

Study and Discussion Questions

1. Judging by this book alone, what caused the Civil War, and what caused Virginia's secession? Judging by everything else you know, do the documents in this book yield satisfying answers to these questions of causation?
2. Judging by this book alone, was the Civil War and/or Virginia's secession inevitable, once Lincoln was elected? Judging by everything else you know, do the documents in this book yield satisfying answers to these questions of inevitability?
3. Do the secessionists or the Unionists win the debate in Part One of this book?
4. Does Baldwin or Wise win the debate in Ch. 26 of this book?
5. Which of the Unionist speakers and/or arguments in Part 1 do you find most persuasive? If you had been in the convention, how would you have given an even more persuasive Unionist speech? Which Unionist speaker and/or argument do you find least persuasive and why?
6. Which of the secessionist speakers and/or arguments in Part 1 do you find most persuasive? If you had been in the convention, how would you have given an even more persuasive secessionist speech? Which secessionist speaker and/or argument do you find least persuasive and why?
7. The editors of this book have highlighted the taxation issue by putting it in a separate Part 2. Do you think they have thereby overemphasized the importance of this issue?
8. How seriously was Virginia split between upper and lower classes? Or put another way, were nonslaveholders a serious threat to slaveholders' dominance?
9. How seriously was Virginia split between geographic regions? Or put another way, were the northwesteners a serious threat to eastern Virginians' control?
10. Why did western Virginians secede from Virginia? Could eastern Virginians have avoided that secession? If they had, do you think the Confederacy might have won the Civil War?
11. Was Virginia's secession decision a legitimately democratic decree?