Lesson 7

The Election of 1860 Role Play

By Bill Bigelow

Most of my students share a cartoon-like version of the causes of the Civil War: Slavery was horrible; President Abraham Lincoln was a great man who hated slavery; so, to free the slaves, he fought a war against the South; the North won and the slaves were freed. This common but wildly inaccurate history reinforces at least two unfortunate myths: The United States fights wars only for high moral purposes; and African Americans owe their freedom to the efforts of a great white man. The activities in this lesson offer students a more complex and truthful historical picture of the social forces that led to Lincoln's election and Southern secession, and thus help to puncture these myths.

Four political parties competed for the presidency in 1860. The outcome resulted in a social earthquake that permanently transformed the United States of America. This role play asks students to confront the actual issues addressed by the different parties in 1860. It gives students the tools to analyze some of the main causes of the Civil War, and helps them expel the simplistic notions of the war's aims that they may, perhaps unconsciously, carry around.

Kean Collection/Getty Images

This 1860 campaign poster for the Lincoln/Hamlin ticket features planks in the Republican Party's platform.

Of course, to suggest that students are wrong to think that the Civil War was fought to end slavery does not mean that slavery was not the root cause of the Civil War. It was. The white planter class of the South pushed secession because planters felt that Lincoln's election threatened the preservation and extension of slavery. This role play will help students understand that. But it also helps them see the web of issues within which slavery was embedded.

Materials Needed

- Construction paper, crayons or colored markers, pins, scissors.
- Copies of "Election of 1860: Issues" (Handout 7–A) for every student.
- Copies of role play roles (Handout 7–B through 7–F), enough for every student to have one role.
- Copies of "Election of 1860: Ballot" (Handout 7–G) for every student.

Time Required

Two class periods. One to get into roles and meet other groups. Another to hear candidate speeches and debrief the role play.

Suggested Procedure

1. The more background students have about the economic relations between different sections of the country the better. [See Lesson 6, "Mapping the Slave Economy."] Also useful, but not absolutely vital is knowledge about the Missouri Compromise, and its repeal in 1854; "Bloody Kansas"; the *Dred Scott* decision; John Brown's 1859 raid on the Harpers Ferry, Virginia, arsenal; and the historic dispossession of Native Americans from huge swaths of the United States that would be "homesteaded" and would become sites for the transcontinental railroad, both issues in the role play. On the board, list the four presidential candidates of 1860 and their political parties: Abraham Lincoln, Republican; Stephen Douglas, Democrat (Northern); John Breckinridge, Democrat (Southern); and John Bell, Constitutional Union. Explain that for reasons that will become clear, the Democrats couldn't agree on one candidate in 1860 and the party split. Explain that the class will participate in a role play to understand the conflicting interests in that election, perhaps the most important in U.S. history, the results of which triggered events that led to the Civil War.

   An historical note: In the election of 1860, there was also an abolitionist candidate Gerrit Smith, who ran on the Liberty Party ticket. Some abolitionists, particularly Black abolitionists, opted to support Smith. Ultimately, however, Smith received less than 0.01 percent of the popular vote and no electoral votes. For practical purposes, I limited the candidates to those receiving electoral votes.

   And one more note: For the purposes of the role play, the Northern Workers, Northern Factory Owners and Merchants, and Western Farmers in the role play are all white, as the vast majority of voters in the 1860 election were white. However, prior to 1860 there were Black men who were voters in states like New York, Massachusetts, Ohio, and even in North Carolina.

2. Ask students to look at "Election of 1860: Issues" (Handout 7-A). Review each of the issues with students. It's vital that they understand the distinction between whether slavery should continue to be legal in states where it currently exists and whether slavery should

Four political parties competed for the presidency in 1860. The outcome resulted in a social earthquake that permanently transformed the United States of America.

be legal in the territories. Each of their roles offers additional background on a number of the issues, and they'll be able to teach each other, but as you review these questions you should familiarize students with terms like homesteads and tariffs. There are a lot of issues included here, but in my experience, as they assume their respective roles, students quickly begin to see some of the implications of the various questions.

3. Divide students into five groups and assign each group a role. It's best if the Lincoln group includes people who are willing to assume leadership roles. The Lincolns will need to campaign among the different social groups and then give a speech outlining positions on the issues. Those students in "social" roles (i.e., farmers, manufacturers, planters, and workers) should begin by reading their roles and discussing and answering the questions posed in "Election of 1860: Issues." They may know very little about some of the issues. Assure them that later they will be able to meet with groups who may know more about these. Those in the Lincoln group should read the role and begin discussing campaign strategy, as indicated in the instructions following the description of Lincoln. [Obviously, this is not how it works in real life; a candidate doesn't campaign by circulating to different social groups trying to sniff out a winning coalition — although there is that dimension. You'll note from reading Lincoln's role that the only hard principle he begins with in the role play is opposition to slavery in the territories. The activity is not meant to portray Lincoln solely as a creature of political expediency, but aims to show students the electoral alliance he had to assemble in order to win the presidency.]

   Distribute construction paper and markers to each group so that they can create placards indicating their social group. The Lincolns may want to make campaign buttons so that they will be easily recognizable when they travel among the other social groups.

4. As students discuss the issues, circulate to the different groups to answer their questions and raise points that students may not have considered. Make sure that students respond to the questions in ways that are consistent with their roles. There is, of course, some room for students to individualize their roles. A group needn't arrive at consensus on any particular issue, as later they'll be voting as individuals; nonetheless, they should do their best to try to reach agreement.

5. When you sense that each group has decided on tentative answers to the questions posed in "Election of 1860: Issues," explain the next step to them. Students should select half their group as traveling negotiators, while the rest stay seated at their table to meet with negotiators from other groups. All the Lincolns will be traveling campaigners. I tell my students something like the following: "During this session two things will happen at the same time. Those of you who are manufacturers, planters, workers, and farmers will be meeting with each other to discuss your agreements and disagreements on the various issues and to try to make alliances. Don't compromise on issues that you feel strongly about. But the more you're able to reach agreement with other groups, the more likely candidate Lincoln will need to pay attention. Second, the people in the Lincoln group will campaign by traveling to the different groups to listen to these groups' concerns, and also might offer ideas on the various issues. Because the Democrats have split in this election, there are four parties running. Lincoln has a pretty good chance of winning, so those of you in social groups want to convince Lincoln to support the issues that you feel most strongly about. Afterward, you'll hear speeches from Lincoln and all the candidates so you'll be able to decide who you want to cast your vote for." Does this sound complicated? Students rarely have a problem figuring out what to do once the session begins — especially if they've participated in similar role plays before.

6. Begin the campaign session. Tell students that travelers cannot talk to other travelers, only to those seated in groups. During this negotiation period I wander from group to group stirring the pot, playing devil's advocate, raising questions, and trying to discourage unrealistic alliances. But it's the students' show, and they listen to me or ignore me at their pleasure. Generally, I let the session run as long as the Lincolns want it to, so they can be sure of their stands on the various issues — perhaps 15 or 20 minutes.
7. After you've called a halt to the session, those in the Lincoln group will need to spend some time crafting their campaign speech. I invite my students-as-Lincoln to take their desks out in the hall to work. Encourage them to involve as many of their group in giving the speech as possible. The rest of the class does other work as the Lincolns prepare. I'll often ask the remaining students to write in character about what they hope or fear from the coming election or what their ideal candidate would stand for.
8. For what will likely be the next class session, seat students in rows facing a podium for the candidates' speeches. The order I use is Douglas, Lincoln, Bell, and Breckinridge. I give the speeches for the other three candidates in the election, unless I can rope in another teacher who has a prep period and is willing to play a John Bell or Stephen Douglas. Obviously, I don't read the actual campaign speeches delivered in 1860 as this would be tedious, but instead speak extemporaneously based on the candidates' positions. (In fact, in 1860, campaign speeches were not the tradition. Lincoln didn't give a single speech after his nomination, though Douglas broke with tradition and spoke widely.) Platforms for all four parties can be found in the 6th edition of *Documents of American History*, edited by Henry Steele Commager (Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1958: 363–66). In brief, here are the positions of the candidates on the issues students considered in the role play:

Douglas

1. **Slavery in the South.** Supported slavery where it existed.
2. **Slavery in the territories.** Douglas' platform reiterated agreement to support the Supreme Court's interpretation of the Constitution. Recently, the Supreme Court had been pro-slavery — in the *Dred Scott* decision, the court upheld an owner's right to take enslaved people wherever he wanted, and, in 1859, upheld the Fugitive Slave Law. Personally, Douglas believed the territories should be allowed to decide the question of slavery for themselves. Douglas' platform supported the acquisition of Cuba, then a Spanish colony with legal slavery. The platform also specifically supported the Fugitive Slave Law.
3. **Support for homesteads.** Douglas was in favor of homesteads, however the Democratic Party in recent years had successfully opposed them. Also Douglas' position of "popular sovereignty" raised doubt about whether homesteads would be granted solely to free farmers.
4. **Tariffs on manufactured goods.** Democrats in Congress had dramatically lowered tariffs in 1857. Douglas was not for increasing tariffs.
5. **Building of a transcontinental railroad**. The Democratic platform supported the construction of a railroad "between Atlantic and Pacific states."

Lincoln

1. **Slavery in the South.** Personally, Lincoln may have been opposed to slavery, but the Republican Party supported slavery in the states where it existed. The platform even went one step further and denounced "lawless invasion[s]" of slaveholding states, like those of John Brown, although without mentioning Brown by name.

2. **Slavery in the territories.** Lincoln and the Republican Party vehemently opposed the extension of slavery to the territories.
3. **Support for homesteads.** Strongly supported homesteads for free farmers.
4. **Tariffs on manufactured goods.** Lincoln had favored high tariffs as a congressman, and the Republicans played up support for tariffs in generally pro-tariff states like Pennsylvania and New Jersey. The Republican slogan in these states was "protection for American industry." Because the tariff was unpopular in farm states, Republicans sought to link the homesteads and tariffs with the slogan "Vote yourself a farm — vote yourself a tariff."
5. **Building of a transcontinental railroad.** The federal government should immediately aid in the construction of a railroad to the Pacific Ocean.

Bell

The platform of the Constitutional Union party was strictly concerned with preserving the Union. It had nothing to say about specific issues, such as slavery in the territories or tariffs. The party platform was brief, stating that adherents "*recognize* no political principle other than THE CONSTITUTION OF THE COUNTRY, THE UNION OF THE STATES, AND THE ENFORCEMENT OF THE LAWS. . ." [emphases in the original.]

Breckinridge

1. **Slavery in the South.** Breckinridge was from the slaveholding state of Kentucky, and was a supporter of slavery where it existed.
2. **Slavery in the territories.** According to the Democratic Party platform as amended by the Breckinridge faction in Richmond, Virginia, all slaveholders should be entitled to take their slaves into any territory. Further, Breckinridge Democrats held that the federal government should enact slave codes protecting the "rights" of slaveholders. Breckinridge also urged the annexation of Cuba, presumably to be divided in the future as slave states.
3. **Support for homesteads.** Southern Democrats had opposed homesteads in recent years.
4. **Tariffs on manufactured goods.** Did not support increasing tariffs.
5. **Building of a transcontinental railroad.** Supported the construction of a railroad from "the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean" — slightly, but significantly different wording from the Douglas Democrats who supported a railroad between "Atlantic and Pacific states."

9. I urge the students to take notes on the speeches as they will be voting for one of the candidates and, unlike in an actual election, they will need to offer detailed written reasons for their votes. After each speech, students (still in their roles) may pepper a candidate with questions or arguments. They have special fun with John Bell because of the Constitutional Union Party's silence on the specific issues students debated and built alliances on. When Linda Christensen and I taught together, Linda gave a wonderful Bell speech, waxing poetic about family values and the need to stay united at all costs.
10. After the speeches, I distribute ballots (Handout 7–G) to students that ask for name and social group, which candidate they are voting for and which candidates they are *not* voting for. The ballots provide space for students to say *why* they voted as they did. (Because Lincoln had the extra responsibility of writing and delivering a speech and because Lincoln is not "his" own social group, students in this group needn't complete this assignment. If you like, students in the Lincoln group might write predictions on who they think will win the election and offer thoughts on how much support each of the candidates will garner and from whom.)

11. We tally the ballots to see who won. Obviously, the deck is stacked in Lincoln's favor, although a couple of classes have elected a President Douglas in past years. Some of the issues and questions to raise in the post-role play discussion:

    - Ask how the Southern planters feel about the outcome of the election. Remaining in character, what angers or frightens them about the election results? How might they respond?
    - Why will a number of Southern states secede from (leave) the Union before Lincoln even takes office?
    - How do other groups feel about the election results? How will they respond?
    - Was "compromise" possible in the election of 1860? Was it even desirable?
    - Using a map of the 1860 election results, ask students to review the regional strength of the four parties.
    - How will Lincoln respond to the secession of Southern states? What arguments might Southern states have given to support their right to secede? What arguments might Lincoln and others have made denying a state's right to leave the Union? What does the Constitution say about a state's obligation to remain in, or right to leave, the Union?
    - Why should Lincoln care if the Southern states secede? Why not just say, "Good riddance," and get on with the business of running what's left of the United States?
    - Part of the Republican Party platform for 1860 reads: "to the Union of the States this nation owes its unprecedented increase in population, its surprising development of material resources, its rapid augmentation of wealth. . ." In other words, the United States is prosperous — at least some people are — because the states belong to one country. How did the unity of North and South create prosperity? Who benefited economically from the South and North belonging to the same country? Who did not benefit?

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    - Describe to students the drama unfolding at Fort Sumter in South Carolina in the weeks after Lincoln takes office. Ask: If necessary, should Lincoln resupply the fort by force? From their point of view, should leaders of the new Confederacy attack and seize the fort?
    - Which social groups would be willing to fight a war to keep the Union together? Why?

Handout 7–A

Election of 1860: Issues

Each group: You must come to a position on the following issues. Answer not from your personal beliefs, but based on how you think people in your social group would respond.

1. Should slavery be allowed in the Southern states where it currently exists? Why or why not?

2. Should slavery be allowed in the Western territories? Why or why not?

3. Should the U.S. government begin giving "homesteads" to people who are willing to work the land themselves? Why or why not?

4. Should tariffs on imported goods be increased? Why or why not?

5. Should the United States government use tax money to support the building of railroads across the country?

6. List the issues that your group feels most strongly about.

Abraham Lincoln

You are the Republican candidate for president of the United States in 1860. Most of your life you've been a politician. In fact, you were only 23 years old when you first ran for office. The only time you weren't in politics was a few years back when, because your party was too weak, you left political life to work as a lawyer. Your friends say that you are very ambitious and that what you want most in the world is to be president.

It's never easy to run for president, but these days it is especially difficult with the country deeply divided. Historically, you have been politically cautious and have not taken unpopular stands on issues. For example, in private you tell people how much you dislike slavery. But publicly, you have never said that slavery should be abolished where it currently exists. In fact, in public you never even spoke out against the Fugitive Slave Law, which required Northerners in free states to help capture people who escaped from slavery. In private, you wrote: "I confess I hate to see the poor creatures hunted down . . . but I bite my lips and keep quiet." You are no abolitionist and have strongly condemned those abolitionists, like John Brown, who broke the law and used violence in their efforts to stop slavery. However, you have always said that slavery should not be spread to any new states or territories.

You believe that what makes this a great country is the opportunity it provides its free citizens. If you work hard, you can rise and succeed. Look at you: Your parents were not rich and now you may become president.

Right now, what you want most is to be elected. That will require you to convince people who have very different interests and ideas to compromise and to see that your positions are the best. You will be able to please some of the people on some of the issues, but not all the people on all the issues. Good luck.

In the "Campaign" period, you will meet with as many of the groups as you can. Listen to their concerns and test out some of your positions. They will also be talking to each other to try to build alliances so that they can urge you to adopt their positions on various issues. Hint: In order to win, you will probably need a majority of at least three of the four groups.

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1. Read over the questions included in "Election of 1860: Issues." Come up with tentative positions on each of these issues. Don't feel that you need to be sure at this stage. Remember that you'll be meeting with each group and will be able to change positions afterward.

2. Decide among yourselves which of you will campaign with which groups. There are four other groups: Northern workers, Western farmers, Southern planters, and Northern manufacturers.

3. Decide what questions you will ask the different social groups in the upcoming campaign session.

Handout 7–C

Western Farmers

You live in Western and Midwestern states and territories — places like Illinois, Ohio, Nebraska, and Kansas. Your family owns a farm and you work it yourselves. You are white, but you don't own other human beings as slaves, like the plantation owners in the South. Some of you were born in the United States, but many of you come from other countries like Germany and Great Britain.

Like farmers everywhere, you want the best land you can get. Those of you in states like Ohio and Illinois think about moving someday to Western territories like Kansas and Nebraska where there is plentiful, rich land and good amounts of rainfall. For all of you, perhaps your biggest worry is that Southerners will move into the territories and bring their slaves with them. You hate slavery. Not because you believe that all people are created equal, but because slave labor would cheapen *your* labor. Any crop grown by slaves can be sold more cheaply. How can you compete against people who work for free? Let the slave owners keep their slaves in the South where they've always been. But every year, these white plantation owners get bolder. In 1854 Congress repealed the Missouri Compromise that outlawed slavery in Kansas and Nebraska. In the 1857 *Dred Scott* decision, the Supreme Court ruled that a slave owner can take slaves wherever he wants, and Congress can't say anything about it. You want these slave owners to keep away from free farmers like you.

For a long time, there has been talk of the government giving good land in the West to farmers who will work it themselves. Congress passed a "homestead" act recently, but President Buchanan, a Democrat, vetoed it. Maybe you'd move and maybe you wouldn't, but you sure would like the choice. Perhaps you could sell your farm for a profit and move farther west onto better land.

Another concern of yours these days is transportation. Travel is slow. There's no way to get way out west to California or Oregon except by wagon. And if you move farther west, how would you get manufactured goods like guns, stoves, and tools from the east? And you'd need some quick and safe way to get your products to market in the east.

Northern Factory Owners and Merchants

You are a powerful class growing more powerful. You manufacture and sell products like cotton cloth and machinery. You depend on a government that will not interfere with your right to make profits. However, this isn't to say you want a "do-nothing" government. Not at all. You have a number of concerns that require a strong and sympathetic government. You are still worried about products from other countries, especially from Great Britain and her colonies, being sold here more cheaply than your products. To make sure that people buy from you, you want the government to tax imported goods from other countries. These import taxes are called tariffs. For example, as recently as the early 1840s, cotton cloth made in the United States sold for just under 7 cents a yard. The tariff for foreign cloth was 7 and a half cents — more than 100 percent! This was great because it made foreign cloth more expensive than your cloth so people bought your products. Of course, *some* people support low tariffs because with low tariffs goods are cheaper to buy. In 1857, Congress lowered the tariff to 24 percent. This hurt your industry and, in fact, you think this contributed to the terrible depression of 1857, which still hurts business.

To keep growing, you need more and more places to sell your products. Transportation is a problem. If there were more railroads to the Western states and territories you'd be able to sell a great deal more than you do now. You could get cheap food and whiskey from the Western regions, and could sell them cloth, guns, tools, stoves, and the like. You'd also be able to invest in the railroads and make even more money.

Here's a problem: Many workers and farmers want the government to allow them to "homestead" (farm on free land) in the Western territories. You worry about your workers leaving to become farmers. Then who'd do all the work? As it is, because of labor shortages, you pay between a third and a half more in wages than do factory owners in Great Britain. Cheaper labor gives them an unfair advantage. The only thing that helps out the labor shortage here is the steady supply of immigrants coming to the United States from Europe. The more workers available, the lower the wages you have to pay. You don't like homesteads — and you want a president who opposes homesteads — but you might be willing to put up with a homestead law if you could get the president and Congress to support higher tariffs on foreign goods.

Your major political rivals are the Southern slave owners, almost all of whom are Democrats. Just about everything you support, they oppose. You need the cheap cotton, grown with slave labor, that they send north and you need them to buy your products. But you don't need them to get any stronger in Congress. Frankly, you benefit from slavery in the South, but you don't need it to spread. Because that would increase the power of your biggest rivals: the Southern plantation owners.

Handout 7–E

Southern Plantation Owners

It seems that everyone who is not a Southerner wants to destroy your way of life. Just last year, that lunatic criminal John Brown tried to start a slave uprising in Virginia. It failed miserably. But you know there are lots more crazy abolitionists where he came from. Brown even got financial support from church people in the North.

The coming election of 1860 is perhaps the most important election in the short history of this country. Here is your situation. As you know, your livelihood depends on growing crops like tobacco, rice, sugar, and especially cotton. A plantation requires a great deal of labor — slave labor. Above all, you want the South to remain open to slavery. However, you believe that in a free country you should also have the right to bring your slaves to wherever you choose to live. Fortunately, the Supreme Court seems to agree with you. In the 1857 *Dred Scott* decision, the court decided that if a slave were taken to a "free" state, it didn't mean the slave got his freedom. To you, the logical conclusion is that you should be able to own land in Western territories like Kansas and Nebraska and bring your slaves to work that land. However, there are many in the North and West who want to outlaw slavery in the territories — in direct violation of the Constitution. These people must be defeated at all costs. (For that matter, many in the South would like to take over Cuba and Nicaragua to open up more territory for the expansion of slavery. To them you have one thing to say: Good.)

To make matters worse, many in the North and West propose to give "free" farmers homesteads in the territories — excellent land they can move onto. Nobody says anything about giving *you* free land and allowing you to bring your slaves. Why not? Because they are afraid that they won't be able to compete. So they demand unfair government protection. As long as homesteads go only to "free" farmers, then you oppose them. They are just an unfair giveaway.

The rich owners in the North are happy to take your cheap cotton grown with slave labor, but their representatives in Congress have always voted for high tariffs — a tax on imports — so that they don't have to compete with cheaper goods from Great Britain and her colonies. They make cotton shirts for less in India, but they cost more here because of the tariffs. In 1857, Congress lowered the tariffs to 24 percent. At one point they'd been more than 100 percent. You want to keep them low — even lower than 24 percent.

The government also wants to take your tax money and give it to people who will build a railroad across the Northern United States, all the way to California. This will cost tens of millions of dollars. The railroad might help Northerners sell cloth and iron tools in Kansas and California. But you have good rivers in the South. A Northern railroad won't help you, although you would support a railroad from the Mississippi River to the Pacific.

Northern Workers

You work in a factory that produces cloth from cotton. As you know, the United States is becoming more "industrialized." Factories are springing up everywhere. Recently you read that in just the last 20 years, the value of manufactured goods produced by workers like you quadrupled. You are white. Many of you are native-born, and some of you left your farms for work in the cities. Others of you are from different countries, especially Ireland. Currently, you face a number of problems.

In 1857 a major depression hit the country and, at least temporarily, some of you lost your jobs. This taught you that even though more and more things are produced by machines in factories, you don't have a guaranteed job. The factory owners try to convince you that the depression was caused by the Democrats in Congress who lowered the tariffs on imported manufactured goods in 1857. The owners say that because foreign owners can find cheaper workers, the United States needs high tariffs — which make foreign goods more expensive. Otherwise, American products can't compete. Or so they say. The owners say that we should elect politicians who support high tariffs to protect American industries and American jobs.

Because of your job insecurity, and because factory jobs aren't so great, many of you dream of owning your own farm out west. It would be expensive to pull up and move, but there is one proposal that would make it a lot cheaper. Some politicians support the idea of giving "homesteads" — free land out west — to people who will work a plot of land with their families. This would be great. However, some people think that slave owners should be able to take advantage of the homesteads and bring in their slaves to work the land. With free workers, these Southerners could sell their crops for almost nothing. How could you and other *free* farmers compete with that?

Something else that would make it easier to move west is if there were railroads to take you there. You might want to go all the way to California or Oregon. But to do that now, it takes months of difficult and dangerous travel by wagon. For years, politicians have talked about building a railroad across the entire country, but so far they haven't done anything about it. The owners support railroads because they say they'll sell more products and that will make your jobs more secure. Of course, the owners say lots of things.

Election of 1860: Ballot

Your Name: _____ Your Social Group: _____

Candidate You Are Voting For: _____

Reasons Why: _____
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Candidate You Are ***Not*** Voting For: _____

Reasons Why Not: _____
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Candidate You Are ***Not*** Voting For: _____

Reasons Why Not: _____
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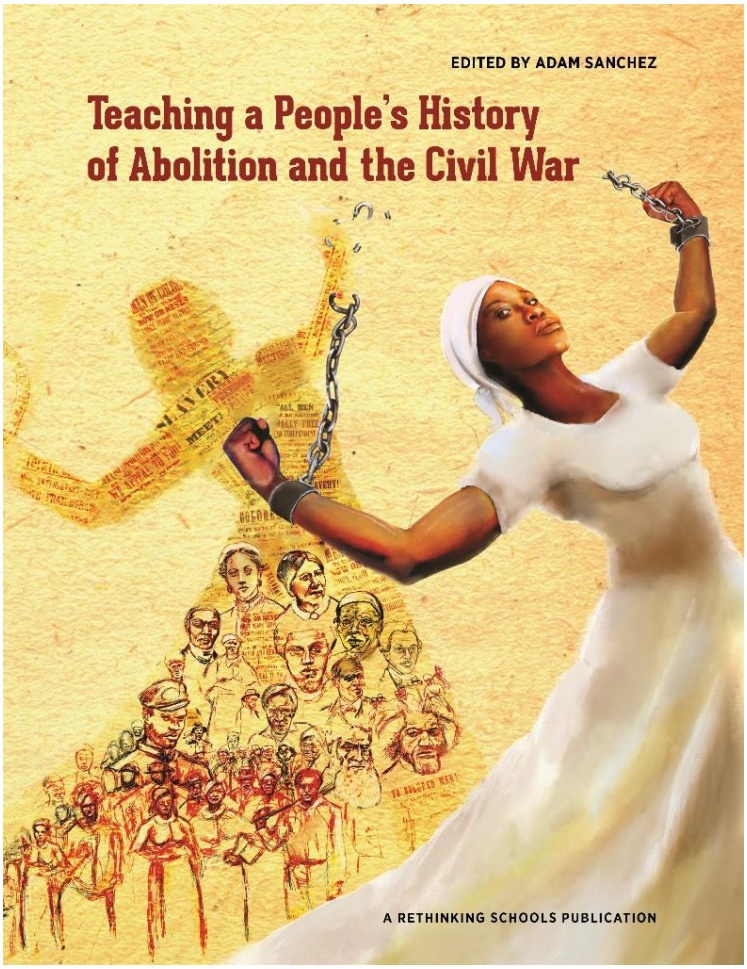

"The Election of 1860 Role Play" lesson can also be found in Rethinking Schools teaching guide, *Teaching a People's History of Abolition and the Civil War* edited by Adam Sanchez. The book offers a collection of 10 classroom-tested lessons on one of the most transformative periods in U.S. history.

These lessons encourage students to take a critical look at the popular narrative that centers Abraham Lincoln as the Great Emancipator and ignores the resistance of abolitionists and enslaved people.

To preview the book's introduction, table of contents, and order direct from the publisher, please visit:
www.rethinkingschools.org/books/title/teaching-a-people-s-history-of-abolition-and-the-civil-war

"A valuable blueprint for teaching the history of abolitionism and the end of slavery. . . . Coming at a moment of activism by modern descendants of the struggle for freedom, the book could not be more timely."
Eric Foner, DeWitt Clinton Professor Emeritus of History, Columbia University and author of The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery

"By debunking the false history of lone great men and restoring the role of diverse coalitions of ordinary people working together to make extraordinary change, these lessons provide a factual basis for hope and inspiration amid oppressive circumstances."
Chenjerai Kumanyika, Assistant professor of Journalism and Media Studies, Rutgers University, and co-executive producer and co-host of Uncivil

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