

SHAPING America

LESSON 20:

“IRREPRESSIBLE CONFLICTS”

Lesson Assignments

You are encouraged to be very attentive while viewing the video program. Review the video objectives and be prepared to record possible answers, in abbreviated form as you view the video. The topics and time periods may differ somewhat from the chapters of the textbook your school system is using. Each video program chronicles a wide array of events and personalities during a specific time period of American history prior to 1877. Keep in mind that one of the overarching goals of each lesson is to help you understand how past historical events and actions by historical personalities did not occur in a vacuum, and that they are inextricably interwoven in your society today.

Activities:

Your teacher may assign one or more activities for each lesson. Refer to your course syllabus for details.

OVERVIEW

Sectional tensions were further heightened with the publication of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in 1852. She was motivated to write the novel by her animosity towards the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law. The novel was an instant bestseller and rallied thousands to the cause of the anti-slavery movement. Southerners were furious with the inaccuracies and sensationalism of the novel, which proved to be fodder for the abolitionist mill. Abolitionists such as William Lloyd Garrison and John Brown were energized by the novel and viewed the Fugitive Slave Law as an abomination that was to be defied at every opportunity. The South became increasingly unwilling to live under the same roof as their northern bedfellows.

John Brown led the abolitionist fight, as he stalked the Kansas battlefield, which had now become the scene for an intensified conflict over the extension of slavery with the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854. Senator Stephen A. Douglas, the author of the act, was a champion of popularity sovereignty, but he failed to foresee the bloodbath that would develop in "Bloody Kansas." With one fell swoop, Douglas's bill shattered the Missouri Compromise and offered the slaveholders the opportunity to extend slavery into Kansas. Pro- and anti-slave forces settled vied



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with one another to become the majority population and dictate the fate of Kansas. Into the fray stepped the fanatical abolitionist John Brown and the blood began to flow. The notorious Lecompton Constitution was proposed by the pro-slavery forces that made a joke of popular sovereignty and was ridiculed by Stephen Douglas. The final vote on the entire Lecompton Constitution resulted in its defeat, due to a large turnout by the free soil voters, and Kansas remained a territory until 1861, when the southern secessionists left Congress.



“Bleeding Kansas” also splattered blood on the floor of the Senate in 1856 when Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts made a blistering attack entitled “The Crime Against Kansas.” He condemned the pro-slavery supporters in Kansas and managed to also include a few vehement attacks on Senator Andrew Butler from South Carolina. The result was Congressman Preston S. Brooks of South Carolina rushing to the defense of Butler by attacking Sumner with a cane on the floor of the Senate. He received wholehearted support from the South for his outrageous attack. Thus, bleeding Sumner and bleeding Kansas became casualties in the slavery conflict.



One of the most significant results of the Kansas-Nebraska Act was the emergence of the new Republican Party, which was destined to replace the Whig Party. The Republican Party clearly stated its opposition to the extension of slavery and became the dreaded sectional party. The Whig Party was more of a national party, but it had refused to take a strong stand against slavery, and abolitionists and free soil supporters gravitated to the Republican Party. The Democrat Party was more of a national party in 1854, but it was moving in the direction of a sectional party too with the division between Northerners and Southerners. The split was formalized in the 1860 election, when each section nominated a different man for the office of the presidency.

The final bombshell was dropped in the slavery controversy when a pro-slavery Supreme Court handed down the Dred Scott decision in 1857. Scott had lived for five years with his master in the Illinois and Wisconsin Territory and, backed by abolitionists, sued for his freedom. Chief Justice Taney declared that Dred Scott was a black slave, not a citizen, and, therefore, had no standing before the Court. That part of the decision was not unexpected, but the thunderclap that rocked the nation was the Court’s statement that a slave was private property and the Fifth Amendment clearly forbade Congress from making any laws that interfered with the rights of a slave-owner to control his slaves. In effect, Taney’s Court threw out all the compromises that placed any restrictions on slavery. Gone were the Missouri Compromise, the Compromise of 1850, and the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Gone also were any hopes of subduing the flame of sectionalism, which now threatened to consume the Union.

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WEB ACTIVITIES

These activities are assigned at the discretion of your teacher. They are offered as suggestions to help you learn more about the material presented in this lesson.

Activity 1: Analysis of the Kansas-Nebraska Act Document

- a. Access and review the following web sites:
Documents for the Study of American History:
http://www.ukans.edu/carrie/docs/amdocs_index.html
The American Civil War Homepage:
<http://sunsite.utk.edu/civil-war/warweb.html>
An Act to Organize the Territories of Nebraska and Kansas:
<http://www.ukans.edu/carrie/docs/texts/kanneb.html>
Africans in America. Bleeding Kansas:
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4p2952.html>
National Archives Records and Administration Document Analysis Worksheets:
<http://www.nara.gov/educaiton/teaching/analysis/analysis/html>
- b. Write an analysis of the Kansas-Nebraska Act and use the National Archives Written Document Analysis Worksheet as a guide for your analysis.

Activity 2:

- a. Access and review the following web sites:
Documents for the Study of American History:
http://www.ukans.edu/carrie/docs/amdocs_index.html
The American Civil War Homepage:
<http://sunsite.utk.edu/civil-war/warweb.html>
An Act to Organize the Territories of Nebraska and Kansas:
<http://www.ukans.edu/carrie/docs/texts/kanneb.html>
Africans in America. Bleeding Kansas:
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4p2952.html>
National Archives Records and Administration Document Analysis Worksheets:
<http://www.nara.gov/educaiton/teaching/analysis/analysis/html>
On the Crime Against Kansas by Senator Sumner:
<http://members.aol.com/jfeperson/crime.html>
Speech on the Kansas-Nebraska Act by A. Lincoln:
<http://www.ukans.edu/carrie/docs/texts/kansas.html>



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Library of Congress. Questions for Analyzing Primary Sources:
<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/lessons/psources/studqsts.html>

- b. Compare and contrast the speeches of A. Lincoln and Senator Sumner using the Library of Congress Questions for Analyzing Primary Sources as a guide for your analysis.

VIDEO OBJECTIVES

The following objectives are designed to assist the viewer in identifying the most significant aspects of the video segment of this lesson. You should take succinct notes while viewing the video.

1. Examine the reactions of the abolitionists to the Fugitive Slave Law.
2. Investigate the effects of H. B. Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.
3. Assess the significance of the Kansas-Nebraska Act and Senator' Douglas's role.
4. Evaluate the emergence of sectional political parties in the 1850s.
5. Analyze the Dred Scott Decision of 1857.

After watching the video and reviewing the objectives, you should be able to complete the following Practice Test. Access the Answer Key to score your answers after you have completed the Practice Test.

Multiple Choice:

Select the single best answer. It will be indicated if more than one answer is required.

1. Stephen A. Douglas proposed that the question of slavery in the Kansas-Nebraska Territory be decided by:
 - A. Popular sovereignty.
 - B. Making Kansas a free territory and Nebraska a slave territory.
 - C. The Supreme Court.
 - D. Admitting both California and Kansas-Nebraska to the Union.

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2. The consequences of the Kansas-Nebraska Act included all of the following except:
 - A. Splitting of the Democratic Party.
 - B. The emergence of the Republican Party.
 - C. Opening of the Kansas Territory to popular sovereignty.
 - D. All of the above.
 - E. None of the above.

3. Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*:
 - A. Intended to show the cruelty of slavery.
 - B. Was prompted by passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act.
 - C. Comprised the recollections of a long-time personal witness to the evils of slavery.
 - D. Received little notice at the time it was published but became widely read during the Civil War.

4. The clash between Preston S. Brooks and Charles Sumner revealed:
 - A. The seriousness of political divisions in the North.
 - B. The importance of honor to Northerners.
 - C. The fact that, despite divisions over slavery, the House of Representatives would unite to expel a member for bad conduct.
 - D. The fact that passions over slavery were becoming dangerously inflamed in both North and South.

5. In ruling on the Dred Scott case, the United States Supreme Court:
 - A. Hoped to incite further debate on the slavery issue.
 - B. Expected to lay to rest the issue of slavery in the territories.
 - C. Supported the concept of popular sovereignty.
 - D. Reunited the Democratic Party.



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Essay Question:

1. Compare and contrast how the following contributed to the growing rift between North and South: the Kansas-Nebraska Act, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the creation of the Republican Party, the Dred Scott Decision, Lecompton Constitution, and the Sumner-Brooks clash.

Answers to the Practice Test:

The correct answer is indicated first, followed by the objective (s) that correlate with the test question.

1. A: 3
2. D: 3
3. A: 2
4. D: 3
5. B: 5