

Protest, Resistance, and Violence

MAIN IDEA

Proslavery and antislavery factions disagreed over the treatment of fugitive slaves and the spread of slavery to the territories.

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

The antislavery leaders became role models for leaders of civil rights movements in the 20th century.

Terms & Names

- Fugitive Slave Act
- personal liberty laws
- Underground Railroad
- Harriet Tubman
- Harriet Beecher Stowe
- *Uncle Tom's Cabin*
- Kansas-Nebraska Act
- John Brown
- Bleeding Kansas

One American's Story

On June 2, 1854, thousands lined the streets of Boston. Flags flew at half-mast, and a black coffin bearing the words “The Funeral of Liberty” dangled from a window. Federal soldiers, bayonets ready for action, marched a lone African American, Anthony Burns, toward the harbor. Charlotte Forten, a free black, wrote about the day.

A PERSONAL VOICE CHARLOTTE FORTEN

“Today Massachusetts has again been disgraced. . . . With what scorn must that government be regarded, which cowardly assembles thousands of soldiers to satisfy the demands of slaveholders; to deprive of his freedom a man, created in God’s own image, whose sole offense is the color of his skin! . . . A cloud seems hanging over me, over all our persecuted race, which nothing can dispel.”

—quoted in *The Underground Railroad*, by Charles L. Blockson

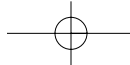
Anthony Burns was being forced back into slavery in Virginia. As a result of his trial, antislavery sentiment in the North soared. “We went to bed one night old-fashioned, conservative, compromise Union Whigs,” wrote one Northerner, “and waked up stark mad Abolitionists.”



▲ Charlotte Forten was the granddaughter of James Forten, a Philadelphia abolitionist who fought in the Revolutionary War.

Fugitive Slaves and the Underground Railroad

Burns’s return to slavery followed the passage of the **Fugitive Slave Act**, which was a component of the Compromise of 1850. Many people were surprised by the harsh terms of the act. Under the law, alleged fugitives were not entitled to a trial by jury, despite the Sixth Amendment provision calling for a speedy and public jury trial and the right to counsel. Nor could fugitives testify on their own behalf.



A statement by a slave owner was all that was required to have a slave returned. Frederick Douglass bitterly summarized the situation.

A PERSONAL VOICE FREDERICK DOUGLASS

“The colored men’s rights are less than those of a jackass. No man can take away a jackass without submitting the matter to twelve men in any part of this country. A black man may be carried away without any reference to a jury. It is only necessary to claim him, and that some villain should swear to his identity. There is more protection there for a horse, for a donkey, or anything, rather than a colored man.”

—quoted in *Voices from the Civil War*

Federal commissioners charged with enforcing the law were to receive a \$10 fee if they returned an alleged fugitive, but only \$5 if they freed him or her, an obvious incentive to “return” people to slavery. Finally, anyone convicted of helping an alleged fugitive was subject to a fine of \$1,000, imprisonment for six months, or both.

RESISTING THE LAW Infuriated by the Fugitive Slave Act, some Northerners resisted it by organizing vigilance committees to send endangered African Americans to safety in Canada. Others resorted to violence to rescue fugitive slaves. Nine Northern states passed **personal liberty laws**, which forbade the imprisonment of runaway slaves and guaranteed that they would have jury trials. And Northern lawyers dragged these trials out—often for three or four years—in order to increase slave catchers’ expenses. Southern slave owners were enraged by Northern resistance to the Fugitive Slave Act, prompting one Harvard law student from Georgia to tell his mother, “Do not be surprised if when I return home you find me a confirmed disunionist.” **A**

HARRIET TUBMAN AND THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD As time went on, free African Americans and white abolitionists developed a secret network of people who would, at great risk to themselves, aid fugitive slaves in their escape. This network became known as the **Underground Railroad**. The “conductors” hid fugitives in secret tunnels and false cupboards, provided them with food and clothing, and escorted or directed them to the next “station,” often in disguise.

One of the most famous conductors was **Harriet Tubman**, born a slave in 1820 or 1821. As a young girl, she suffered a severe head injury when a plantation overseer hit her with a lead weight. The blow damaged her brain, causing her to lose consciousness several times a day. To compensate for her disability, Tubman increased her strength until she became strong enough to perform tasks that most men could not do. In 1849, after Tubman’s owner died, she decided to make a break for freedom and succeeded in reaching Philadelphia.

Shortly after passage of the Fugitive Slave Act, Tubman became a conductor on the Underground Railroad. In all, she made 19 trips back to the South and is said to have helped 300 slaves—including her own parents—flee to freedom. Neither Tubman nor the slaves she helped were ever captured. Later she became an ardent speaker for abolition.

For slaves, escaping from slavery was indeed a dangerous process. It meant traveling on foot at night without any sense of distance or direction except for the North Star and other natural signs. It meant avoiding patrols of armed men on horseback and struggling through forests and across rivers. Often it meant going

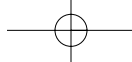
With a price of \$40,000 on her head, Harriet Tubman was called “Moses” by those she helped escape on the Underground Railroad. ▼



MAIN IDEA

Analyzing Effects

A What effect did the Fugitive Slave Act have on abolitionist feelings in the North?



HARRIET BEECHER STOWE 1811–1896

Harriet Beecher Stowe was born in Connecticut into a prominent reform family. Her father was a Presbyterian minister and temperance advocate, Lyman Beecher. Her brother, Henry, was a clergyman and abolitionist.

Stowe moved with her family to Cincinnati, where the issue of slavery—once rather remote—became painfully familiar. She never forgot standing on the banks of the Ohio River, watching boats fill with slaves from Kentucky to be shipped to slave markets. Her hatred of slavery grew until she resolved to express herself in writing, and *Uncle Tom's Cabin* resulted. The novel made such an impact that when Abraham Lincoln met Stowe a decade later, during the Civil War, he said, “So this is the little lady who made the big war.”

without food for days at a time. Harry Grimes, a slave who ran away from North Carolina, described the difficulties of escaping to the North.

★ A PERSONAL VOICE HARRY GRIMES

“In the woods I lived on nothing. . . . I stayed in the hollow of a big poplar tree for seven months. . . . I suffered mighty bad with the cold and for something to eat. One time a snake come to the tree . . . and I took my axe and chopped him in two. It was . . . the poisonest kind of snake we have. While in the woods all my thoughts was how to get away to a free country.”

—quoted in *The Underground Railroad*, by Charles L. Blockson

Once fugitive slaves reached the North, many elected to remain there and take their chances. (See map on p. 313.) Other fugitives continued their journey all the way to Canada to be completely out of reach of slave catchers. Meanwhile, a new abolitionist voice spoke out and brought slavery to the attention of a great many Americans. **B**

UNCLE TOM'S CABIN In 1852, ardent abolitionist **Harriet Beecher Stowe** published *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Stirring strong reactions from North and South alike, the novel became an instant bestseller. More than a million copies had sold by the middle of 1853.

The novel's plot was melodramatic and many of its characters were stereotypes, but *Uncle Tom's Cabin* delivered the message that slavery was not just a political contest, but also a great moral struggle. Readers tensed with excitement as the slave Eliza fled across the frozen Ohio River, clutching her infant son in her arms. They wept bitterly when Simon Legree, a wicked Northern slave owner who moved to the South, bought Uncle Tom and had him whipped to death.

In quick response, Northern abolitionists increased their protests against the Fugitive Slave Act, while Southerners criticized the book as an attack on the South as a whole. The furor over *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had barely begun to settle when a new controversy over slavery drew heated debate.

MAIN IDEA

Summarizing

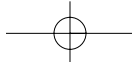
B How did the Underground Railroad operate?



Tension in Kansas and Nebraska

Abolitionist feelings in the North further intensified when the issue of slavery in the territories—supposedly settled by the Compromise of 1850—surfaced once again. Ironically, Senator Stephen Douglas, who had helped to steer the compromise to victory, was the person most responsible for resurrecting the issue.

◀ An abolitionist poster distributed in 1851



The Underground Railroad, 1850–1860

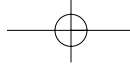


	Free states
	Slave states
	Areas with slave population of 50% or more in 1860
	Routes of the Underground Railroad
	Station on Underground Railroad

0 100 200 miles
0 100 200 kilometers

GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER


- 1. Movement** What does this map tell you about the routes of the Underground Railroad?
- 2. Place** Name three cities that were destinations on the Underground Railroad.
- 3. Location** Why do you think these cities were destinations?



POPULAR SOVEREIGNTY As early as 1844, Douglas was pushing to organize the huge territory west of Iowa and Missouri. In 1854, he developed a proposal to divide the area into two territories, Nebraska and Kansas. His motives were complicated. For one thing, Douglas was pushing for the construction of a railroad between Chicago—his hometown, where he also owned real estate—and San Francisco. To get this route, he had to make a deal with Southerners, who wanted the railroad to start in Memphis or New Orleans.

In addition, Douglas was anxious to organize the western territory because he believed that most of the nation's people wished to see the western lands incorporated into the Union. Along with many other Democrats, Douglas was sure that continued expansion would strengthen his party and unify the nation. He also believed that popular sovereignty—that is, the right of residents of a given territory to vote on slavery for themselves—provided the most fair and democratic way to organize the new state governments. But what Douglas failed to fully understand was how strongly opposed to slavery Northerners had become.

To Douglas, popular sovereignty seemed like an excellent way to decide whether slavery would be allowed in the Nebraska Territory. The only difficulty was that Nebraska Territory lay north of the Missouri Compromise line of 36°30' and therefore was legally closed to slavery. Douglas assumed, though, that the territory of Nebraska would enter the Union as two states, one free and one slave, and thus maintain the balance in the Senate between North and South.

Douglas was convinced that slavery could not exist on the open prairies, since none of the crops relying on slave labor could be grown there. However, to win over the South, Douglas decided to support repeal of the Missouri Compromise—which now would make slavery legal north of the 36°30' line—though he predicted it would cause “a storm” in Congress. His prediction was right. 

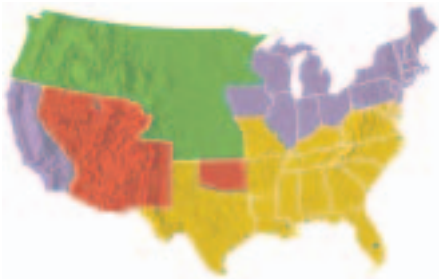
THE KANSAS-NEBRASKA ACT On January 23, 1854, Douglas introduced a bill in Congress to divide the area into two territories: Nebraska in the north and Kansas in the south. If passed, it would repeal the Missouri Compromise and establish popular sovereignty for both territories. Congressional debate over the bill was bitter. Some Northern congressmen saw the bill as part of a plot to turn the territories into slave states; but nearly

Free and Slave States and Territories, 1820–1854

The Missouri Compromise, 1820–1821

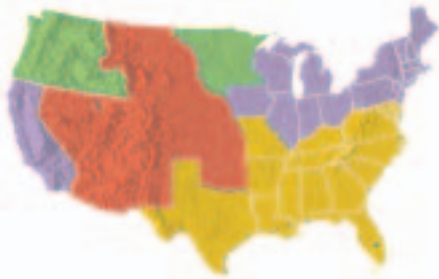


The Compromise of 1850



-  Free states
-  Territory closed to slavery
-  Slave states
-  Territory open to slavery

The Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854




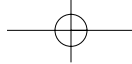
GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER

1. **Place** How did the number of slave states change between 1820 and 1854?
2. **Region** How did the Kansas-Nebraska Act affect the amount of land that was open to slavery?

MAIN IDEA

Analyzing Issues

-  Explain why popular sovereignty was so controversial.



90 percent of Southern congressmen voted for the bill. The bitterness spilled over into the general population, which deluged Congress with petitions both for and against the bill.

In the North, Douglas found himself ridiculed for betraying the Missouri Compromise. Yet he did not waver. He believed strongly that popular sovereignty was the democratic way to resolve the slavery issue.

A PERSONAL VOICE STEPHEN A. DOUGLAS

“If the people of Kansas want a slaveholding state, let them have it, and if they want a free state they have a right to it, and it is not for the people of Illinois, or Missouri, or New York, or Kentucky, to complain, whatever the decision of Kansas may be.”

—quoted in *The Civil War*, by Geoffrey C. Ward

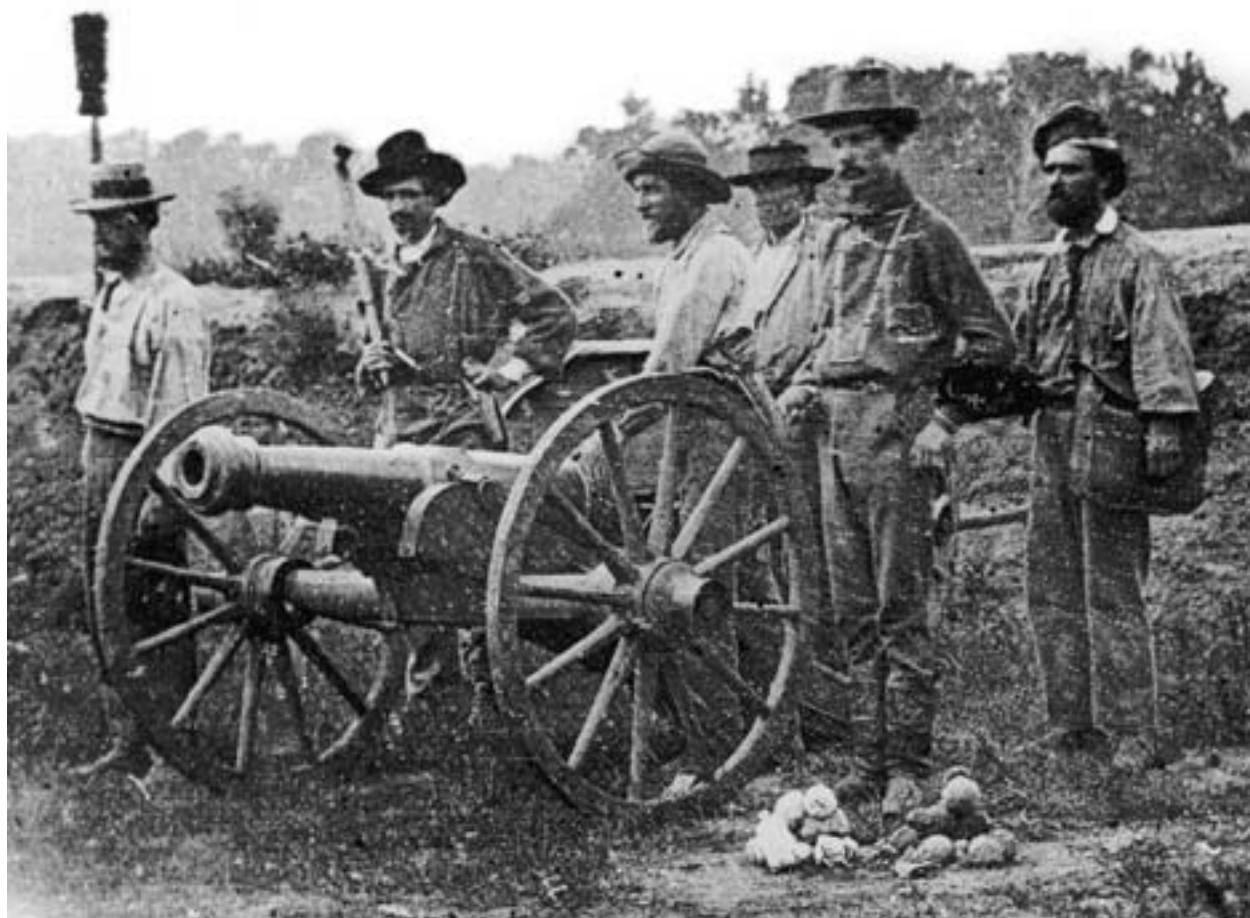
With the help of President Franklin Pierce, a Democrat elected in 1852, Douglas steered his proposal through the Senate. After months of struggle and strife, the **Kansas-Nebraska Act** became law in May 1854. All eyes turned westward as the fate of the new territories hung in the balance.

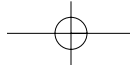
Violence Erupts in “Bleeding Kansas”

The race for the possession of Kansas was on. New York senator William Seward threw down the gauntlet: “Come on, then, gentlemen of the Slave States. . . . We will engage in competition for the virgin soil of Kansas and God give the victory to the side that is stronger in numbers as it is in right.”

From both the North and the South, settlers poured into the Kansas Territory. Some were simply farmers in search of new land. Most were sent by emigrant aid societies, groups formed specifically to supply rifles, animals, seed, and farm equipment to antislavery migrants.

This organized party of Kansas-bound armed settlers was one of the groups known as “Free-State batteries.” ▶





By March 1855, Kansas had enough settlers to hold an election for a territorial legislature. However, thousands of “border ruffians” from the slave state of Missouri, led by Missouri senator David Atchison, crossed into Kansas with their revolvers cocked and voted illegally. They won a fraudulent majority for the proslavery candidates, who set up a government at Lecompton and promptly issued a series of proslavery acts. Furious over events in Lecompton, abolitionists organized a rival government in Topeka in fall 1855. **D**

“THE SACK OF LAWRENCE” Before long, violence surfaced in the struggle for Kansas. Antislavery settlers had founded a town named Lawrence. A proslavery grand jury condemned Lawrence’s inhabitants as traitors and called on the local sheriff to arrest them. On May 21, 1856, a proslavery posse of 800 armed men swept into Lawrence to carry out the grand jury’s will. The posse burned down the antislavery headquarters, destroyed two newspapers’ printing presses, and looted many houses and stores. Abolitionist newspapers dubbed the event “the sack of Lawrence.”

“THE POTTAWATOMIE MASSACRE” The news from Lawrence soon reached **John Brown**, an abolitionist described by one historian as “a man made of the

stuff of saints.” Brown believed that God had called on him to fight slavery. He also had the mistaken impression that the proslavery posse in Lawrence had killed five men. Brown was set on revenge. On May 24th, he and his followers pulled five men from their beds in the proslavery settlement of Pottawatomie Creek, hacked off their hands, and stabbed them with broadswords. This attack became famous as the “Pottawatomie Massacre” and quickly led to cries for revenge. It became the bloody shirt that proslavery Kansas settlers waved in summoning attacks on Free-Soilers.

The massacre triggered dozens of incidents throughout Kansas. Some 200 people were killed. John Brown fled Kansas but left behind men and women who lived with rifles by their sides. People began calling the territory **Bleeding Kansas**, as it had become a violent battlefield in a civil war.

VIOLENCE IN THE SENATE Violence was not restricted to Kansas, however. On May 19, Massachusetts senator Charles Sumner delivered in the Senate an impassioned speech later called “The Crime Against Kansas.” For two days he verbally attacked his colleagues for their support of slavery. Sumner was particularly abusive toward the aged senator Andrew P. Butler of South Carolina, sneering at him for his proslavery beliefs and making fun of his impaired speech.

On May 22, Butler’s nephew, Congressman Preston S. Brooks, walked into the Senate chamber and over to Sumner’s desk. “I have read your speech twice over, carefully,” Brooks said softly. “It is a libel on South Carolina and Mr. Butler, who is a relative of mine.” With that, he lifted up his cane and struck Sumner on the head repeatedly before the cane broke. Sumner suffered shock and apparent brain damage and did not return to his Senate seat for over three years.

Southerners applauded and showered Brooks with new canes, including one inscribed with the words, “Hit him again!” Northerners condemned the incident as yet

MAIN IDEA

Analyzing Causes

D Why did Kansas become a center of controversy over the issue of slavery?

KEY PLAYER

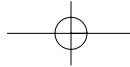


JOHN BROWN
1800–1859

John Brown was a fiery idealist who believed that God had called on him to fight slavery. He was raised in a deeply religious anti-slavery family. Brown was never financially successful although he tried a variety of ventures, from farming to land speculation.

By 1849, Brown was living in the black community of North Elba, New York. He supported many abolitionist causes, such as David Walker’s *Appeal* and helped finance farms for fugitive slaves.

Brown became a powerful symbol of the moral issue of slavery in the North and reinforced the worst fears of the South. After a number of raids on proslavery settlers in Kansas and a raid on Harpers Ferry, Virginia, Brown was caught. He was hanged for treason in 1859.



SOUTHERN CHIVALRY — ARGUMENT VERSUS **CLUB'S**

MAIN IDEA

Summarizing

E Describe Northern and Southern reactions to the incident between Brooks and Sumner.

another example of Southern brutality and antagonism toward free speech. Northerners and Southerners, it appeared, had met an impasse. **E**

The widening gulf between the North and the South had far-reaching implications for party politics as well. The compromises that had been tried from the time of the Wilmot Proviso until the Kansas-Nebraska Act could not satisfy either the North or the South. The tensions that resulted led to new political alliances as well as to violence. As the two sections grew further apart, the old national parties were torn apart and new political parties emerged.

▲ This 1856 cartoon shows Preston Brooks attacking Charles Sumner in the U.S. Senate chamber.



ASSESSMENT

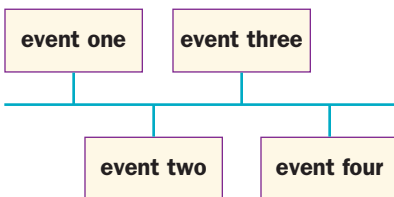
1. TERMS & NAMES For each term or name, write a sentence explaining its significance.

- Fugitive Slave Act
- Harriet Tubman
- *Uncle Tom's Cabin*
- John Brown
- personal liberty laws
- Harriet Beecher Stowe
- Kansas-Nebraska Act
- Bleeding Kansas
- Underground Railroad

MAIN IDEA

2. TAKING NOTES

Create a time line highlighting the major events in the growing conflict between the North and the South. Use a form similar to the one below.



Select one event. Explain how it was representative of North-South conflict.

CRITICAL THINKING

3. ANALYZING EFFECTS

Explain how *Uncle Tom's Cabin* affected the abolitionist cause. Use details from the section to support your answer.

4. ANALYZING ISSUES

Why was the Kansas-Nebraska Act so controversial? Use details from the section to support your answer.

5. SYNTHESIZING

Explain the concept of popular sovereignty and describe Northern and Southern reactions to it as a way of making decisions about slavery in the territories. Use evidence from the text to support your answer. **Think About:**

- Douglas's view on continued expansion
- Douglas and the Missouri Compromise
- the congressional balance of power