

Summary: A Nation Divided

Would Slavery Spread?

A territory became a state when it had enough people. 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 territories choose to be slave states or free states by popular sovereignty. In 1854, Congress gave popular sovereignty to the Kansas and Nebraska territories. 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 the book *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. It was about the cruelty of slavery. The story convinced northerners to oppose slavery. Southerners said the book 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

popular sovereignty *noun*, the right of people to make political decisions for themselves

fugitive *noun*, a person who is running away



After You Read

REVIEW What compromises did Congress make as the nation grew? Circle the date and name of each compromise.

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