CHAPTER 12

Expansion and Slavery

ANTICIPATION/REACTION

Directions: Before you begin reading this chapter, place a check mark beside any of the following seven statements with which you now agree. Use the column entitled “Anticipation.” When you have completed your study of this chapter, come back to this section and place a check mark beside any of the statements with which you then agree. Use the column entitled “Reaction.” Note any variation in the placement of check marks from anticipation to reaction and explain why you changed your mind.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anticipation</th>
<th>Reaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>_____ 1.</td>
<td>_____ 1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephen F. Austin commanded Texas’ army during the Texas Revolution in 1835-1836.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____ 2.</td>
<td>_____ 2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the mid-nineteenth century, most Americans believed it was God’s will that the United States govern all of North America.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____ 3.</td>
<td>_____ 3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attack by Indians was the most common and serious problem faced by pioneers on the Oregon Trail.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third parties were of little significance in presidential politics from 1836 to 1852.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____ 5.</td>
<td>_____ 5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Americans rallied to support President Polk and the war against Mexico in 1846-1848.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States acquisition of Mexican territory in 1848 had little effect on the slavery controversy in the United States.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____ 7.</td>
<td>_____ 7.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The 1850 Fugitive Slave Law was enacted to protect runaway slaves from recapture by hired southern slave catchers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading Chapter 12 you should be able to:

1. Define “manifest destiny” and relate it to the conduct of American diplomacy in the 1840s.
2. Explain why the United States and Mexico went to war in 1846 and explain how the United States won the war.
3. Describe how the terms of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo set the stage for a renewed debate over slavery in the United States.
4. State the terms of the Compromise of 1850 and explain why it was thought by many to be the final solution to the slavery issue.
5. Compare and contrast the views of national leaders as they debated the issue of slavery in the territories between 1845 and 1850.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Tyler’s Troubles

President John Tyler, a proud but unimaginative man, did not get along well with Whig leaders in Congress. One of them, Senator Henry Clay, designed a congressional program that ignored Tyler’s states’ rights views. Clay wanted to create a new national bank, raise tariffs, distribute surplus federal funds back to the states, and, with the Preemption Act, legalize the right of squatters to occupy and purchase unsurveyed public land. Tyler vetoed the Bank bill and, once Congress repealed the Distribution Act, signed the Tariff of 1842 raising tariff rates.

The Webster-Ashburton Treaty

Tyler’s secretary of state, Daniel Webster, negotiated a settlement of the disputed boundary between Maine and New Brunswick. The popular Webster-Ashburton Treaty was a workable compromise that avoided injury to vital business relations between the United States and Great Britain.

The Texas Question

By 1830, thousands of Americans were occupying free land in Mexican Texas and were commonly defying Mexican laws governing religion and slavery. Mexican authorities attempted, without success, to close the Texas border to further American immigration. Resentful American immigrants in Texas rose in revolt against President Santa Anna’s dictatorship in 1835. After massacres at the Alamo and Goliad, Sam Houston’s Texan army defeated Mexican forces at San Jacinto, who then retreated across the Rio Grande. President Jackson then recognized the new government of the independent Republic of Texas. Most Texans wanted Texas annexed to the United States, but fear of war with Mexico and concern that it might stir up the slavery controversy delayed the annexation of Texas until 1845. Meanwhile, much to the annoyance of Americans, especially southerners, Texas developed friendly ties to Great Britain.
**Manifest Destiny**

Since the first colonial founding, Americans had continuously expanded their territorial holdings. By the 1840s Americans were confident that one day the United States would be a powerful nation stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific. It was, they thought, the “manifest destiny” of Americans (God’s chosen people) to occupy and exploit the entire continent and make it a showcase of democracy and economic opportunity.

**Life on the Trail**

Pioneers heading west more often faced dangers from accidents, poor sanitation, and exposure than from Indian attack. The demands of westward migration required family self-sufficiency where all labor was shared. Letters and journals reveal that life on the trail was especially taxing for women made weary and disillusioned by the difficulties of day-to-day existence.

**California and Oregon**

California and Oregon were the favorite destinations of westward pioneers in the 1840s. “Oregon fever”—a form of patriotic crusade and land rush produced by manifest destiny and the glowing reports of the lush Willamette Valley—gripped the nation. Thousands of pioneers embarked on the Oregon Trail that stretched from Missouri to the Columbia River. Most pioneers were young families, usually from the Ohio Valley, who undertook the five-month ordeal of labor, discomfort, and uncertainty as a self-governing community on the move. West Coast harbors also offered economic opportunity to eastern merchants. They were the keys to trade with the Orient. Because Mexico owned California and the British had claims in the Oregon Country, these became objects of diplomatic concern to American leaders.

**The Election of 1844**

But it was Texas that dominated the politics of 1844. Clay and Van Buren wanted to ignore the Texas annexation issue, but the Democrats nominated “dark horse” expansionist James K. Polk, who pledged the “reannexation” of Texas and “reoccupation” of Oregon. The election was extremely close. The decisive factor was the abolitionist Liberty party’s capture of enough votes in New York to deny its Electoral College votes to Clay. Polk’s narrow victory was taken as a mandate for expansion, and Congress passed a joint resolution to annex Texas. In December 1845, Texas became a state.

**Polk as President**

James K. Polk was an uncommonly successful president. Congress followed his leadership to lower the tariff, restore the independent treasury, and halt federal funding of internal improvements. He also successfully pursued the acquisition of Oregon and California. Polk’s
astute diplomacy with Great Britain led to the division of the Oregon country at the 49th Parallel from the Rockies to the Pacific, yet gave the United States use of the Strait of Juan de Fuca into Puget Sound.

**War with Mexico**

In 1846, the expansionist spirit in the United States would bully proud Mexico into a war for territorial conquest. When Texas was annexed in 1845, Mexico, who had never recognized Texas’ independence, broke diplomatic relations with the United States. Polk sent General Zachary Taylor’s army to South Texas to defend the disputed border with Mexico. He then sent John Slidell to Mexico City with an offer to settle the dispute in Texas and buy California. Mexican authorities rejected Slidell, Polk ordered Taylor’s army to the Rio Grande, and hostilities began. Polk, treating the matter as a *fait accompli*, asked Congress for a declaration of war. Taylor’s army enjoyed immediate success against a poorly equipped and poorly led Mexican army.

**To the Halls of Montezuma**

Polk was an effective commander-in-chief, but his top ranking generals were Whigs. This injected divisive partisanship into the conduct of the war. Further, from the outset, Polk faced opposition to the war: Many northerners feared the war would lead to the expansion of slavery, and some Whigs alleged that Polk had deceived Congress and provoked an unnecessary war of aggression against Mexico.

The Mexican War was a continuous series of military victories by American armies in a three-pronged invasion of Mexico. United States forces, with the help of American settlers already there, occupied California. Taylor’s army occupied northern Mexico, and, after a successful amphibious landing at Vera Cruz and overland march, General Winfield Scott’s army captured Mexico City.

**The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo**

Polk sent diplomat Nicholas Trist to negotiate a peace treaty in Mexico City. In the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Mexico accepted the Texas boundary at the Rio Grande and ceded New Mexico and Upper California to the United States. The United States agreed to pay Mexico $15 million and assume $3.25 million of Mexican debts owed to American citizens.

**The Fruits of Victory: Further Enlargement of the United States**

In the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the United States acquired an immense amount of new territory at relatively small cost. As a consequence, the wealth of the 1848-1849 California gold
rush would enrich the United States, not Mexico. This seemed an ultimate confirmation of manifest destiny.

**Slavery: The Fire Bell in the Night Rings Again**

While prosperity came from territorial expansion, sectional harmony did not. Once again the nation had to answer the question, Is slavery to be allowed into the territories of the United States? The Constitution prevented any federal control of slavery in the states, but it gave Congress complete control in the territories. This was where slavery’s opponents could combat the institution they deplored.

Pennsylvania Congressman David Wilmot opened the debate with a proviso that would have prevented the expansion of slavery into the territory acquired from Mexico. It passed the House, but failed in the Senate where John C. Calhoun argued that Congress had no right to bar slavery from any territory. Others tried to find grounds for compromise between Wilmot and Calhoun. Polk suggested extending the 36° 30’ line of the Missouri Compromise to the Pacific coast. Michigan Senator Lewis Cass proposed to settle the issue by “popular sovereignty”—organizing the territories without mention of slavery and letting local settlers decide whether theirs would be a free or slave territory. This seemed a democratic way to solve the problem and it allowed Congress to escape having to make the decision.

**The Election of 1848**

Neither the Whigs who nominated Zachary Taylor nor the Democrats who backed Lewis Cass took a position on the issue of slavery in the territories in the 1848 presidential campaign. But Liberty party abolitionists and “barnburner” Democrats who opposed the expansion of slavery formed the Free Soil party and nominated Martin Van Buren. Offered a choice among Taylor’s honest ignorance, Cass’ cynical opportunism, and Van Buren’s principled conviction, voters chose the first of these and elected Taylor by a narrow margin.

**The Gold Rush**

Still, the question of slavery in the territories had to be faced. Thousands flooded into California’s gold fields in 1848-1849, provoking ethnic conflict and demands for a territorial government. Hoping to avoid reopening the slavery controversy, President Taylor proposed to admit California to statehood without the prior organization of a territorial government. Californians submitted an antislavery constitution with their request for admission. Southerners were outraged because they felt betrayed by the slave-owning Taylor and because the admission of California would give the free states a majority and control of the Senate.
The Compromise of 1850

Once again, Henry Clay rose to offer a compromise that might settle every sectional conflict related to slavery. He proposed that California be admitted as a free state, the remainder of the Mexican Cession be organized without mention of slavery, a Texas-New Mexico boundary controversy be settled in New Mexico’s favor, Texas be compensated with a federal assumption of its preannexation debt, the slave trade (but not slavery) be abolished in Washington, D.C., and a more effective fugitive slave law be enacted and vigorously enforced.

Clay’s proposals generated a great debate. Calhoun argued for a federal guarantee for slavery in all territories, Webster backed Clay’s proposals, and abolitionist Senator William Seward cited a “higher (moral) law” that bound him to oppose the return of fugitive slaves. The death of President Taylor broke the deadlock. Senator Stephen Douglas maneuvered the proposals through Congress, including the antilibertarian Fugitive Slave Act that denied those who were accused of being runaway slaves a jury trial and compelled northerners to cooperate in their capture. The proposals passed one by one, and for the time the Compromise of 1850 preserved the Union.

PEOPLE, PLACES, AND THINGS

Define the following:

Manifest Destiny

______________________________

______________________________

joint resolution

______________________________

______________________________

popular sovereignty

______________________________

______________________________

Describe the following:

Distribution Act

______________________________

______________________________

Webster-Ashburton Treaty

______________________________
Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo

Wilmot Proviso

Free Soil party

Fugitive Slave Act

Compromise of 1850

*Identify the following:*

John Tyler

Henry Clay

Daniel Webster

Stephen F. Austin

Santa Anna
Sam Houston

John C. Calhoun

James K. Polk

Zachary Taylor

John Slidell

Winfield Scott

Nicholas P. Trist

Lewis Cass

Barnburners

Martin Van Buren

Stephen A. Douglas
Locate the following places. Write in both the place name and its map location number.

1. The state whose boundary was involved in the Webster-Ashburton Treaty.

________________________________________________________    ______________

2. The site of the battle where Texan troops were all killed while attempting to stop a Mexican army invasion of Texas in 1835.

________________________________________________________    ______________

3. Three major Pacific ports acquired by the United States in the 1840s.

________________________________________________________    ______________
________________________________________________________    ______________
________________________________________________________    ______________

4. The river where a military skirmish ignited the Mexican War in 1846.

________________________________________________________    ______________

5. The independent nation that was annexed by the United States in 1845.

________________________________________________________    ______________
6. The boundary line established in the Oregon Settlement in 1846.

7. The state admitted to the Union as a free state in the Compromise of 1850.

8. The territories where, in the Compromise of 1850, the question of slavery was left open to resolution by popular sovereignty.

SELF-TEST

Multiple-Choice Questions

1. All but one of President Tyler’s cabinet members resigned in protest when he vetoed a bill to
   A. distribute surplus federal funds back to the states.
   B. establish a new Bank of the United States.
   C. allow squatters to occupy and buy unsurveyed public land.
   D. prevent the expansion of slavery into any unoccupied territory.

2. The Webster-Ashburton Treaty dealt with the question of
   A. joint United States-British occupation of Oregon.
   B. United States annexation of Texas.
   C. the United States’ boundary with Canada.
   D. the United States’ boundary with Mexico.

3. Mexican authorities were so alarmed by the number of American settlers in Texas by 1830 that they
   A. canceled all land grants given to Americans.
   B. sent an invading army under the command of Santa Anna.
   C. required the Americans to learn and speak Spanish.
   D. closed the Texas border to any further American immigration.
4. The United States refused to annex Texas in 1836 because
   A. most of Texas’ inhabitants were native Mexicans.
   B. Texans did not want to be annexed to the United States.
   C. the American government was opposed to armed rebellions against established governments.
   D. of fear that it would provoke war with Mexico.

5. The phrase “manifest destiny” expressed a popular attitude favoring
   A. the abolition of slavery.
   B. evangelical revivalism.
   C. slavery.
   D. territorial expansion.

6. Migration to Oregon in the 1840s was stimulated by
   A. Mormon missionaries who had explored the area.
   B. the discovery of gold in the Columbia River.
   C. reports of rich agricultural land there.
   D. the Hudson Bay Company’s boom in the fur trade.

7. The destination of most of those who took the Oregon Trail was the
   A. Sacramento Valley.
   B. Willamette Valley.
   C. Great Salt Lake.
   D. port cities of San Diego and San Francisco.

8. James Polk’s election to the presidency in 1844 was taken to be a popular endorsement for
   A. extending slavery into the territories of the United States.
   B. war with Mexico.
   C. acquiring new territories.
   D. reopening the slave trade.

9. Match the territory in the left column with its manner of attachment to the United States.
   A. California  1. annexed by joint resolution of Congress
   B. Oregon     2. claimed by treaty with Britain
   C. Texas      3. acquired by conquest of Mexico
   D. purchased from Spain

   A. A-1, B-2, C-3  
   B. A-4, B-2, C-3  
   C. A-3, B-2, C-4  
   D. A-3, B-2, C-1
10. All of the following preceded the United States’ war with Mexico EXCEPT
   A. Zachary Taylor’s forces occupied the territory just north of the Rio Grande.
   B. an emissary was sent to Mexico to try to purchase California.
   C. Texas was annexed to the United States.
   D. gold was discovered in California.

11. Of those listed here, the earliest battle of the Mexican War was
   A. Resaca de la Palma.
   B. Monterey.
   C. Vera Cruz.
   D. Cerro Gordo.

12. Put in proper sequence, the United States acquired (A) Oregon, (B) Texas, (C) California
   A. A then B then C
   B. C then B then A
   C. B then A then C
   D. B then C then A

13. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was negotiated by
   A. Nicholas Trist.
   B. Winfield Scott.
   C. John Slidell.
   D. William Seward.

14. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo provided for all of the following EXCEPT
   A. Mexican recognition of the Rio Grande as its border with Texas.
   B. United States’ acquisition of both California and New Mexico.
   C. a $15 million payment from the United States to Mexico.
   D. prohibition of slavery in the territories Mexico ceded to the United States.

15. If it had passed Congress, the Wilmot Proviso would have
   A. banned slavery from the territory ceded by Mexico to the United States.
   B. reopened the territory north of 36° 30_ to slavery.
   C. left the question of slavery to be decided by vote of territorial legislatures.
   D. provided for immediate admission of California as a free state.

16. In the election of 1848, opposition to expansion of slavery into the territories was the position taken by
   A. Zachary Taylor.
   B. Lewis Cass.
   C. Martin Van Buren.
   D. James Polk.
17. In 1849, President Taylor outraged his southern supporters with his proposal to
   A. ban slavery from all U.S. territories.
   B. admit California as a free state.
   C. endorse the concept of popular sovereignty.
   D. veto the Wilmot Proviso.

18. The major concession made to the South in the Compromise of 1850 was the proposal regarding the
   A. return of fugitive slaves.
   B. Texas-New Mexico boundary dispute.
   C. slave trade in Washington, D.C.
   D. admission of California to statehood.

19. The most upsetting proposal in the Compromise of 1850 to northerners was that it
   A. legalized slavery in Washington, D.C.
   B. gave the southern states control of the Senate.
   C. guaranteed the protection of slave property in the territories.
   D. compelled them to cooperate in the capture of runaway slaves.

20. Arrange these events in their proper time order: (A) David Wilmot proposes a proviso in Congress, (B) the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ends the Mexican War, (C) Congress passes the Compromise of 1850, (D) Zachary Taylor is elected president.
   A. A, B, C, D
   B. B, A, D, C
   C. C, D, B, A
   D. A, B, D, C

**Essay Questions**

1. Explain why Americans were susceptible to the expansionist impulses of manifest destiny in the 1840s.

2. State the causes of the Mexican War. Do you think President Polk provoked Mexico into an unnecessary war? Why or why not?

3. Describe the relationship between the Mexican War, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the Wilmot Proviso, and the great debate on slavery in the territories that led to the Compromise of 1850.

4. State the terms of the Compromise of 1850 and explain why many thought this was the final solution to the slavery issue in the United States.
5. Compare and contrast the views of Clay, Calhoun, Taylor, and Cass on the issue of slavery in the territories. Whose position do you find most persuasive? Why?

**Critical Thinking Exercise**

**Cause and Effect**

In previous chapters you completed exercises dealing with causal chains and with contributory causes to historical events. In this exercise you will consider both of these in relation to three events: Texas annexation to the United States, the Mexican War, and the Compromise of 1850.

*Each of the following three groups of items is a causal chain leading to the stated effect. Arrange the items in the chain in correct chronological order by numbering them in the sequence in which they occurred.*

1. Effect: Texas Annexation

   ______ Republic of Texas created
   ______ Texas Revolution begins
   ______ President Jackson recognizes the Republic of Texas
   ______ Battle of the Alamo
   ______ James K. Polk elected president

2. Effect: Mexican War

   ______ John Slidell’s mission to Mexico City
   ______ Texas annexation
   ______ General Taylor’s army skirmishes with Mexican troops on the Rio Grande
   ______ Mexico breaks diplomatic relations with the United States
   ______ General Taylor’s army sent to South Texas
3. Effect: Compromise of 1850

- Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo
- Free Soil party organized
- Wilmot Proviso introduced to Congress
- California gold rush
- President Taylor dies

*In the following exercise, describe how each of the listed items was a contributory cause of the effect indicated.*

4. Effect: Texas Annexation

- Election of 1844

- British interest in Texas

5. Effect: Mexican War

- Annexation of Texas

- Manifest Destiny

- Mexican policies

- Election of 1844
President Polk’s diplomacy

6. Effect: Compromise of 1850

Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo

death of President Taylor

popular sovereignty

Stephen A. Douglas