Document #2 Continued - Excerpts from Textbooks

The War Begins at Fort Sumter

On an island in the harbor of Charleston, South Carolina stood Fort Sumter. Although South Carolina claimed the fort, Union troops still occupied it. By the beginning of April 1861, however, the Union commander, Major Robert Anderson, reported that his supplies were almost used up. Lincoln ordered that the fort be re-supplied. He hoped that the Confederates would not fire at the supply ships. If they did, though he could blame the Confederacy for starting war.

General Pierre Beauregard was commander of the Confederate troops in Charleston. All of his cannons were aimed directly at Fort Sumter. His orders were to open fire if any attempt was made to re-supply the fort.

As Northern ships approached the harbor, Beauregard's determined troops stood near their guns. Talks aimed at avoiding a battle had failed. Anderson's troops took their places. At 4:30 in the morning of April 12, the Confederate gunner opened fire.

The shelling lasted 34 hours. The people of Charleston watched the bombardment from rooftops. Inside the fort, fires broke out, ammunition ran low, and no help was in sight. The Union troops stayed under cover as best they could.

Major Anderson surrendered on April 13. The last troops were taken away by the Union supply ships, which had anchored outside the harbor during the bombardment. No one was hurt until after the surrender, when Northern soldiers fired a salute as their flag came down. A spark fell into some gunpowder, and it exploded. On man was killed and five were injured.

As Lincoln had thought would happen, the Confederate attack on Fort Sumter caused a gigantic wave of patriotism to seep across the Northern states. People there were enraged by the insult to their glorious Stars and Stripes. Thus, the capture of Fort Sumter had great importance. It allowed Lincoln to gain tremendous support very quickly for a war against secession. This support helped him greatly in the early months of the war.

A History of the American Nation pg. 417-418