**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 . . .

**8-4.4 Evaluate the arguments of unionists, cooperationists, and secessionists on the issues of states’ rights and slavery and the ways that these arguments contributed to South Carolina’s secession.**

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

Members of the South Carolina secession convention in 1860 voted unanimously to secede from the Union. However, there were South Carolinians who strongly discouraged secession prior to the national election of 1860. Unionists favored the idea of remaining part of the Union. Although Unionists did not necessarily agree with the actions of the Northern states or the federal government, they believed that the United States Constitution was well-equipped to protect South Carolina’s way of life. Cooperationists were South Carolinians who favored seceding from the Union. However, this was a last resort and only if it was done with the support of all of the southern states. They believed that it would be a big mistake for South Carolina to secede without the cooperation and support of other southern states. On the other hand, secessionists, also known as radicals or fire-eaters, argued that breaking apart from the Union was the only answer for South Carolina. They believed that the issue was not debatable and had been ready to secede since as early as 1852. The events of the 1850s and the election of Lincoln convinced most South Carolinians to support the position of the fire-eaters.

When it became clear that Lincoln was to be the 16th president of the United States, the leaders of South Carolina carried through with their threat to secede. The South Carolina legislature issued a call for a convention to determine the relationship between South Carolina and the Union. The convention met at the First Baptist Church in Columbia but rumors of a smallpox outbreak led them to quickly and conveniently adjourn and move to Charleston where support for secession was strongest. . When the meeting reconvened, the leaders unanimously adopted an Ordinance of Secession. This political statement said that the federal government should not interfere with the decision making and freedoms of the individual states (states’ rights). Because Lincoln was a Republican and therefore opposed to slavery in the territories, many Southerners assumed that the federal government would soon make slavery illegal. Ending slavery would, in turn, end southern wealth, political influence and way of life. Without waiting for Lincoln to be inaugurated, South Carolina and six other southern states seceded from the union to protect the institution of slavery upon which their way of life depended.