SOFTWARE & TECH

Dbq 9 What Caused Secession Answers

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Introduction: Unpacking the Core Question of DBQ 9

The question of what caused the secession of the Southern states in 1860 and 1861 remains one of the most debated and analyzed topics in American history. For students tackling Document Based Question 9, often referred to as **Dbq 9 What Caused Secession Answers**, the challenge lies not just in identifying a single cause, but in weaving together a complex tapestry of political, economic, and social factors. This article provides a comprehensive exploration of the secession crisis, offering clear explanations and analytical frameworks that will help you construct well-supported and persuasive answers. We will move beyond simplistic explanations to examine the deep-rooted tensions that finally shattered the Union, focusing on primary source evidence and historical context that are essential for excelling in DBQ 9.

Understanding **Dbq 9 What Caused Secession Answers** requires a careful examination of the documents typically provided in the exercise. These documents often include speeches from Southern fire-eaters, newspaper editorials, and official ordinances of secession. By analyzing these sources, students can identify the primary arguments made by secessionists themselves. The consistent and overwhelming theme that emerges is the protection and expansion of slavery. However, to provide a high-scoring answer, one must also discuss the role of states' rights, economic disparities, and the political breakdown that made compromise impossible by the late 1850s.

The Central Role of Slavery in the Secession Crisis

When studying **Dbq 9 What Caused Secession Answers**, the first and most undeniable fact is that slavery was the central cause of secession. This is not a modern reinterpretation; it was explicitly stated in the secession documents of the Southern states. South Carolina's "Declaration of the Immediate Causes Which Induce and Justify the Secession of South Carolina from the Federal Union," for instance, spends considerable time complaining about the refusal of Northern states to enforce the Fugitive Slave Act and the growing abolitionist sentiment in the North.

The 'Peculiar Institution' as a Social and Economic Foundation

For the Southern planter class, slavery was not merely a labor system; it was the very foundation of their society, culture, and wealth. The profitability of cotton, fueled by the Industrial Revolution in England and the North, made the institution immensely valuable. By 1860, the enslaved population was worth more than all the banks, railroads, and factories in the South combined. Any threat to this system was perceived as an existential threat to the Southern way of life. This explains why the election of Abraham Lincoln, a man who promised only to prevent the expansion of slavery into new territories, was met with such immediate and drastic action. Southern leaders understood that if slavery could not expand, it would eventually wither under the weight of a free-soil majority in Congress.

Primary Source Evidence for Slavery as the Cause

When crafting your **Dbq 9 What Caused Secession Answers**, you must cite specific evidence from the provided documents. Look for statements from prominent secessionists like Robert Barnwell Rhett, William Lowndes Yancey,

or even Alexander Stephens, the future Vice President of the Confederacy. Stephens famously stated in his "Cornerstone Speech" that the new Confederate government was founded upon the "great truth that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery—subordination to the superior race—is his natural and normal condition." This is perhaps the most damning piece of evidence that slavery, and the racial ideology supporting it, was the core issue. Your DBQ answer should analyze such primary sources to demonstrate that secession was a calculated defense of slavery against the rising tide of free-soil ideology.

States' Rights: A Shield for Slavery

Many students struggle with the concept of states' rights in the context of secession. It is crucial to understand that states' rights was not an abstract political philosophy; it was a specific argument used to protect slavery. The nullification crisis of the 1830s, for example, was not about tariffs in general, but about a tariff that South Carolina believed set a precedent for federal interference with slavery. By the 1850s, the Southern states' rights argument had evolved into a full-throated defense of slavery against any form of federal regulation.

The Right to Take 'Property' into Territories

The most critical states' rights issue on the eve of secession was the status of slavery in the territories. The Dred Scott v. Sandford decision (1857) seemed to settle the matter by ruling that Congress had no power to prohibit slavery in the territories. However, the Republican Party and Abraham Lincoln refused to accept this ruling. They campaigned on stopping the expansion of slavery, which the South interpreted as a direct attack on their constitutional rights. When analyzing **Dbq 9 What Caused Secession Answers**, you should highlight this tension. The South argued that they had a right to take their "property" (enslaved people) anywhere in the Union, and that the election of a party opposed to this right was sufficient cause to leave the Union.

The Rhetoric of 'Oppression' and 'Tyranny'

Southern secessionists masterfully employed the language of the American Revolution. They portrayed the North as a tyrannical power that was trampling on their liberties. This rhetoric is a key component of any good **Dbq 9 What Caused Secession Answers**essay. They argued that Northern states violated the Constitution by passing personal liberty laws, which nullified the Fugitive Slave Act. They claimed that the abolitionist press was inciting slave rebellions (like John Brown's Raid) and that the federal government was unwilling or unable to protect them. By framing secession as a "second American Revolution," they tried to legitimize their act of rebellion. A sophisticated answer will point out how this language of liberty was used to preserve the institution of slavery.

Political Breakdown and the Failure of Compromise

Secession did not happen overnight. It was the culmination of decades of political conflict in which the traditional mechanisms of compromise broke down. The Missouri Compromise (1820), the Compromise of 1850 (including the Fugitive Slave Act), and the Kansas-Nebraska Act (1854) were all attempts to manage the slavery question. Each one, however, only delayed the inevitable crisis and deepened sectional hostility.

The Collapse of the National Party System

For decades, the Democratic and Whig parties had been national institutions, with significant support in both the North and the South. These cross-sectional parties helped to moderate conflict by forcing politicians to appeal to a broad national audience. The Kansas-Nebraska Act destroyed the Whig Party and gave rise to the purely sectional Republican Party. The Republicans had no support in the South, and after Lincoln's victory, the South felt they had no political allies left in the federal government. This political isolation is a critical factor in **Dbq 9 What Caused Secession Answers**. The South saw the election of a purely sectional president as a sign that the Union was no

longer a viable partnership.

The Election of 1860: The Final Spark

Abraham Lincoln's election in November 1860 was the immediate trigger for secession. While Lincoln was a moderate who promised not to interfere with slavery where it already existed, his victory was interpreted as a death sentence for the South's interests. The Democratic Party had split into Northern and Southern factions, making Lincoln's victory almost inevitable. For Southern fire-eaters, secession was not a reaction of fear, but a preemptive strike. They believed that waiting would only make them weaker. South Carolina seceded on December 20, 1860, and by February 1861, seven states had formed the Confederate States of America. When crafting your **Dbq 9 What Caused Secession Answers**, make sure to identify the election of 1860 as the crucial political event that moved the secession movement from a theoretical possibility to a reality.

Economic and Sectional Differences

While slavery was the root cause, it was reinforced by profound economic differences between the North and the South. The North was rapidly industrializing, with a diverse economy based on manufacturing, commerce, and small-scale agriculture. The South was an agrarian society dominated by cotton and the plantation system. These economic systems created conflicting interests regarding tariffs, internal improvements, and western lands.

The Tariff and Economic Dependency

The South was a major exporter of cotton and a consumer of manufactured goods. High protective tariffs, favored by Northern industry, hurt the Southern economy by raising the price of goods they had to buy. While the tariff issue was less prominent in 1860 than it had been in the 1830s, it still simmered beneath the surface. Southerners believed they were being exploited by the North, forced to sell cheap cotton and buy expensive manufactured goods. This economic grievance is a useful supporting argument in **Dbq 9 What Caused Secession Answers**, but it should always be linked back to the defense of slavery. The plantation economy itself was dependent on slave labor.

The Fear of 'Free Soil' and the Southern Economy

The most direct economic threat to the South was the Republican policy of free soil. If slavery was prohibited in the territories, the South believed it would be boxed into a shrinking region. As new free states were admitted to the Union, the balance of power in the Senate would shift permanently against the South. This would eventually allow the North to pass a constitutional amendment abolishing slavery. Therefore, secession was seen as an economic necessity to preserve the slave-based plantation system. Your **Dbq 9 What Caused Secession Answers** should demonstrate an understanding that the economic threat was inseparable from the threat to slavery itself.

How to Construct Effective DBQ 9 Answers

Now that we have explored the historical context, let us focus on the practical skill of writing your answer. A strong **Dbq 9 What Caused Secession Answers** essay is not simply a list of causes; it is an argument that uses evidence from the documents and your own knowledge of history.

Step 1: Develop a Clear Thesis Statement

Your thesis is the most important sentence in your essay. It should directly answer the prompt and outline your main points. A strong thesis for DBQ 9 might argue: "The secession of the Southern states was primarily caused by the determination to preserve and expand the institution of slavery, a goal which was threatened by the rise of the anti-slavery Republican Party and the election of Abraham Lincoln, with arguments over states' rights and

economic differences serving as justifications rather than independent causes." This thesis is analytical, takes a stand, and sets up the rest of your essay.

Step 2: Analyze, Don't Just Summarize

When using the documents, avoid simply quoting them or paraphrasing their content. You must analyze them. Explain why the document is important. For example, instead of saying "Document A says the South wanted states' rights," say "In Document A, the South Carolinian writer uses the language of states' rights to argue that the federal government's failure to protect slavery in the territories is a violation of the Constitution, thereby framing secession as a defensive and constitutional act." This shows the grader that you understand the document's purpose and context.

Step 3: Use Outside Evidence

To get a high score, you must go beyond the documents. Use your knowledge of history to support your argument. Mention the Dred Scott decision, John Brown's Raid, the Compromise of 1850, or the speeches of Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas. This outside information shows that you have a strong command of the historical period. For **Dbq 9 What Caused Secession Answers**, using outside evidence to demonstrate the escalation of the slavery conflict in the 1850s is essential.

Step 4: Address Complexity and Counterarguments

A sophisticated essay acknowledges complexity. While

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