CHAPTER 14

The Coming of the Civil War

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>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>_____ 1. While a literary and theatrical success, Harriet Beecher Stowe’s</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uncle Tom’s Cabin had little impact on public opinion toward slavery.</td>
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<td>_____ 2. The Kansas-Nebraska Act provoked a strong reaction because it</td>
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<td>proposed a more radical solution to the problem of slavery in the</td>
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<td>territories than had the Compromise of 1850.</td>
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<td>_____ 3. The Republican party founded in 1856 was the political voice of</td>
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<td>northern radical abolitionists.</td>
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<td>_____ 4. The Dred Scott decision implied that slavery could be legal</td>
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<td>anywhere in the United States.</td>
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<td>_____ 5. The Lincoln-Douglas debates were a public airing of the</td>
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<td>antislavery versus proslavery positions taken by the North and South</td>
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<td>before the Civil War.</td>
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<td>_____ 6. Lincoln’s election in 1860 was a popular mandate in support of</td>
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<tr>
<td>emancipating southern slaves.</td>
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<td>_____ 7. The primary reason the South seceded in 1861 was to defend</td>
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<td>slavery.</td>
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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading Chapter 14 you should be able to:

1. Explain why the Compromise of 1850 failed to end the debate on slavery.
2. Describe the purpose, provisions, and impact of the Kansas-Nebraska Act.
3. Assess the role of Kansas Territory in the crises of the 1850s.
4. Evaluate the contribution of the Dred Scott decision, Lincoln-Douglas debates, John Brown’s raid, and election of 1860 to the coming of the Secession Crisis.

5. Describe the roles of Stephen A. Douglas and Abraham Lincoln in the key events of the period 1850-1861.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

The Slave Power Comes North

The 1850 Fugitive Slave Act, which imposed fines for protecting runaway slaves, panicked northern blacks and encouraged more southerners to try to recover escaped slaves. Abolitionists often interfered with the enforce ment of the law, and their efforts aggravated sectional feelings. The sight of blacks being carried off to slavery outraged many northerners, and southerners resented the northerners’ refusal to obey the law. The Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the Fugitive Slave Act, but the law became increasingly difficult to enforce in the North.

Uncle Tom’s Cabin

Sectional tension was also heightened by the publication of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novel, Uncle Tom’s Cabin. Like other northerners, Stowe’s conscience had been stirred by the Fugitive Slave Act. While Stowe knew little about slavery and her depiction of plantation life was distorted, her story had sympathetic characters and it was told with sensitivity. She was the first white American writer to look at slaves as people.

Diversions Abroad: The “Young America” Movement

Foreign affairs offered a distraction from the growing sectional hostility. Sympathies were extended to European revolutionaries struggling against autocratic government. Some adventurous Americans also dreamed of territorial acquisitions in Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean. The need for better communication with California resulted in the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty that gave the United States and Britain joint control of any canal built across Central America. American diplomats who signed the Ostend Manifesto proposed the acquisition of Cuba by force if necessary, but when northerners charged that this was a plot to expand slavery, the manifesto was disavowed. The United States also signed a trade agreement and opened diplomatic and commercial relations with Japan in this period.
Stephen Douglas: “The Little Giant”

Senator Stephen A. Douglas saw the needs of the nation in a broad perspective. He advocated territorial expansion and popular sovereignty. He opposed slavery and thought natural conditions would keep it out of the West, but he did not find slavery morally repugnant. Generally, he thought it was unwise and unnecessary for the nation to expend its energy on the slavery issue. He was a rising star in the Democratic party and in national politics. In the 1852 presidential campaign both major parties endorsed the Comprise of 1850, but as the slavery debate became more heated, the Whig party was disintegrating, and proslavery southerners were coming to dominate both the Democratic party and Congress.

The Kansas-Nebraska Act

In 1854, Douglas introduced a bill to organize the Nebraska Territory. The area had a growing population and Douglas hoped to speed construction of a transcontinental railroad through the territory. Southerners balked because they wanted the railroad built further south through territory acquired in the Gadsden Purchase, and they feared Nebraska would become a free state. Under southern pressure, Douglas amended his bill to divide the territory into the Kansas-Nebraska Territory and open it to the possibility of slavery by popular sovereignty. Many northerners were outraged at this proposal to repeal of the Missouri Compromise that had banned slavery north of 36° 30’. Nevertheless, with solid southern support, the bill passed and the nation took a giant step toward disunion. Northerners denounced the act as “a gross violation of [the Missouri Compromise’s] . . . sacred pledge” to keep slavery out of the territories.

Know-Nothings, Republicans, and the Demise of the Two-Party System

The Kansas-Nebraska Act compelled former Whigs and antislavery northern Democrats to join new parties. Nativists, who blamed the recent flood of Catholic immigrants for causing many social problems, founded the Know-Nothing party. The party enjoyed support in both the North and South because it was flexible on the slavery issue. More significant in the long run was the founding of the Republican party, a purely sectional party dedicated to opposing the expansion of slavery into the territories. Republicans were not abolitionists, but appealed to the growing sentiment among northerners that blacks-free or slave-must be kept out of the West.

“Bleeding Kansas”

Kansas Territory became a testing ground over slavery and it eventually exposed a fatal flaw in the idea of popular sovereignty. The Kansas-Nebraska Act had been ambiguous about when a vote on slavery in the territory would be held and who would be allowed to vote. Thus, both sections sought to influence the situation in Kansas: New England sent organized groups of antislavery settlers to Kansas, and proslavery Missourians crossed the border to vote in key
Kansas elections, making a mockery of the democratic process. The result was a virtual civil war in Kansas. The Pierce administration refused to insist on order and honesty; instead, it backed the proslavery element in Kansas.

**Senator Sumner Becomes a Martyr for Abolitionism**

Charles Sumner, an abolitionist senator from Massachusetts, relentlessly demeaned slavery and southerners alike. His combative insistence on the admission of Kansas as a free state and his personal attack on a southern senator resulted in his being assaulted by the senator’s nephew, South Carolina’s congressman, Preston Brooks. Northerners viewed the incident as an illustration of the brutalizing effects of slavery on southern whites.

**Buchanan Tries His Hand**

In the 1856 presidential election the Republicans nominated Mexican War hero, John C. Frémont, and reiterated free soil in the West as their objective. James Buchanan, the Democratic candidate, won by portraying the Republicans as a sectional party that threatened the survival of the Union. Republicans labeled Buchanan a “doughface”—they believed he lacked the force of character to stand up against southern extremists.

**The Dred Scott Decision**

The Dred Scott decision drove another wedge between North and South. Scott was a Missouri slave whose master had taken him into Illinois and Wisconsin Territory, then returned to Missouri. Scott sued for his freedom on the basis of his temporary residence on free soil. The real issue was the question of Congress’ authority to ban slavery from the territories. In 1857, the Supreme Court ruled that blacks were not citizens, so Scott could not sue in federal court. Further, the Court ruled that the Missouri Compromise (which had banned slavery from Wisconsin Territory) was unconstitutional because it violated the slaveowners’ Fifth Amendment guarantee of due process. The decision also seemed to challenge the concept of popular sovereignty, undercut the foundation of the Republican party, and potentially make slavery a national institution.

**The Lecompton Constitution**

President Buchanan tried to get Congress to accept Kansas’ proslavery Lecompton constitution and admit Kansas as a slave state. But Douglas, concerned for his reelection to the Senate and the credibility of popular sovereignty, opposed the fraudulently drawn constitution. This clash between Buchanan and Douglas shattered the Democratic party. Ultimately, both Congress and a large majority of Kansas’s voters rejected the Lecompton constitution.
The Emergence of Lincoln

To many, Douglas seemed the best hope to keep the Union from splitting apart. Illinois Republicans nominated Abraham Lincoln to oppose Douglas’ bid for reelection to the Senate in 1858. Lincoln had served a single term in the House during the Mexican War, and he was admired in Illinois for his wit and integrity. He was not an abolitionist and he did not blame southern slaveowners for slavery, but he condemned slavery as morally wrong. Although he had no immediate solution to the slavery problem, Lincoln insisted that the nation could not much longer remain divided over slavery.

The Lincoln-Douglas Debates

Although Lincoln and Douglas had contrasting styles, their campaign debates were pitched at a high intellectual level though they tended to exaggerate the differences between them. Both men opposed the expansion of slavery, and both believed blacks were inferior to whites, but neither was an abolitionist. Nevertheless, Douglas tried to portray Lincoln as an abolitionist and racial equalitarian, and he painted himself as the champion of democracy. Lincoln countered by pointing to his own opposition to black suffrage and black citizenship, and his opposition to repealing the Fugitive Slave Act. Lincoln tried to portray Douglas as proslavery and an unconscionable defender of the Dred Scott decision. Douglas countered by arguing in the Freeport Doctrine that slavery could still be “banned” in a territory by passing local laws that were hostile to slavery. The Freeport Doctrine probably won Douglas reelection, but it cost him southern support when he ran for president in 1860. The debates revitalized Lincoln’s political career.

Elsewhere in the North in 1858, the Republicans fared well. Still, a southern-dominated Congress refused to enact any of the Republicans’ pro-business proposals. Southerners were growing increasingly uneasy in their relationship with the North, and radical southern “fire-eaters” demanded a federal slave code, and talked of annexing Cuba and reopening the African slave trade.

John Brown’s Raid

John Brown, a mentally imbalanced abolitionist who had led a massacre of proslavery settlers in Kansas in 1856, organized a raid on the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, in 1859. He truly believed in racial equality and intended to foment a slave uprising and create a black republic. Southerners were outraged. Brown was captured and executed for treason. Republicans denounced Brown’s use of violence, but he conducted himself with such dignity during his trial that he was martyred by many in the North. But to southerners, John Brown was a symbol of northern ruthlessness.
The Election of 1860

Radicals in the North and South were heedlessly provoking one another, but extremists were more evident in the South. Yet, southerners sincerely felt they were merely defending themselves against the hostility and growing power of the North. Secession was openly talked about as a way to relieve the sectional tensions. Southern Democrats refused to nominate Douglas as the party’s presidential candidate in 1860, and the party split in two. Later, Northern Democrats nominated Douglas on a platform upholding the Freeport Doctrine, and Southern Democrats nominated Vice President John Breckenridge and insisted on enforcement of the Dred Scott decision.

The Republicans, drawn by his moderation, debating skills, and homespun personality, nominated Lincoln. Their platform unequivocally opposed slavery in the territories and advocated a high tariff, a homestead law, and the construction of a transcontinental railroad. With Lincoln as their nominee, Republicans hoped to capture the key states just north of the Ohio River. Remnants of the Know-Nothing (American) and Whig parties formed a Constitutional Union party, nominated Tennessee Senator John Bell, and endorsed the Constitution. Lincoln won the election with only a plurality of the popular vote, but he swept the North and West and amassed a comfortable electoral majority.

The Secession Crisis

When news of Lincoln’s election was confirmed, South Carolina seceded. By February 1861, six other Deep South states had seceded and founded the Confederate States of America. Secession came even though Lincoln posed no immediate threat to slavery in the South, the Democrats still controlled Congress, and the Supreme Court was decidedly pro-southern. Southern states seceded in part to liberate the southern economy from northern dominance, but it was also a move to defend slavery and resist dishonorable submission to northern power. Years of sectional conflict and the growing northern criticism of slavery destroyed the patriotic feelings of many southerners. States’ rights and strict constructionalism provided the rationale for secession, but these economic and emotional concerns were more basic.

Many northerners, including Lincoln, viewed secession as a bluff. Also, many southerners refused to believe northerners would resist secession with force. President Buchanan was paralyzed by his own view that secession was illegal, but that there was no legal way for the federal government to prevent it. Congressional moderates debated, then, at Lincoln’s insistence, rejected the Crittenden Compromise that would have guaranteed slavery south of 36° 30_ and constitutionally prohibited any future tampering with slavery in the slave states. In the South, Jefferson Davis was elected president of the Confederacy, and he set about trying to establish a new nation.
PEOPLE, PLACES, AND THINGS

Define the following:

“Young America” ____________________________

popular sovereignty __________________________

“Bleeding Kansas” ____________________________

“doughface” ____________________________

secession ____________________________

Describe the following:

Fugitive Slave Act ____________________________

Uncle Tom’s Cabin ____________________________

Clayton-Bulwer Treaty ____________________________

Ostend Manifesto ____________________________
Kansas-Nebraska Act

Dred Scott decision

Lecompton Constitution

Lincoln-Douglas debates

Freeport Doctrine

Harpers Ferry raid

Crittenden Compromise

Identify the following:

Harriet Beecher Stowe

Stephen A. Douglas

Franklin Pierce
Know-Nothing party

Republican party

New England Immigrant Aid Society

“border ruffians”

John Brown

Charles Sumner

John C. Frémont

James Buchanan

Abraham Lincoln

John Breckenridge

John Bell
SELF-TEST

Multiple-Choice Questions

1. In the early 1850s, enforcement of the ______ gave large numbers of northerners an eyewitness view of the heartlessness of slavery.
   A. Fugitive Slave Act
   B. Kansas-Nebraska Act
   C. Dred Scott decision
   D. Freeport Doctrine

2. Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* aroused northern outrage over the implications of the
   A. Lecompton Constitution.
   B. Fugitive Slave Act.
   C. Kansas-Nebraska Act.
   D. Dred Scott decision.

3. American acquisition of Cuba was advocated in the
   A. Compromise of 1850.
   B. Gadsden Purchase.
   C. Ostend Manifesto.
   D. Clayton-Bulwer Treaty.

4. In the 1850s, Senator Stephen Douglas became the national spokesman for
   A. popular sovereignty.
   B. banning slavery from American territories.
   C. a federal slave code.
   D. abolitionism.

5. Northerners thought they saw evidence of a slave power conspiracy designed to give southerners control of national policy in all these events EXCEPT the
   A. Ostend Manifesto.
   B. Kansas-Nebraska Act.
   C. Freeport Doctrine.
   D. Dred Scott decision.
6. To decide the fate of slavery in the territories, Stephen Douglas’ Kansas-Nebraska bill applied the same concept that had been used in the
   A. Northwest Ordinance.
   B. Wilmot Proviso.
   C. Missouri Compromise.
   D. Compromise of 1850.

7. The greatest beneficiary of the northern outrage over passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act was the _______ party.
   A. Democratic
   B. Whig
   C. Republican
   D. Know-Nothing

8. The concept of popular sovereignty caused problems when it was applied in Kansas because it
   A. was illegal.
   B. was ambiguous.
   C. carried a moral condemnation of slavery.
   D. made abolition a capital offense.

9. Charles Sumner was a Senate spokesman for
   A. popular sovereignty.
   B. abolitionism.
   C. secession.
   D. nativism.

10. It was NOT true that President Buchanan
    A. was a “doughface.”
    B. believed secession was legal.
    C. supported the Lecompton Constitution.
    D. supported the Dred Scott decision.

11. Which one of the following was NOT associated with the proslavery element in Kansas?
    A. the sack of Lawrence
    B. “border ruffians”
    C. Lecompton Constitution
    D. John Brown

12. In the Dred Scott decision, the Supreme Court did NOT rule that
    A. Dred Scott was legally held in slavery.
    B. Dred Scott was not a citizen of the United States.
    C. the Missouri Compromise was unconstitutional.
    D. slavery in the territories must be decided by popular sovereignty.
13. The Lecompton Constitution was approved by
   A. President Buchanan.
   B. Stephen Douglas.
   C. a majority of the eligible voters in Kansas.
   D. Republicans.

14. When he ran for the U.S. Senate from Illinois in 1858, Lincoln was generally considered _____ on the slavery issue.
   A. an abolitionist
   B. indifferent
   C. naive
   D. a moderate

15. In their 1858 debates, Lincoln and Douglas were in agreement as to the
   A. status of slavery in the territories.
   B. implication of the Dred Scott decision.
   C. probable inferiority of blacks.
   D. morality of slavery.

16. When he raided Harpers Ferry, John Brown apparently hoped to
   A. frighten the North and South into negotiating a compromise on slavery.
   B. provoke a slave insurrection.
   C. discredit northern abolitionists.
   D. help make Kansas a free state.

17. Match the 1860 presidential candidate with his position on the issue of slavery in the territories.
   A. Lincoln           1. federal slave code
   B. Douglas          2. ban slavery
   C. Breckenridge     3. popular sovereignty
   4. have Congress divide territories; half slave and half free
   A. A-1, B-2, C-3
   B. A-2, B-1, C-3
   C. A-3, B-1, C-2
   D. A-2, B-3, C-1

18. Which one of the following was NOT a feature of the election of 1860?
   A. The nation now had a president who had virtually no support in the South.
   B. The Republican party divided over the the issue of slavery in the territories.
   C. The Democratic party divided into hostile northern and southern wings.
   D. The winner won less than a majority of the popular vote.
19. The proposed Crittenden Compromise would have
   A. banned slavery in all U.S. territories.
   B. amended the Constitution to protect slavery.
   C. repealed the Fugitive Slave Act.
   D. repealed the Missouri Compromise.

20. Arrange these events in their proper time order: (A) Dred Scott decision, (B) Lincoln-Douglas debates, (C) Kansas-Nebraska Act, (D) Harpers Ferry raid
   A. A, C, B, D
   B. B, D, C, A
   C. C, A, B, D
   D. D, B, A, C

Essay Questions

1. Explain why it might be said that the South’s insistence on the strict enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Act may have been a fatal error.

2. Explain why “the nation took the greatest single step in its march toward the abyss of secession and civil war” when Congress passed the Kansas-Nebraska Act.

3. Explain why Kansas Territory came to be the focus of sectional hostilities in the mid-1850s.

4. Evaluate the importance of the Dred Scott decision, Lincoln-Douglas debates, Harpers Ferry raid, and the Election of 1860 to the coming of secession and civil war. Which of these events do you think was the most significant? Why?

5. Choose either Stephen Douglas or Abraham Lincoln. Then make an argument that he was the nation’s single most important political leader between 1852 and 1861.
Critical Thinking Exercise

Cause and Effect

Understanding the coming of the Civil War depends on your being able to see the chain of causal relationships that preceded it. In the following exercise, a series of effects is sequentially listed in Column B. Column A is a list of causes. You must match the appropriate cause in Column A with the effect it produced in Column B. Items in Column A may be used more than once.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column A (causes)</th>
<th>Column B (effects)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Catholic immigration reaches high levels</td>
<td>____ 1. northerners get first taste of “real” slavery</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Fugitive Slave Act strictly enforced</td>
<td>____ 2. Harriet Beecher Stowe writes <em>Uncle Tom’s Cabin</em></td>
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<td>c. John Brown’s Raid</td>
<td>____ 3. the Ostend Manifesto is repudiated</td>
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<td>d. popular sovereignty election generates conflict</td>
<td>____ 4. Kansas-Nebraska Bill introduced</td>
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<td>e. Lincoln wins the 1860 election</td>
<td>____ 5. northerners outraged at slavery expansion</td>
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<td>f. northerners charge a plot to expand slavery</td>
<td>____ 6. founding of the Know-Nothing party</td>
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<td>g. Republicans refuse to compromise on slavery in the territories</td>
<td>____ 7. founding of the Republican party</td>
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<td>h. northern outrage at the Kansas-Nebraska Act</td>
<td>____ 8. civil war in Kansas</td>
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<td>i. Missouri Compromise repealed</td>
<td>____ 9. slavery made legal in all territories</td>
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<td>j. Dred Scott decision</td>
<td>____10. Senator Douglas loses southern support</td>
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<td>k. Freeport Doctrine pronounced</td>
<td>____11. Southern fears of abolitionist threat</td>
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<td>l. interest develops in a transcontinental railroad from Chicago to San Francisco</td>
<td>____12. South Carolina secedes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>____13. the Crittenden Compromise proposals are rejected</td>
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