Standard 8-4: The student will demonstrate an understanding of the multiple events that led to the Civil War.

Enduring Understanding:

The outbreak of the Civil War was the culminating event in a decades-long series of regional issues that threatened American unity and South Carolina’s identity as one of the United States. To understand how South Carolina came to be at the center of this conflict, the student will . . .

**8-4.2 Analyze how sectionalism arose from racial tension, including the Denmark Vesey plot, slave codes and the growth of the abolitionist movement.**

**It is essential for students to know:**

Sectionalism is loyalty to a particular region or section of a country instead of to the nation as a whole. Sectionalism developed in the period after the ratification of the Constitution as the economies, cultures and political interests of the North and the South became more and more different.

Sectional differences first developed in the colonial period as a result of the different geographies of the regions. The North developed as a trading region of small farms and the South developed the plantation system. Although all regions had slavery prior to the American Revolution, after the war was over, Northern states passed laws to gradually emancipate their slaves. In the South, the invention of the cotton gin led the South to become even more economically dependent upon slave labor (8-4.1). Although both Northerners and Southerners supported the ratification of the Constitution, the different interests of the regions helped to create the two-party system. Southerners tended to be Democratic-Republican followers of Thomas Jefferson who called themselves Republicans (8-3.4). New Englanders tended to be Federalists (and later Whigs). [It is important not to confuse the Jeffersonian Republicans with the Republicans of Lincoln. Jefferson’s Republicans became Jackson’s Democrats. Lincoln Republicans are the ideological descendants of the Federalists.] The political parties and the regions increasingly took different positions on the issues of the day.

Sectionalism intensified as a result of the growing slave population in the South. In South Carolina, by the 1720’s, the black population surpassed the white population and there was an African American majority in most Southern states. Although the international slave trade was outlawed in 1808, the numbers of slaves grew due to higher birth rates and smuggling. This growing population increased the fear of slave revolts. The Denmark Vesey plot caused South Carolinians to become even more fearful of their slaves. Slave codes that had been developed as a result of the Stono rebellion during colonial times were strengthened to better protect white society. The General Assembly passed laws that prohibited slaves from meeting, learning to read and write and that regulated all aspects of slaves’ lives. A similar uprising in Virginia, the Nat Turner Rebellion, further increased tension throughout the region. Southerners feared that if slavery could not expand into the territories eventually the national government would be in the hands of the North, slavery would be outlawed and Southerners would have among them a large African American population that they could not control.

Tension also arose as a result of the growing abolitionist movement. The goal of the Abolitionist Movement was to outlaw slavery throughout the United States. Although abolitionism grew in the North, it was effective in South Carolina only in making slave owners more determined to hold onto their ‘peculiar institution.’ Abolitionists were active in South Carolina prior to the uncovering of the Denmark Vesey plot. However, after the plot was uncovered, abolitionists such as Sarah and Angelina Grimke were forced to either leave the state or keep silent. It is important for students to understand that the abolitionist movement was not popular among most northerners. The abolitionist movement grew with the publication of antislavery newspapers such as *The Liberator* by William A Garrison. Postmasters across South Carolina removed from the mails what they considered inflammatory materials including anti-slavery newspapers. However they could not keep abolitionists from reaching a larger and larger Northern audience. Southerners responded to abolitionists’ criticism by claiming that slavery was a ‘positive good,’ because slaves were cared for throughout their lives, unlike northern laborers that they termed ‘wage slaves.’ Abolitionists manned the Underground Railroad with limited impact in South Carolina since the state was too far from the border with “free states” to make this escape route effective. Abolitionists played a role in all of the incidents that furthered tension between the North and the South (8-4.3).

Sectionalism was furthered also by changes in the Northern economy and politics. The development of industry in the North attracted European immigrants to jobs there. The resulting growth of population allowed the Northern states to have a larger representation in the House of Representatives. Another political party that supported a strong national government, called the Whigs, emerged to compete with Democrats, many of whom were southerners, for control of the presidency and Congress. Concern over the North’s greater voice in Congress led the South to compete rigorously for the admission of new states as slave states in order to maintain the balance of slave and free states in the Senate.