions.

#### Interpreting Information

1. What assurances did President Lincoln make to Southern citizens in his first inaugural address?

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2. In what ways did Lincoln make it clear that he would not accept the secession of the South?

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3. Reread the second paragraph of the excerpt from Lincoln's address. To what oath does Lincoln refer?

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4. In 1933, the Twentieth Amendment changed the inauguration date from March 4 to January 20. How much time now passes between a President's election and inauguration? How much time used to elapse?

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#### Raising Significant Questions

5. List some questions with which Lincoln may have struggled before his inauguration.

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#### Developing a Hypothesis

6. How did Lincoln's inaugural address prove especially important?

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## South Carolina's Secession Convention

### DAILY ACTIVITY

#### Chapter 13, Section 4

**Directions:** Read the following paragraphs carefully. Then answer the questions that follow.

On December 17, 1860, Edmund Ruffin, a sixty-six-year-old plantation owner, set out from his Virginia home for Columbia, South Carolina. Ruffin had long favored Southern independence and was determined to witness what he thought would be the dawn of a new era: South Carolina's secession from the Union. At a stop along the way, Ruffin heard that the site for the secession convention had been changed to Charleston because there had been an outbreak of smallpox in Columbia. This did not stop him; he simply changed trains and arrived in Charleston on December 19.

Ruffin found Charleston alive with excitement. Enthusiastic Southerners swelled the city streets. Among them were planters, newspaper publishers, judges, lawyers, clergymen, and bankers. A friend got Ruffin a seat at the convention.

There were many things that had to be settled. Because of secession, South Carolina would have to create a new code of government. Local residents had to be appointed to take over the functions of United States officials. They had to figure out the best way to handle the postal service and the collection of customs at Charleston's port. The convention passed a resolution to send three commissioners to Washington to negotiate the return of United States properties to South Carolina.

Ruffin heard the Committee to Prepare an Ordinance of Secession read this statement aloud:

We, the people of the State of South Carolina, in convention assembled, do declare and ordain that the union now subsisting between South Carolina and other States under the name of "The United States of America" is hereby dissolved.

At 1:15 P.M. all 169 delegates adopted the ordinance. At seven o'clock the signing ceremony, which lasted two hours, began. Later, Ruffin recorded this description in his diary:

Military companies paraded, salutes were fired, and as night came on, bonfires, made of barrels of resin, were lighted in the principal streets; rockets [were also] discharged and innumerable crackers discharged by the boys. As I now write, after 10 P.M. I hear the distant sound of rejoicing, with music of a military band, as if there were no thought of ceasing.

One of the few people in Charleston to voice dissatisfaction was Judge James Louis Petigru. Upon hearing the commotion he asked a friend, "Where's the fire?" His friend replied that there was no fire. "I tell you there is a fire," the judge snapped. "They have this day set a

blazing torch to the temple of Constitutional liberty, and please, by God, we shall have no more peace forever."

#### Interpreting Information

1. What was the purpose of the convention in Charleston, South Carolina?

2. Why was the convention held in Charleston rather than in Columbia?

3. What matters were addressed at the convention?

#### Raising Significant Questions

4. Why did Ruffin, a Virginian, attend the convention? Why might a member of the convention have seen that Ruffin obtained a seat?

#### Listing Consequences

5. How did the atmosphere surrounding the convention reflect South Carolina's attitude toward secession?

6. Explain the significance of Judge Petigru's remarks.

7. How might South Carolina's secession have influenced other Southern states?