The Civil War: The Cause

Introduction
Beginning with a searing indictment of slavery, Ken Burns’s first episode dramatically evokes the causes of the war, from the Cotton Kingdom of the South to the northern abolitionists who opposed it. Here are the burning questions of Union and States’ rights, John Brown at Harper’s Ferry, the election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860, the firing on Fort Sumter and the jubilant rush to arms on both sides. Along the way the series’ major figures are introduced: Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, Robert E. Lee, Ulysses S. Grant and a host of lesser-known but equally vivid characters. The episode comes to a climax with the disastrous Union defeat at Manassas, Virginia, where both sides now learn it is to be a very long war.

Detailed Episode Description with time code:

Prologue :00 -.01:29
Anecdote about Wilmer McLean who “could rightfully say, 'the war began in my front yard and ended in my front parlor.'"

1.1 Chapter 1 - THE CIVIL WAR Series Title :01:30 - 10:20
Introduction to the war and to the important characters in the series.

1.2 Chapter 2 - The Cause :10:21 - :12:28
America in 1861-most of the nation's 31 million people live peaceably on farms and in small towns.
1.3 Chapter 3 - All Night Forever  :12:29 - :19:12
The brutal reality of slavery and its importance to the Southern cotton economy; the invention of the cotton gin.

1.4 Chapter 4 - Are We Free?  :19:13 - :23:35

1.5 Chapter 5 - A House Divided  :23:36 - :27:45
Events leading up to secession: Uncle Tom’s Cabin published in 1850; Supreme Court's Dred Scott Decision; political conflict over entry of new states in the Union. In 1858 Lincoln writes, "a house divided against itself cannot stand."
1.6 Chapter 6 - The Meteor :27:46 - :32:43
John Brown raids the arsenal at Harper's Ferry in 1859, and is captured by Colonel Robert E. Lee. The Southern militia now becomes a viable instrument; it is the beginning of the Confederate army.

1.7 Chapter 7 - Secessionitis :32:44 - :47:10
In 1860 Abraham Lincoln is elected President. The South is horrified. Introduction to George Templeton Strong, New York lawyer, and diarist. Seven Southern states secede in the time between Lincoln's election and inauguration. The Confederacy inaugurates Mississippi senator Jefferson Davis as President. Introduction to Mary Chesnut, wife of a prominent Southern planter and diarist.

1.8 Chapter 8 - 4:30 a.m. April 12, 1861 :47:11 - :52:09
Southern artillery attack a battalion of Northern troops inside Fort Sumter, off the coast of South Carolina in the first battle of the Civil War. When Union forces surrender, the South is jubilant. Walt Whitman writes, "all the past we leave behind with Sumter."

1.9 Chapter 9 - Traitors and Patriots 52:10 - 1:04:16
Lincoln calls for 75,000 volunteers -- Davis asks for 100,000. Introductions to: Northern soldier (and diarist) Elisha Hunt Rhodes, Southern soldier (and diarist) Sam Watkins. U.S. Grant, William Tecumseh Sherman, Nathan Bedford Forrest and Robert E. Lee.

1.10 Chapter 10 - Gun Men 1:04:17 - 1:12:17
The first Union troops arrive in Washington. Wherever the Union army goes in the South, slavery crumbles. Slaves fleeing their plantations for the Union lines are considered "contraband" of war and are not returned to their former owners.

1.11 Chapter 11 - Manassas 1:12:18 - 1:24:07
When the Union army marches into Virginia, Confederate troops engage them at the Battle of Bull Run/Manassas. The battle, thanks in part to "Stonewall" Jackson, is a Southern victory with an unprecedented 5,000 casualties. Union troops limp back to Washington.
1.12 Chapter 12 - A Thousand Mile Front 1:24:08 - 1:31:17
General George McClellan takes command of the Union army with an elaborate plan to destroy the Confederacy, but does nothing. U.S. Grant is assigned to desk duty; William T. Sherman resigns, close to suicide.

1.13 Chapter 13 - Honorable Manhood 1:31:18 - 1:34:50
Sullivan Ballou, a Northern soldier, writes a letter home to his wife before the Battle of Bull Run.
The Cause: Timeline

1787: The United States Constitution is ratified; slaves are counted as three-fifths of a person and enjoy no rights of citizenship.
1793 Eli Whitney, a northerner, invents the cotton gin.
1803 Louisiana Purchase roughly doubles the size of the United States.
1831 55 whites killed in Virginia slave revolt led by Nat Turner.
1837 Pro-slavery mob kills abolitionist editor Elijah P. Lovejoy in Alton, Illinois.
1846- War with Mexico adds territory to the United States.
1848
1852 Harriet Beecher Stowe’s international best-seller, Uncle Tom’s Cabin, exposes the evils of slavery.
1854-5 Anti-slavery northerners found the Republican Party.
1854 The Kansas-Nebraska Act allows incoming settlers to decide for themselves whether to permit slavery.
1857 The Supreme Court decides that a slave, Dred Scott, has no rights a white man is bound to respect.
1858 Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas debate issues in the campaign for Illinois United States Senate seat.
1859 John Brown is executed for treason against the state of Virginia after his unsuccessful attempt to incite a slave uprising at Harpers Ferry.
1860 Abraham Lincoln is elected President of the United States.
1861 February - The Confederate States of America is formed, with Jefferson Davis sworn in as president.
1861 March 4 - Abraham Lincoln inaugurated as President of the United States.
1861 April 12 – Confederates fires on Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor, South Carolina.
1861 April 14 – Lincoln calls for 75,000 volunteers to put down the insurrection.
1861 April 18 – Virginia’s Robert E. Lee rejects Lincoln’s request to command the Union army.
1861 April 19 – Lincoln orders the blockade of ports in Confederate states.
1861 July 21 – Battle of First Manassas (Bull Run) in Virginia; 4,878 casualties.

The information on this handout is taken from the official PBS website for Ken Burns’s film, The Civil War http://www.pbs.org/civilwar