

# Summary: Compromise and Conflict

## Would Slavery Spread?

A territory became a state when enough people lived there. New states could be slave states or free states. Northerners wanted free states. They tried to make slavery illegal. Southerners wanted slave states. In 1820, Missouri wanted to enter the Union as a slave state. To keep the number of free and slave states equal, Congress let Maine join as a free state. This was the Missouri Compromise.

Congress drew an imaginary line. Only those states south of the line could be slave states. The Compromise of 1850 let settlers in some places decide whether their territory would be a slave state or a free state. In 1854, Congress passed the Kansas-Nebraska Act which gave Kansas and Nebraska the right to choose slavery or not. Abolitionists objected because both territories were north of the line. Settlers for and against slavery traveled to Kansas to vote. In 1861, Kansas became a free state.

## The Growing Crisis

The Fugitive Slave Law was part of the Compromise of 1850. It ordered people to return runaways to slavery. Many northerners would not obey the law. Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote about the cruelty of slavery in the book *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The story convinced northerners to oppose slavery. Southerners said the book's description of slavery was false. The conflict over slavery pushed the North and South further apart.

In 1857, the Supreme Court ruled on the Dred Scott case. It said that slaves were property. Living in a free state did not make them citizens. The court also said it could not ban slavery in any of the territories. Abolitionists feared slavery would spread.

Abolitionist John Brown thought that slavery was wrong. He tried to start a rebellion against slavery by attacking an Army post in Harpers Ferry, Virginia. Brown was captured, convicted, and hung. Many northerners said he was a hero. By 1860, some southerners wanted to leave the Union to defend their way of life.



### Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

**slave state** *noun*, a state that permitted slavery

**free state** *noun*, a state that did not permit slavery

**Union** *noun*, another name for the United States

**fugitive** *noun*, a person who is running away



### After You Read

**REVIEW** What compromises did Congress make as the nation grew?

Circle the years and names of three compromises.

**REVIEW** Why did John Brown attack Harpers Ferry? Draw a box around the sentences that tell what John Brown thought about slavery.