

The Civil War

Civil War and Reconstruction
(1850–1877)



A divided nation

Crisis of the 1850s

The Civil War

Thematic Icons



Economics and business



Geography and environment



Historical concepts and questions



Politics, government and citizenship



Society and culture



War, diplomacy and foreign policy

Icons: For more detailed instructions, see the *User Guide*



Flash activity (these activities are not editable)



Teacher notes included in the Notes page



By the end of this section, you will be able to explain how the following events in the 1850s led to the outbreak of the Civil War:

- The Compromise of 1850
- The Kansas-Nebraska Act
- “Bleeding Kansas”
- Creation of the Republican Party
- The Dred Scott decision
- The raid on Harper’s Ferry
- The election of Abraham Lincoln.



The debate intensifies



In 1850, California applied for statehood as a free state.

Much of California was south of the 36° 30' line. Southern senators saw the admission of California as a free state as an attack on their power in Congress.



Henry Clay attempted to persuade both sides to accept the **Compromise of 1850**.

The Compromise did not pass until Senator **Stephen Douglas** broke it into sections and forced Congress to vote on each part separately.





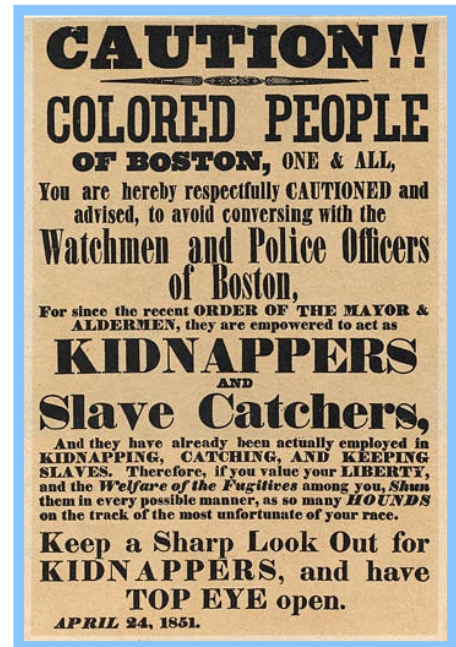
The Compromise of 1850



The final Compromise:

- admitted California as a free state
- prohibited the slave trade in Washington, D.C.
- created **popular sovereignty**, allowing new states to vote on whether they would be open to slavery
- paid \$10 million to Texas to give up its claim to New Mexico
- created the **Fugitive Slave Act**.

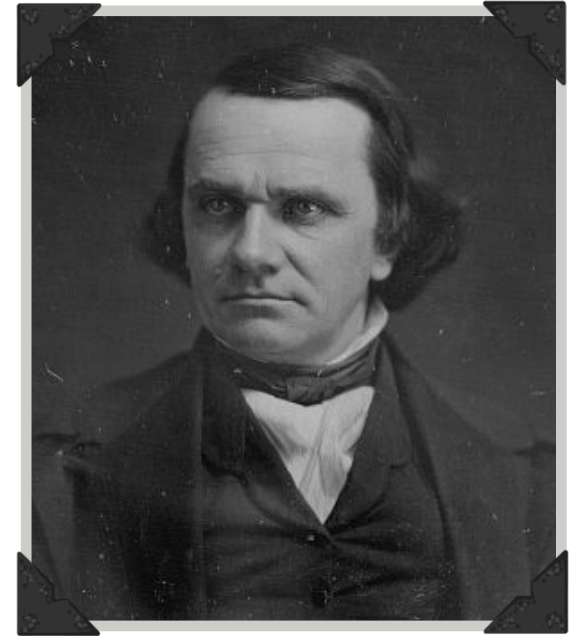
Many Northerners were outraged by the Fugitive Slave Act, which required citizens of free states to turn in escaped slaves.





Stephen Douglas proposed the **Kansas-Nebraska Act** in 1854.

Douglas wanted to organize the land west of the Mississippi in order to construct a transcontinental railroad. He suggested that the region be split into the Kansas and Nebraska territories. Settlers could then vote on whether the territories would be slave or free.



By allowing the possibility of slavery north of the 36° 30' line, the Kansas-Nebraska Act significantly altered the terms of the Missouri Compromise. Northerners were outraged.





During the first half of the 19th century, various pieces of legislation redrew the free and slave territories of the United States. Press the dates to see how these boundaries changed over time.

Press **start** to begin.

start





Settlers from the North and South flooded the new Kansas territory, hoping to claim it for their side of the slavery debate.



In 1855, illegal voters from the slave state of Missouri crossed the border to elect a proslavery government at Lecompton. Antislavery settlers ignored the election, and set up a rival government in Topeka.

Violence erupted across Kansas, resulting in approximately 200 deaths. As a result, the Kansas territory earned the nickname **Bleeding Kansas**.



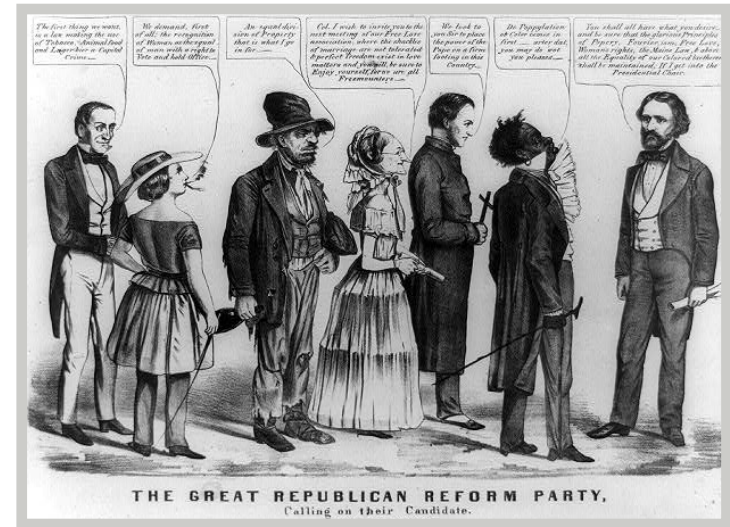


The Republican Party



The Kansas-Nebraska Act split the major political parties along regional lines. Northern Congressmen found themselves in search of a new party that would better represent their beliefs.

The answer was the **Republican Party**. Composed of Northern Whigs, Northern Democrats and members of the **Free Soil Party**, the Republicans were antislavery.



Republicans favored tariffs on foreign goods and believed in using federal aid for internal improvements. The Republicans lost the 1856 election, but they proved themselves a political force to be reckoned with.





Can you match these key abolitionists
with their descriptions?

Press the information panels on the
right to see a photograph and a
quotation from each of them.

Press **start** to begin.

start





Literature can offer a great deal of insight into the culture and society of a specific time period. Explore Harriet Beecher Stowe's famous novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, to see how it reflects the conflict over slavery in the antebellum U.S.

Press **start** to begin.

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The Dred Scott decision



Press on the folder tabs to learn more about the historic Supreme Court decision in the case of **Dred Scott**.

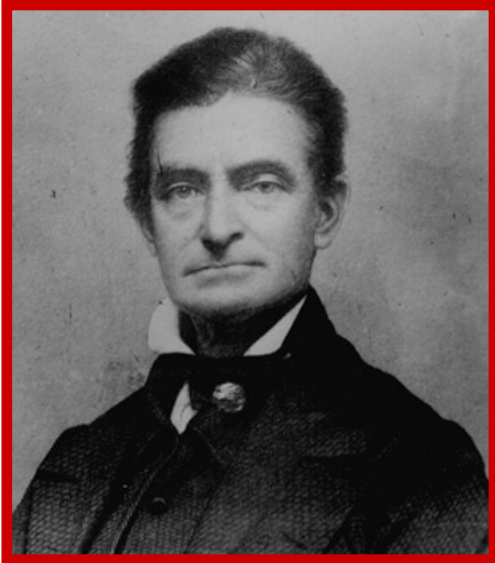
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John Brown was a radical abolitionist who believed that God wanted him to free slaves.



He planned to start a slave revolt by seizing the federal arsenal at **Harper's Ferry**, VA and distributing the weapons to local slaves.

Brown took the arsenal on October 16, 1859. However, no slaves joined the revolt. Ten of Brown's men were killed, and he was hanged for treason on December 2.

Although Brown's raid was unsuccessful, he gave reality to the greatest Southern fear: slave revolt.

Was John Brown a vigilante or a hero?

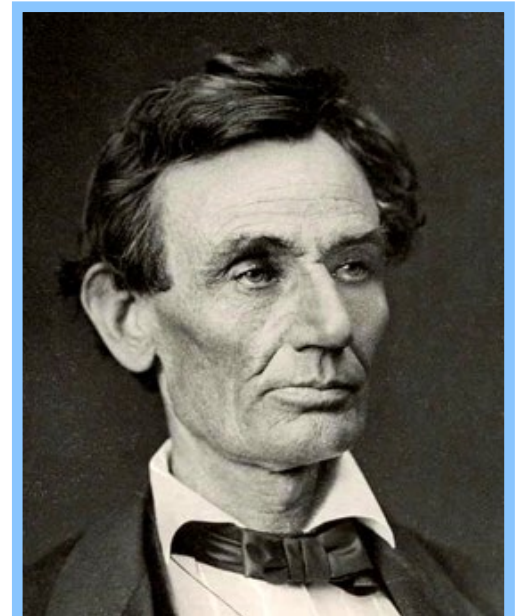


The election of 1860



By the election of 1860, many Southerners felt that a Republican victory would leave them with no choice but to **secede**, or withdraw from, the United States.

The South threatened secession on the basis of the **Nullification** theory, which stated that the Federal Union was a contract among individual states that had the right to withdraw from that contract at any point.



On November 6, 1860, Republican **Abraham Lincoln** was elected President with almost 60% of electoral votes.



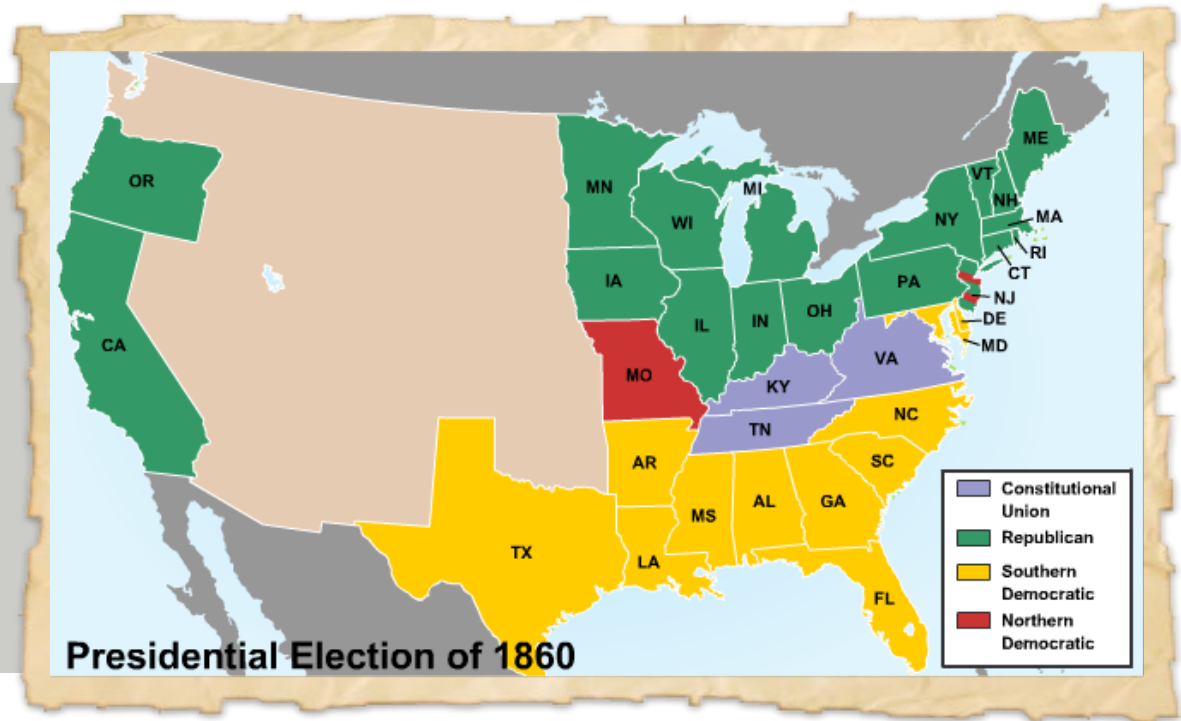


Secession



Lincoln's victories were restricted to the North.
In ten Southern states, he did not even appear on the ballot.

On December 20, South Carolina became the first state to secede following a unanimous vote by its legislature.



Within three months, seven states had seceded to form the **Confederate States of America.**

