As Abraham Lincoln awaits the election returns in November 1860, three other Americans—Robert Allston, a South Carolina slave owner; Frederick Douglass, an escaped slave; and Michael Luark, an Iowa farmer—also watch the results of the election, each filled with intense concern over how the fate of the nation would affect his own.

### Slavery in the Territories
- Free Soil or Constitutional Protection?
- Popular Sovereignty and the Election of 1848
- The Compromise of 1850
- Consequences of Compromise

### Political Disintegration
- Weakened Party Politics in the Early 1850s
- The Kansas-Nebraska Act
- Expansionist “Young America” in the Larger World
- Nativism, Know-Nothings, and Republicans

### Kansas and the Two Cultures
- Competing for Kansas
- “Bleeding Kansas”
- Northern Views and Visions
- The Southern Perspective

### Polarization and the Road to War
- The Dred Scott Case
- Constitutional Crisis in Kansas
- Lincoln and the Illinois Debates
- John Brown's Raid
- The Election of 1860

### The Divided House Falls
- Secession and Uncertainty
- Lincoln and Fort Sumter

### Conclusion: The “Irrepressible Conflict”
(2) SIGNIFICANT THEMES AND HIGHLIGHTS

1. The heightened tensions surrounding the 1860 election and suggested by the anecdote indicate the central place the Civil War occupies in American history. The causes of the war that dissolved the Union, therefore, are crucial to an understanding of America's history. The causes reflect the interrelationship of politics, emotions, and sectional culture.

2. Historians have long debated, without resolution, the causes of the Civil War. This chapter focuses on four developments of the period between 1848 and 1861, each an important cause of war. The chapter weaves these developments together in an interpretive narrative account of both the events and the cultural values behind the events. The student is left to decide how the four causes interacted to bring about the war and which, if any, were more important than others.

3. Events in Kansas in 1855 and 1856 are highlighted as a specific microscopic illustration bringing together many of the forces that led Americans to secession and civil war in 1861.

4. The primary focus in this chapter is on national political developments involving nationally known figures because the Civil War was, after all, fundamentally a political event. Nevertheless, the chapter includes the comments of ordinary Americans, most frequently those of two figures from earlier chapters, runaway slave Frederick Douglass and South Carolina rice planter Robert Allston, as they observed the events of the 1850s leading to the outbreak of civil war.

(3) LEARNING GOALS

Familiarity with Basic Knowledge

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Explain four proposals for dealing with the territories acquired in the Mexican War and the four provisions of the Compromise of 1850.

2. Describe the breakdown of political parties in the early 1850s, explaining the disappearance of old parties and the emergence of new ones.

3. Outline the course of the Kansas-Nebraska Act and how it affected politics and sectional animosities in the mid-1850s.

4. Explain America's expansionist interest in Latin America.

5. Show how the events in Kansas in 1855 and 1856, the Dred Scott case, the emotional events of 1859-1860, and the election of Lincoln led to the secession crisis and the outbreak of the Civil War.

Practice in Historical Thinking Skills
After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Describe the differing cultural values of the South and North and each section's view of the other, and explain how these cultural differences helped lead to civil war.

2. Explain the development and significance of each of the four causes of the Civil War, citing four or five specific examples for each.

3. Evaluate the four causes, indicating which ones (or one) you think were most significant in explaining why the North and South went to war in 1861.

(4) IMPORTANT DATES AND NAMES TO KNOW

1832   Nullification crisis

1835-1840  Intensification of abolitionist attacks on slavery
           Violent retaliatory attacks on abolitionists

1840   Liberty party formed

1846   Wilmot Proviso

1848   Free-Soil party founded
       Zachary Taylor elected president

1850   Compromise of 1850, including Fugitive Slave Act

1850-1854  “Young America” movement

1851   Women's rights convention in Akron, Ohio

1852   Harriet Beecher Stowe publishes best-selling *Uncle Tom's Cabin*
       Franklin Pierce elected president

1853   Gadsden Purchase

1854   Ostend Manifesto
       Kansas-Nebraska Act nullifies Missouri Compromise
       Republican and Know-Nothing parties formed

1855   Walt Whitman publishes *Leaves of Grass*
1855-1856  Thousands pour into Kansas, creating months of turmoil and violence

1856  John Brown's massacre in Kansas
Sumner-Brooks incident in U.S. Senate, Washington D.C.
James Buchanan elected president

1857  Dred Scott decision legalizes slavery in territories
Lecompton constitution in Kansas

1858  Lincoln-Douglas debates in Illinois

1859  John Brown's raid at Harpers Ferry (West Virginia)

1860  Democratic party splits
Four-party campaign
Abraham Lincoln elected president

1860-1861  Secession of seven southern states

1861  Confederate States of America founded
Attack on Fort Sumter begins Civil War

Other Names to Know

Lewis Cass  Stephen Douglas  William Marcy
William Walker  Frederick Douglass  William Seward

(5) GLOSSARY OF IMPORTANT TERMS

**Popular Sovereignty:** The doctrine that left the decision whether a state would enter the Union slave or free up to the territorial legislature representing the people of that territory

**Nativism:** Antiforeign feelings and behavior (especially against Irish Catholic immigrants) expressed by native-born Americans

**Young America:** A term describing proud, confident, highly nationalistic, expansionist Americans in the early 1850s
(6) ENRICHMENT IDEAS

1. After reviewing the Recovering the Past section, read further into the Senate debates over the Compromise of 1850, analyzing and discussing the style and arguments of various speeches, especially the complete texts of those by Clay, Webster, Calhoun, and Seward.

2. It is 1855. Create a dialogue between two recent migrants to Kansas, one from Massachusetts and one from Missouri. Put them in an appropriate setting and provide an end to their conversation, but focus mainly on how each reveals his or her sectional origins and views and how each sees the other.

3. You are Lincoln in the winter of 1860-1861. What would you do? You are Frederick Douglass in the same winter. What would you do? You are Robert Allston at the same time. What would you do? Why? What do you think would happen?

(7) SAMPLE TEST AND EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

Multiple choice: Choose the best answer.

1. According to the textbook, the most pervasive underlying cause of the Civil War was
   a. slavery
   b. political blundering
   c. abolitionist agitation
   d. economic differences

2. The Wilmot Proviso stated that
   a. Congress should protect slavery in the territories acquired from Mexico
   b. the people of those territories should decide for themselves whether to permit slavery
   c. slavery should be prohibited in territories acquired from Mexico
   d. slavery should be prohibited only north of the line 36°30'

3. The Compromise of 1850 included all of the following provisions EXCEPT
   a. a stronger Fugitive Slave Act
   b. the admission of California as a free state
   c. the abolition of slavery and the slave trade in the District of Columbia
   d. the organization of New Mexico and Utah according to the principle of popular sovereignty

4. Of those blacks arrested in the North under the Fugitive Slave Act, most
   a. were able to purchase their freedom
   b. were returned to the South
   c. escaped and fled to Canada
   d. were rescued by sympathetic whites
5. Central to the nativist fears was
   a. the growing power of slaveholders
   b. a dislike of anyone who favored abolitionism
   c. a hatred of the wealthy
   d. loathing of the Roman Catholic church

6. Party distinctiveness and loyalty decreased in the early 1850s because of
   a. improving economic conditions
   b. the upsurge of expansionist fervor
   c. Fillmore's friendship with Douglas
   d. the lasting success of the Compromise of 1850

7. The Kansas-Nebraska Act
   a. settled the question of slavery in the territories
   b. unified the Democratic party
   c. guaranteed Douglas the presidential nomination in 1856
   d. seriously weakened Douglas's support from northern Democrats

8. The Know-Nothing party advocated
   a. a lengthy period before immigrants could become citizens
   b. the abolition of slavery
   c. government regulation of Catholic parochial schools
   d. all of the above

9. The Republican party in 1860
   a. stood for the principle of popular sovereignty
   b. opposed the extension of slavery into the territories
   c. advocated the abolition of slavery
   d. promised not to interfere with southern slavery but supported equal rights for free
      blacks in the North

10. Which of the following is in the correct chronological order?
    a. Kansas-Nebraska Act, Fugitive Slave Act, Dred Scott case
    b. Fugitive Slave Act, Kansas-Nebraska Act, Dred Scott case
    c. Fugitive Slave Act, Dred Scott case, Kansas-Nebraska Act
    d. Dred Scott case, Kansas-Nebraska Act, Fugitive Slave Act

11. The Ostend Manifesto claimed Cuba as a natural part of the United States because of
    a. geographic proximity and mutual economic interests
    b. historic ties and treaty obligation
    c. the influence of the United Fruit Company
    d. all of the above
12. Which of the following statements of the southern perspective is not true?
   a. Northerners were ill-mannered, mean, and materialistic.
   b. The South was a genteel and orderly society guided by gentleman planters.
   c. Slavery was an unfortunate but necessary evil resulting from high northern tariffs.
   d. Southerners revered local self-government as a basic republican right.

13. According to the Dred Scott decision,
   a. the Compromise of 1850 was declared unconstitutional
   b. free blacks but not slaves had the right to sue in federal courts
   c. Dred Scott was entitled to his freedom because he had lived in a free state
   d. Dred Scott had no right to sue and was denied his freedom

14. Of the options facing him in the winter of 1860-1861, Lincoln favored
   a. compromising with the secessionist states
   b. letting secessionist states “go in peace”
   c. risking war by upholding the laws of the land and protecting federal property
   d. going to war in a daring first strike against the secessionist states

15. Which of the following is in the correct chronological order?
   a. John Brown's raid, secession of South Carolina, Lincoln's election, Fort Sumter
   b. Lincoln's election, secession of South Carolina, John Brown's raid, Fort Sumter
   c. John Brown's raid, Lincoln's election, secession of South Carolina, Fort Sumter
   d. Lincoln's election, John Brown's raid, secession of South Carolina, Fort Sumter

**Essays**

1. Explain your view of the causes of the Civil War, citing appropriate specific evidence to defend your explanation.

2. Select three or four specific events and developments in the 1850s that you think were the most significant in causing the Civil War. Defend your choices and explain why you think other events and developments were less significant.

3. Construct a dialogue between a New England migrant and a Missouri slaveholder over whether Kansas should become a slave or free state. Use your imagination in setting the scene (and the outcome), but focus your primary attention on how each person reflects his or her sectional view and how that section viewed the other.

4. Explain the reasons the majority on the Supreme Court used in deciding the Dred Scott v. Sandford case.

5. Explain why the Lincoln-Douglas debates in Illinois were significant to the outcome of the election of 1860.
(that is, state who, what, where, when, and why significant)