

# Becoming Kansas: The People and the Struggles That Built the State

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## Territorial Capital Museum Lecompton – The Birthplace of the Civil War Intermediate Lesson Plan (4-8)

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### History, Government, and Social Studies Standard(s)

Standard #3: Societies are shaped by the identities, beliefs, and practices of individuals and groups:

Benchmarks:

3.1: The students will recognize and evaluate significant beliefs, contributions, and ideas of the many diverse peoples and groups and their impact on individuals, communities, states, and nations.

3.2: The students will draw conclusions about significant beliefs, contributions, and ideas, analyzing the origins and context under which these competing ideas were reached and the multiple perspectives from which they come.

Standard #5: Relationships among people, places, ideas, and environments are dynamic:

Benchmarks:

5.1 The student will recognize and evaluate dynamic relationships that impact lives in communities, states, and nations.

5.2 The student will analyze the context and draw conclusions about dynamic relationships.

5.3 The student will investigate and connect dynamic relationships to contemporary issues.



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This *Becoming Kansas* lesson plan has been made possible in part by the National Endowment for the Humanities: Democracy demands wisdom.

# Overview



This plan is designed to support classroom instruction in history, government, and social studies at the intermediate and high school level (4-8). It can be completed in 1-3 hours depending upon how many pre and post activities and which displays you choose to include. The specific theme of this lesson is: Lecompton – the Birthplace of the Civil War.

Prior to arriving at the museum, review the key vocabulary with the class. Follow that by reviewing the foundation information with students. It may help to focus the conversation on the guiding questions:

What do you know about the events that led Kansas being admitted into the Union as a free state?

Why was Lecompton considered a key player in the history of Kansas becoming a free state?

#### Foundation Information:

Kansas History, Government, and Social Studies  
Standard 3:

Societies are shaped by the identities, beliefs, and practices of individuals and groups.

Standard 5: Relationships among people, places, ideas, and environments are dynamic.

*The classroom teacher should review the information in the Overview prior to arriving at the museum. Ensure that students understand the terms choice and consequence as well as how they are connected.*

#### Key vocabulary to front load for intermediate students:

abolitionist – someone who opposed slavery  
mandated – required by law

condemn – take a stand against; criticize  
dynamic - characterized by constant change, activity, or progress

Bleeding Kansas - the period of repeated outbreaks of violent battles between pro-slavery and anti-slavery forces in the 1854 Kansas territory

sovereignty – power or authority

Founded in 1854, the town of Lecompton, KS was originally named “Bald Eagle” because of the frequent Eagle sightings along the Kansas river. The name “Bald Eagle” didn’t stick. In 1855, it was renamed after the chief justice of the Kansas Territorial Supreme Court, Judge Samuel Lecompte.

When the Kansas-Nebraska Act, which overturned the Missouri Compromise, was passed, the desired effect was that Kansas would come in as a slave state and Nebraska would come in as a free state so that the balance of power would remain equal in the United States Senate. However, the effect was that it led to Bleeding Kansas. Kansas had problems drawing up a state constitution when it moved to become a state in the late 1850s.

The following are aspects of choices and consequences:

- Every choice comes with a cost.
- Individual choice is affected by culture, geography, politics, economics, social emotional attachments, and other factors including other people.

The following are aspects of rights and responsibilities:

- Rights tell us what we are able to do.
- A responsibility is a duty or obligation to perform or complete.

A constitutional convention held at Topeka produced a constitution that prohibited the practice of slavery while a convention in the territorial capital of Lecompton created a constitution that legalize slavery. The federal government had to determine which constitution would go into effect. The Lecompton Constitution, became a subject of intense national debate. Ultimately that resulted in a split within the Democratic Party which impacted the election of Abraham Lincoln. The Emancipation Proclamation issued by Lincoln freed the people held as slaves in those territories still in rebellion against the Union from January 1, 1863, forward.

#### HANDLING MATERIALS

Watch for this icon for opportunities to use hands-on artifacts or materials to make each stop more interactive.



# Mapping the Kansas-Nebraska Act



## DISCUSSION/TOUR

The Kansas-Nebraska Act was a bill in 1854 that mandated popular sovereignty which allowed settlers to debate whether they wanted slavery or not in that region. The Act was proposed by Stephen A. Douglas—Abraham Lincoln’s opponent in the famous Lincoln-Douglas debates—the bill overturned the Missouri Compromise’s use of latitude as the boundary between slave and free territory. The conflicts that arose between pro-slavery and anti-slavery settlers in the aftermath of the act’s passage led to the period of violence known as Bleeding Kansas and helped paved the way for the American Civil War. The Kansas-Nebraska Act was passed by the U.S. Congress on May 30, 1854. It allowed people in the territories of Kansas and Nebraska to decide for themselves whether or not to allow slavery within their borders. The Act served to repeal the Missouri Compromise of 1820 which prohibited slavery north of latitude  $36^{\circ}30'$ . The passing of the Act is thought to be the initial act that led to Lecompton, Kansas being called the "Birthplace of the Civil War, Where Slavery Began to Die." Lecompton was the Territorial Capital of Kansas from 1855 to 1861 and is the home of the historic Lecompton Constitution. That triggered the debate in the U.S. Congress



## LEADING QUESTIONS

The Kansas-Nebraska is known to be a historical failure. Why do you think that was?

How can you connect the areas and states shown on the 1854 map to what you see on the current map?



## HANDS-ON ACTIVITY

Divide students into groups of 2 or 3.

Provide each group with a copy of the map illustrating the free, slave, and undeclared states in 1854 and a map of the current U.S. states  
Assign each group one of the 4 “colors” on the 1854 map.



## LEADING QUESTIONS

What does your assigned color represent?

How is the defined area on the 1854 map different from today’s map? (which states are now included in which area)

Can you locate latitude  $36^{\circ}30'$  on either of your maps? Where do you think it might have been?

Where would Lecompton be located on the 1854 map?

## HANDLING MATERIALS

1854 map, current U.S. map



# The Debate Over the Lecompton Constitution



## DISCUSSION/TOUR

Lecompton was the Territorial Capital of Kansas from 1855 to 1861. Nine governors called Lecompton home. The famous Lecompton Constitution was written in Constitution Hall, a National Landmark would have admitted Kansas into the Union as a slave state. The document was extensively debated in the Congress of the United States and in the office of the President of the United States. The resulting debate split the National Democratic Party in 1858 and led to four candidates for President in 1860. The split allowed Abraham Lincoln to be elected President with only 39% of the vote.

The Lecompton Constitution was debated not only within the Kansas Territory but in the U.S. Congress and overseas. The constitution was rejected by Congress after intense national debate and was one of the prime topics of the Lincoln-Douglas debates. The controversy that Constitution caused was a contributing factor to a growing dispute that would erupt into the Civil War.

The Lecompton Constitution failed partly because the antislavery party won control of the territorial legislature in the election of 1857. The new legislature met at Constitution Hall in Lecompton and immediately began to abolish the pro-slavery laws of what they called the "Bogus Legislature" - the territory's pro-slavery lawmakers since July 1855.



## LEADING QUESTIONS

What common theme do you see in these displays?

Besides written documents, what other artifacts are contained in the displays?

Why is it important to preserve documents/artifacts like these?



## HANDS ON ACTIVITY

Divide students into 4.

Assign each group one of the following displays: The Lecompton Constitution and the British Empire; The Lecompton Constitution and the Secret Six; Debates in Congress; The Lecompton Constitution and the Lincoln-Douglas Debates. If possible, provide printed copies of the information from each display as assigned to each group.

Have each group select a spokesperson for their group.



## LEADING QUESTIONS

How would you summarize the information contained in your assigned display?

Share your thoughts on the significance of the information you reviewed on Lecompton becoming known as the Birthplace of the Civil War.

## HANDLING MATERIALS



*Copies of the information in each display*



# Gieseeman Territorial Map Collection



## DISCUSSION/TOUR

The Raymond Gieseeman Territorial Map collection contains 30 documents pertaining to Kansas Territory history from 1854 to 1861. Each map in the collection shows dynamic changes in the Kansas Territory throughout the years involving the debate of state sovereignty and slavery prior to the Civil War. The political events during those years impacted homesteaders in Kansas and the overall growth of the state. The Kansas settlers faced many challenges and sometimes used these maps to locate the most beneficial areas of the Kansas Territory in which to settle. In the museum collection there are a wide number of artifacts that were used by settlers to survive in their new locations. Some may be familiar to you, but many may require investigation to discover their value and use.



## LEADING QUESTIONS

What type of items noted on the maps do you think settlers might have paid special attention to as they explored their new territory?



## HANDS ON ACTIVITY

As the tour guide quickly shares each map in the Gieseeman collection have students call out differences they notice from one to the next.

Still working in their groups have each group select a map with which to work and identify the time period that map covers.

Provide students with a data sheet and allow them a limited time (dictated by the tour schedule) to move through the museum looking for artifacts related to their time period. *NOTE: It is important that an adult be available to travel with each group.*

As items are found a recorder in each group will note what the item is, what year(s) it was in use and how it was used, and observations about the item. i.e., needed to survive; compared to similar modern item, etc.



## LEADING QUESTIONS

What types of artifacts do you think you will find?

## HANDLING MATERIALS



*Data sheet for documenting artifacts located*



## Wrap Up Activity

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At the end of the time allowed for groups to locate artifacts for their data sheets, have them gather back in a location for the entire group to gather comfortably.



## Leading Questions

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What data item did you locate that your group found the most interesting or unusual?

Share information and your observations about that item.

What do you know about Lecompton from your tour that might have contributed to the city's title as the Birthplace of the Civil War ?

The data items were connected to settlers in the Kansas Territory. How do you think the slavery debate in Lecompton influenced who settled in the town and the surrounding area?

Which display you would like to have more time to explore in the future?

