

## Events Leading to the Civil War Worksheet

### Western Expansion

After President Thomas Jefferson acquired the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, the United States doubled in size. This purchase gave the United States control of the vast lands west of the Mississippi. As Americans pushed west, the issue of slavery came to the forefront. Would the new territories of the United States be slave or free?

### Missouri Compromise

The first confrontation over slavery in the West occurred in 1819. Missouri applied for admission to the Union as a slave state. The admission of Missouri would upset the balance of power in the Senate where at the time there were 11 free states and 11 slave states. Senator Henry Clay proposed a compromise. In 1820, he suggested that Missouri enter as a slave state and Maine as a free state to keep the balance of power. Congress also drew an imaginary line across the Louisiana Purchase at 36 degrees 30 minutes north latitude. North of the line would be free states (with the exception of Missouri), and south of the line would be slave states.

### Compromise of 1850

In 1850, California applied for admission as a free state. Once again, the balance of power in the Senate was threatened. The South did not want to give the North a majority in the Senate. They also feared that more free states would be carved from the Mexican cession. Once again, Clay, the “Great Compromiser,” pleaded for compromise. John C. Calhoun, a senator of South Carolina stated the South would not compromise. He demanded that slavery be allowed in the western territories and that there be a tough fugitive-slave law. Daniel Webster of Maine offered a solution to keep the Union together. The Compromise of 1850 had four parts: 1) California entered as a free state. 2) The rest of the Mexican cession was divided into New Mexico and Utah. In each state, voters would decide the issue of slavery. 3) Slave trade was ended in Washington D.C. 4) A strict new fugitive-slave law was passed.

### Fugitive Slave Law

The Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 was very controversial. It required that all citizens were obligated to return runaway slaves. People who helped slaves escape would be jailed and fined. The law enraged Northerners because it made them feel a part of the slave system. Persons involved with the Underground Railroad worked to subvert the law.

### Uncle Tom’s Cabin

In 1852, Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. This novel told of the story of Uncle Tom, an enslaved African American, and his cruel master, Simon Legree. In the novel, Stowe wrote of the evils and cruelty of slavery. While it is argued whether the book was a true portrayal of slavery, the novel still had an enormous influence. The book sold more than 300,000 copies, was published in many languages, and was made into a play. It also helped change the way many Northerners felt about slavery. Slavery was now not only a political problem but a moral problem.

### **Kansas-Nebraska Act**

In 1854, Stephen Douglas introduced a bill to help solve the problem of slavery in the new Nebraska territory. He proposed that Nebraska be divided into two territories — Kansas and Nebraska. The settlers of the new territories would decide whether they would be slave or free. This proposal set off a storm of controversy because it effectively undid the Missouri Compromise. Southerners supported the act, while Northerners felt it was a betrayal. The Act set off bitter violence in the Kansas territory. More than 200 people died over the issue of slavery. The area became known as Bleeding Kansas. Anti- and pro-slavery forces set up rival governments. The town of Lawrence was destroyed by pro-slavery forces. In revenge, John Brown and a small group killed five pro-slavery supporters in the middle of the night.

### **Dred Scott Decision**

In 1857, the United States Supreme Court made a landmark ruling in the Dred Scott case. Dred Scott was a slave who applied for freedom. He claimed that because his master had taken him to the free territories of Illinois and Wisconsin, he should be free. The court ruled that because Dred Scott was not considered a citizen, but property, he could not file a lawsuit. The Court also ruled that Congress had no power to decide the issue of slavery in the territories. This meant that slavery was legal in all the territories and the Missouri Compromise was unconstitutional.

### **Harpers Ferry Raid**

In 1859, John Brown and a group of followers organized a raid on Harpers Ferry, Virginia, a federal arsenal. Brown hoped that slaves would come to the arsenal and he would then lead a massive slave uprising. It was Brown's belief that slavery could be ended only through the use of violence. Brown was unsuccessful, and troops led by Robert E. Lee killed 10 raiders and captured John Brown. He was found guilty of murder and treason and sentenced to death. Brown conducted himself with great composure during his trial. While many northerners thought his plan to lead a slave revolt was misguided, they also saw Brown as a hero. Southerners felt that the North wanted to destroy slavery and the South along with it.

### **Election of 1860**

In the mid-1850s, people who opposed slavery were looking for a new voice. Free Soilers, Northern Democrats, and anti-slavery Whigs formed the Republican Party. Their main goal was to keep slavery out of the western territories, not to end slavery in the South. The party grew and was ready in 1856 to challenge the older parties in power. They were not successful in 1856. In 1860, the Republicans ran Abraham Lincoln from Illinois. Lincoln was known to oppose slavery on the basis of its being morally wrong. However, Lincoln was not willing to end slavery at the risk of tearing the Union apart.

### **Secession of the South**

The Southerners' reaction to the election of President Lincoln was strong. They felt that the country had put an abolitionist in the White House. The South felt that secession was the only option. In 1860, South Carolina seceded from (left) the Union. By February of 1861, Alabama, Florida, Texas, Georgia, Louisiana, and Mississippi had seceded. In

1861, the seven states held a convention in Montgomery, Alabama, and formed the Confederate States of America. Jefferson Davis of Mississippi was named the President. The South felt they had the right to secede. The Declaration of Independence stated that “it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish” a government that denies the rights of its citizens. Lincoln, they believed, would deny them the right to own slaves.

### **Beginning of Civil War**

After Lincoln took the oath of office in 1861, he announced that no state can lawfully leave the Union. He declared, however, there would be no war unless the South started it. The South started to take possession of all Federal buildings — forts and post offices. The South took control of the three forts in Florida and was ready to take control of Fort Sumter in South Carolina. In April, 1861, the Confederates asked for the fort’s surrender. Major Robert Anderson of the Union refused to surrender. The Confederate troops proceeded to shell Fort Sumter. Anderson ran out of ammunition and was forced to surrender. The war had begun.