**Unit Title:** The Coming of the Civil War in Virginia

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**Grade Level:** Elementary

**Time Estimated:** 6 days (50-minute periods)

**Overview:**
This unit picks up Virginia Studies in the mid 1800s, following the founding of the new country; the Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe presidencies; and slavery in Virginia. Using many available resources, including on-line primary resources, students will understand that by the mid 1800s there were differences and conflicts between the North and the South in the United States and, furthermore, Virginia was divided in itself. Students will begin to relate and understand various events, issues, and conflicts that contributed to Virginia's secession from the Union and, in turn, the Civil War. Students will examine the differences between Northern and Southern states, focusing on the existence of these differences within the state of Virginia. The unit will begin with study of the North (manufacturing-based) and the South (agricultural-based), abolition, Nat Turner's rebellion, the Underground Railroad, John Brown's raid, and the slavery question in the western territory. Specifically, students will analyze photos, letters, and other documents from the period in order to see that Virginians were not 100% aligned with southern or northern states. It will conclude by studying Lincoln's election and the firing on Fort Sumter, and the formation of West Virginia.

**Historical Background:**
By the mid 1800s, the United States was quickly developing into a grand, progressive nation. The foundations of freedom and liberty which had been won decades before had laid the way for advances in manufacturing, agriculture, transportation, and communications. As the young nation grew, differences began to cause conflicts between northern and southern states. There were numerous failed compromises on major issues and a resulting polarization. In the North industrial centers were creating larger cities and a growing, urban lifestyle was thriving on trade and commerce. The South, where the population was more stable, remained mostly agricultural as cotton had become king and quickly took the place of the former cash crop, tobacco. Like tobacco, however, growing cotton was labor intensive, and even with new technologies like the cotton gin, the booming life on southern plantations was highly dependent on the hard work of slaves.

With Northern factories using free, wage-earning workers, many people there became more and more critical of slavery and of the southern states where slavery was widespread. This became known as the abolition movement and many famous abolitionists (Douglass, Tubman, John Brown, and Nat Turner) were critically involved in campaigns to try to end slavery. Those in the South,
however, felt slavery a necessity and espoused the belief that states had the right to decide such important issues.

Eventually the states became known as “free” or “slave” states. Furthermore, northern states wanted the new states created out of the western territory to be “free states,” while the southern states wanted the new states to be “slave states.” This made the differences between the North and South seem even greater.

In Virginia, slavery was not a simple issue. Conflict grew between the eastern counties that relied on slavery and the western counties that favored abolition of slavery. In some parts of the state, like the Shenandoah Valley, neighbors had different views about the issue. In these areas there were some slave owners, but others who did not rely on slaves.

These differences eventually led to the secession of the southern states from the union, the formation of the Confederate States of America, and the great Civil War. In Virginia, the disagreements led to the formation of West Virginia. Like the country, the state became divided.

**Major Understanding:**
Virginia was torn by the issues that divided the North and the South and led to the Civil War. Even though Virginia eventually joined the Confederacy, part of the state could not side with the South. The result was the formation of West Virginia.

**Objectives:** Students will:
1. Interpret primary and secondary source documents such as letters, newspaper articles, and broadsides, to understand events leading to the Civil War including Nat Turner’s rebellion, the abolitionist movement, John Brown’s raid, the Underground Railroad, and industrial vs. agricultural life.
2. Determine cause and effect relationships by examining the causes of the Civil War including the differences between the North and the South (cause) that led to different ways of life and opinions about slavery (effect).
3. Compare and contrast the views on slavery and secession of people in eastern and western counties in Virginia, as well as northern and southern states.
4. Draw conclusions and make generalizations about whether the western counties of Virginia should secede from the state.
5. Sequence events leading to the Civil War from Nat Turner’s Rebellion in 1830 to the election of 1860.
6. Interpret ideas and events from the perspectives of historical writers to writers of primary sources (diaries, letters, newspapers) of the period.
7. Evaluate and discuss issues relating to the period orally and in writing.

**Standards of Learning:**
**Skills**
VS.1 The student will develop skills for historical and geographical analysis including the ability to
a) identify and interpret artifacts and primary and secondary source documents to understand events in history;
b) determine cause and effect relationships;
c) compare and contract historical events;
d) draw conclusions and make generalizations;
e) sequence events in Virginia history;
f) interpret ideas and events from different historical perspectives;
g) evaluate and discuss issues orally and in writing.

**Content**

VS.7 The student will demonstrate knowledge of the issues that divided our nation and led to the Civil War by identifying the events and differences between northern and southern states that divided Virginians and led to secession, war, and the creation of West Virginia.