



Course Learning Outcomes for Unit VII

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

5. Identify the impact of significant figures on American lands from colonial times through the American Civil War.

Reading Assignment

Schur, J. B. (n.d.). Teaching with documents: Eli Whitney's Patent for the cotton gin. Retrieved from <http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/cotton-gin-patent/>

The American promise: A concise history:

Chapter 13: The Slave South, 1820-1860, pp. 332-334, 336-337, 342, and 344-345

Chapter 14: The House Divided, 1846-1861, pp. 358-359, 363, 365, 367, 370-372, 376, and 382

Reading the American past: Selected historical documents:

Chapter 13: The Slave South, 1820-1860, docs. 13-1, 13-2, 13-3, 13-4, and 13-5

Chapter 14: The House Divided, 1846-1861, docs. 14-1, 14-2, 14-3, 14-4, and 14-5

The articles cited in the Unit Lesson are required reading. You may be tested on your knowledge and understanding of that material as well as the information in the Unit Lesson and textbook readings.

Unit Lesson

Jim Crow was not a president, senator, or congressman; he was not even a local figure of power. Jim Crow was a minstrel show character portrayed most famously by T. D. "Daddy" Rice in the early 19th century; however, there is absolutely no doubt that this fictional personification of racism and subjugation ranks among the most influential icons of the American antebellum period, and is still recognizable today. "I wheel about an' turn about And do jis' so And ebry time I wheel about I jump Jim Crow," T. D. "Daddy" Rice (as cited in "Antebellum Period Quotes," n.d., para. 1).

From the earliest days of the American colonies, amongst the feelings of unification, freedom from unlawful taxation, and desire to self-govern, there were also feelings of great division and entitlement across the American settlements. So far we have discussed several of these debates, but the one that has remained constant is the question of what *freedom* really meant.

Even today, in America there are conflicting teachings of what the true catalysts of the Civil War were. For the South, the "War of Northern Aggression" was a direct attack by subjecting the southern economy for the pure benefit of northern industry, which threatened the agricultural way of life and virtues that Jefferson had represented so famously. As we will review later, however, slavery was not a universal good for all Southerners; in fact, in the years leading up to and during the war there were well established regions of anti-slavery sentiment in every future Confederate state, save one: South Carolina.

For the North, with the exception of the few wealthy outliers who benefitted from the transport and sale of Southern goods, slavery was becoming understood more and more clearly as an unnecessary evil, one which had already been banned in allied nations. Even Alexis de Tocqueville, a French political observer, noted how obvious the slavery question was in the ongoing disputes between the two sides as early as 1831. However,

just as labor was a question in the South, so it would be in the North as well, but in a different way: what would the immediate growth of the American population by hundreds of thousands of former slaves looking for any kind of work do to the already overcrowded unskilled labor pool growing daily by immigrants? The one major question which plagued anti-slavery advocates on both sides was straightforward enough: was abolition beneficial to the future of the growing American citizenry? Could slavery be abolished without jeopardizing the American dream (Johnson, 2012, doc. 14-2 and 14-3)? Pondering this question, we turn our focus to the antebellum era in the visibly divided South. As we left off in the last unit, with the success of the market and transportation revolutions, the focus of the nation was the American West, and like almost everything, there were two clear political agendas requiring the attention of the voting public.

Perhaps an argument can be made, though unfairly, that Eli Whitney should be blamed for the growth of slavery in the 19th century. His 1793 Cotton Gin (<http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/cotton-gin-patent/>), whose simplistic function was to comb tiny, sticky, green seeds from the white fibers, can be considered the tool that made cotton production profitable, so much so that the Southeast United States (now an appropriate label) was dubbed by many as a *cotton kingdom*. This crop was not new to the plantation owners; cotton was a luxury for any who could afford it because at one time it was too slow and labor intensive to justify the otherwise rich farm land necessary.

From this rapid sale and development, new territories emerged throughout the nation, but it was the Southern states that caused significant concerns on the federal level. The annexation of Texas soon spread into population development in Arkansas and other areas of prime cotton growth. Now so outrageously lucrative with Whitney's invention, areas that could grow the crop, generally those below the Mason-Dixon Line, rebounded. Many of these regions had suffered from an economic lull caused by better technologies and exhausted soil in previous decades. The need for inexpensive, unskilled labor led to the shipment of over a million new laborers from Africa by 1860, more than doubling the slave population and numbering three out of four people in the South, a number that shattered the statistics from the Middle Passage. The question quickly became whether a state would be a *slave* or *free* state; this is a discussion that we will pick up again later with the Missouri Compromise.

By the 1820s, the South had already dealt with significant assaults on the culture and labor question, most of which were blamed exclusively on the increasing northern industrial base. In order to ensure the continued demand and need for slave labor, the laws of many southern states would evolve to include a series of laws called the *slave codes* which, in short, legalized ideas and actions of white superiority and black inferiority. These laws provided owners complete and total rights (Johnson, 2012, doc. 13-2) to treat their slaves as nothing other than a working tool, or perhaps more appropriately, livestock. With few exceptions, owners decided every aspect of a slave's life, including relationships, food, shelter, clothing, and even if the slaves would share basic commonalities, like language, which became a major concern after a pattern of rebellions, such as Nat Turner's Raid (Roark, Johnson, Cohen, Stage, & Hartmann, 2014, p. 334), had previously ravaged slave owning communities.

Ways in which this treatment was regulated had many sides. On the farm, the three most common forms of labor would be field labor (by a wide margin), house labor (which grew in popularity first in all colonies), and finally artisan labor for those with a skill. Artisan roles can be somewhat misleading by name only, for many this meant the slaves had shown an exceptional talent with a skill or necessary job that benefitted their masters financially—like carpentry, mechanics, or working with livestock. For some this would mean actually being loaned out to people in need in exchange for a stipend to the master, and for others, their work would remain closer to the plantation. This position was generally southern focused for a few reasons, including that high migrations led to labor needs, slaves were a threat to even low paying opportunities, and because many of the southern laws concerning slaves were not followed or respected in northern states.

House slaves may sound initially like the preferred situation of the three; these slaves stayed in the master's house, would generally serve as cooks, caretakers, maids, and child care, and were fed and clothed appropriately. This, however, was usually only a public face. All too often, the house labor was dominated by females, depending on the required skill, and especially in houses with many men, unique abuses were committed varying from verbal to physical or even sexual abuse (Johnson, 2012, doc. 13-1) In houses with a master and wife, infidelity (Roark et al., 2014, p. 345) by the master could lead to negative reaction by the wife (Johnson, 2012, doc. 13-3) toward the slave as well, causing unwanted contact to lead to additional physical harm. Perhaps the most heinous fate for these women (all too often young girls) was a complete separation from their families and communities of support, described below. It is not so hard to believe then

that these house slaves were generally found to be the most likely to attempt to flee (Johnson, 2012, doc. 14-4)—especially in cases of chaos or danger from the work of anti-slavery advocates.

Approximately three out of four slaves would be the more recognizable field workers. In the lower South, for example, where planting would last for 9-10 months of the year, these laborers would work from day break to dusk with only a break for lunch, and maybe some opportunities for hydration, depending on the master. At night, however, this community would remain together, and for some, a community was built. Food wise, most were given only scraps of unwanted meat from the master's kitchen and either cornmeal or rice (as they were often the cheapest available staples) to eat, but the community made sure man, woman, and child were fed. This was important for the master as well when he needed his labor to be fit for work to guarantee a return on investment.

These communities served other purposes as well; as a community of family, a child, whether he or she had a mother or father or not, would call other slaves names like brother, sister, aunt, and uncle. Some masters even allowed slave marriages, though it was because it was deemed beneficial as an agent to calm the more dangerous men and potentially breed new slaves. Individual families that were split up due to sale or death would know that their child was in loving hands, even if not their own. The community was also a way to ensure that important lessons were passed on about heritage and life skills; some of the best known of the stories survive as spiritual hymns or folktales.

Perhaps the most famous collection of these folktales is Joel Chandler Harris's anthology, titled *Uncle Remus and Brer Rabbit* ("Brother Rabbit"). These allegories were especially popular with children, white and black, as the main characters were general representations of outrageous attitudes personified by common animals recognizable in the Chesapeake and lower South; these included Br'er B'ar, the dim-witted strong man; Br'er Fox, the devious schemer; Br'er Wolf, the overly aggressive enforcer; and finally Br'er Rabbit, the trickster and hero. Even the narrator was painted as a jolly, soft-spoken, Uncle Tom (Roark et al., 2014, p. 365) type character which may have reminded the audience of a particular person, or persons, in the community. While seen as harmless entertainment by masters, these were often stories of survival, quick thinking, and problem solving that were of realistic significance for children learning to survive a slave's life. The Harris collection retained its popularity through much of the 20th century, even being turned into a Disney movie called *Song of the South*, and both it and the book were only removed from common circulation with recent advances in the removal of hate speech and growth of tolerance in the last few decades.

The masters also played an important part in the spread of the Second Great Awakening. Slaves were often dressed and brought to the master's church, where they were segregated to the back or balcony and taught sermons about obedience and warped views of how slavery benefitted the greatest empires and how even biblical heroes were slave masters. Also, this was a platform to instill the ideas of sin, especially miscegenation (Roark et al., 2014, p. 336), which masters hoped would protect their way of life and help the masters secure a public sense of honor and chivalry (Roark et al., 2014, p. 344), even if it was not true in private. Also appealing was that Sundays were commonly days of rest, and sometimes even church festivals, like Christmas, worked in the master's favor as reasons to provide an off-season time of rest.

A separate community of faith would emerge on the plantation, however, as slaves would develop their own practicing religion, often in secret, and led by free men who found their ways onto the plantation. Slave services were led to spread stories of freedom from oppression and provide some opportunity to impart parts of the African culture into American generations. Songs of Moses leading his people and individual histories were also very popular to raise the spirits of the often subjugated and downtrodden. It was from these secret services that many modern traditions would emerge, including the spiritual type of song/chant, some of the more passionate dances, and zealous outcries which are still seen in many revivalist congregations. The call to these meetings was double edged, however. In the wake of rebellions and rising anti-slavery sentiment, owners often feared large, spirited gatherings of slaves, which are why most of these plantation services were held only in secret. Even then, such congregation only fueled the belief of the need for laws and codes to arm the master against potential uprisings, like that of Nat Turner (Roark et al., 2014, pp. 332-333; Johnson, 2012, doc. 13-4).

Under the new slave codes, the white plantation master had all of the power that the law needed to provide him to act on the idea of white superiority under a veil of paternalism (Roark et al., 2014, p. 342; Johnson, 2012, doc. 13-5); notable quotes of the time include the following from Thomas R. Dew, a Virginia planter:

“the slaves of a good master are his warmest, most constant, and most devoted friends” (as cited by Roark et al., 2014, p. 337, para. 1).

While there are records of some slaves being treated with respect and kindness, generally this was on smaller farms as a part of a family without the luxury of numerous offspring. Overwhelmingly, the horrific abuses on the plantation cast light on the horrors that slavery and legalized ownership of another human brought, no matter the job, position, or location. For these owners, they believed that the institution of slavery was a blessing that removed class warfare, but the truth is that only elites could afford that lifestyle; even in the booming South, where cash crops supplied the vast majority of its exports, only one in four families could afford slaves, and little more than one in ten actually had the means for an iconic plantation house and assorted mills. As we will see, though slavery would be one of the essential elements of a prosperous Southern economy, the slavery question was becoming as divided in the South as it was in the North; however, there was still one big difference. The Southern reliance on slavery was growing, while the mixed economy and rapid work demands shunned the practice in the North almost entirely.

As hinted at previously, as significant as the slave system was for the southern economy, and as drastic as the population statistics politicized the voice of plantation owners, three out of four white citizens, including a high number of farmers and those dependent on agriculture, actually did not own slaves. Some of these farmers were lower class, others lived in terrain that was not sufficient for plantation style farming, and many simply did not agree with the idea of *owning* another person. In addition, despite the rural agrarian structure, there were growing cities in the South that echoed the same basic needs found in cities in the North. Still, abolition was a dreadful idea to be considered by most Southerners; even if not directly, the cash crop was the life-blood of any town, and the concerns raised by abolitionists were met with great apprehension.

Though cotton was king in the South, just as there had been both a Chesapeake (upper South) and lower South during the tobacco craze, again there was a geological and climatic divide in the Southern territory. The plantation belt was just as it sounds: the inland plains from South Carolina to Texas that provided the most opportune region for cotton growth. Towards the sea, other traditional crops like rice were still grown as well as it was a relatively cheap staple and would feed many of the inland slaves. The Chesapeake region would be renamed the Upcountry, which now is probably best recognized as the Appellation Mountain range, stretching along north Georgia, Tennessee, North Carolina, and Virginia. This would be more geared toward the growth of produce, and still in some areas, tobacco.

For these non-plantation Southerners, still separated from any large urban areas, there was still a strong devotion and call toward the revivalist congregations, community get-togethers, and opportunities to shop their wares and meet the neighbors. Education, which was already beginning to spread in areas like Boston (as discussed in a previous unit), was far from becoming common in this region, so these social gatherings were important to share stories, experiences, and discoveries with those of most immediate proximity. Interestingly enough, despite the differences in perspective about the morality of slavery, whites of all classes and walks shared a common sense of superiority. Fear of what abolition may bring was a dangerous thought as it was far from just the elites who had everything to lose, and as the number of free blacks strengthened throughout the 19th century, this ideology of superiority was challenged, and fear grew.

In short, free blacks were American citizens subjugated under the earliest forms of Jim Crow. The *inalienable rights* that Jefferson promised were not denied, but there was clear legal precedent in favor of the white man over any claim of any other free man or woman, no matter how successful they might have been. Land, service, opportunity, and benefit were all questionable—the elites had their wish; the law made whites united across class lines, even dropping class restrictions in politics, and that would be the way slavery continued being considered a necessary evil.

This idea of a *necessary evil* would gain additional traction as the Mexican-American War came to an end. As we discussed in the previous unit, territories in the American West had long been welcoming to U.S. settlers who voluntarily pledged to abide by local customs and laws; their presence along the border regions was often of great use as a buffer with Native American tribes and potential international threats. It was the unexpected change in policy that sparked the series of violent affairs beginning with the Alamo. Now, as the U.S. had successfully annexed Texas and much of the former Spanish Southwest, and with a Gold Rush, among other precious mineral rushes, taking place from Colorado to California, Americans searching for their opportunity and a new life quickly rushed to stake a claim. From the same Independence, Missouri, that

served as a starting point for the Oregon Trail, the Santa Fe Trail would also thrive, becoming an important line of services while transportation and communication infrastructure were built.

Briefly going back to the last unit, tying up any political debate not focused on slavery were the on-goings in the American West. With much of the former Mexican and Spanish lands now legally in the hands of the United States, and with the success of the Gold Rush at attracting immigrants, the western coast was quickly growing with the same success that was seen in the East. The reason for debate, however, was again voting rights. As states began to form borders, they would earn representation in Washington D.C., but what had to be decided was the slavery question. What emerged was a series of plans intended to settle the expansion measure before any more states were welcomed into the union.

The first suggestion, called the 1846 Wilmot Proviso, named after Pennsylvania congressman David Wilmot, said simply that because Mexico had already forbidden slavery, that anti-slavery (free soil) is how these newly added lands should remain. Considering how many of the most famous figures to fight in the war, from the Alamo to Santa Anna's surrender, were Southerners, this was a hotly contested perspective. If the proviso passed, it meant two things: first, the remaining slave laws were essentially *grandfathered* in. Simply put, the standing tradition of laborers freely choosing their working conditions (free labor) received rave support from the North and great disdain from the South, and uniquely it was carried along geographical, not party, lines. The second outcome was that with this constraint in the West, ongoing anti-southern sentiment in the North, and a third (somewhat unexpected) region of support from northern segregationists who wanted lands free of other races, the representation of slave states would quickly become the extreme minority in both chambers. For most Southerners, slave holder or not, this was considered a direct attack on the South's culture, economy, and society. There was already a growing population majority against slave states, as evidence in the House vote; it was only by the slimmest of margins that the slave states were able to defeat the measure in the Senate.

The next suggestion, called popular sovereignty, believed that part of a state's application should include a decision by popular vote of that territory's citizens as to which economic situation was preferred. What killed this plan was disagreement in details; slave states wanted the vote to be late in the process to give time for slavery to show its economic benefit, while northern states knew they could stuff the ballots quickly during the first steps in statehood, and cut the head from the snake while it was still young. In 1847 the key advocate for this plan was the Democratic Senator Lewis Cass from Michigan. Despite its ill fate here, this is a plan that would become very instrumental over the next decade, even ironically deciding a pivotal election as the nation was on the brink of division. There being no clear solution from these debates, the issue would carry over to the 1848 election. Cass would be the Democratic representative, and opposing him would be the war hero and Whig, Zachary Taylor, who had not weighed in on the labor discussion in either direction.

1848 would be representative of just how divided the nation was at this time; looking at the political map on page 362, it is clear that geography was not the deciding factor. Interestingly, because of Taylor's silence on the matter, this would not be simply a question of party politics. Taylor was from Mississippi and had plantation properties in the Southeast; southern Democrats saw him as another Jackson: strong military tradition, planter, and defender of agricultural rights. The northern Democrats and Whigs feared what this could mean if elected, and decided to abdicate to form the first heavily northern biased party since the Federalists: the "Free-Soil" party, and tabbed former President and Vice President Martin Van Buren to lead them. Van Buren, like most third party candidates, did not make a dent in the election, winning zero electoral votes and barely ten percent of the popular vote. If he made any waves, it was taking popular votes away from fellow northerner Cass. Many hoped that Taylor's victory would reunite the nation; his support ranged from Vermont to Florida, and he scored every major state, save Virginia. What was not yet clear was how the rise of the Free-Soil party had hurt the two major parties.

Taylor was a man of immediate action; he felt that by striking while the iron was still hot, there would be almost an entire four year term to calm the fears of the nation, giving the politics time to rebalance. As hopeful as this was, it was not realistic. Taylor's proactive attitude fit directly into the northern plan for a quick vote, denying the slave owners a chance to impact the economy. California and New Mexico were the next likely territories to ratify, and under this plan, both would be free-soil states. Many spoke out, including Henry Clay of Kentucky, who argued for compromise and was probably lucky to still be welcomed home (Roark et al., 2014, p. 363); followed by Ohio's Salmon P. Chase, who offered an opposing perspective; and finally Mississippi's fiery Henry S. Foote, who would have probably started a raid against Clay had the northern delegates not dominated Congress. South Carolina's John C. Calhoun, a veteran politician and former Vice

President, gave perhaps the most worrying prediction: “As things now stand, [...the South] cannot with safety remain in the Union.”

Almost poetically, Zachary Taylor, the hope for reunification, died in office in July of 1850, before a decision was made, and Millard Fillmore would oversee the next stages of debate. Despite his upbringing, Taylor was a nationalist who literally confronted any secessionist talk face-to-face; he understood what it meant to preserve the union, and his temper earned him the name “Old Rough and Ready.” He famously said that anyone “taken in rebellion against the Union, he would hang ... with less reluctance than he had hanged deserters and spies in Mexico.” With this dedication to service, it should be no surprise that Taylor’s son, Richard, would become a general himself; ironically, however, he would be in the service of the Confederate Army, and a brother-in-law to Confederate President Jefferson Davis.

After a series of hot tempers and refusals, the outcome would be the Compromise of 1850, which essentially opened California as a free-soil state, states that were already pro-slave would be grandfathered in, and any future territories would be given the opportunity to vote. This was essentially Clay’s original plan, but it came from a much less imposing political presence, the relatively young Senator from Illinois, Stephen Douglas, and included two stipulations: an end to the slave trade in Washington DC, which was technically located between two slave states, and the Fugitive Slave Act (Roark et al., 2014, p. 365), which guaranteed any runaway slaves were returned to their rightful owners, even if caught on free soil. This act of course required the willing acceptance of the law by those harboring fleeing slaves, and it did not take long for this to become a mess (Roark et al., 2014, p. 365).

In 1852 Fillmore would not run for re-election, and instead the Whigs would try to once again elect a war hero in General Winfield Scott. Democrat Franklin Pierce of New Hampshire, with a noted sympathy for the southern condition, would, however, carry the election easily as the Free-Soil Party was still politically active, and the deep divisions from 1848 were still quite apparent. Perhaps his most successful accomplishment was the Gadsden Purchase in 1853, solidifying the border with Mexico and providing the necessary lands for southern tracks through the American West, meaning the Santa Fe Trail was no longer the only safe option for passage. What may have been the only saving grace for the U.S. at this time was the nationwide brand that both major parties had; neither wanted to relinquish their northern or southern bases of support, and the Free-Soil Party’s failures had shown where the line between economics and political leadership was drawn. Despite this apparent lull in the fighting, continued western settlement and transportation infrastructure would also stoke the fires of the slavery question, such as with the debates to incorporate Nebraska and Kansas (Roark et al., 2014, pp. 367 and 370) in 1854.

New York’s Senator William H. Seward, is arguably best remembered for a controversial 1867 purchase of a patch of seemingly uninhabitable Russian tundra west of British Columbia that today we call Alaska in exchange for approximately half the cost of the entire Louisiana Territory—aka “Seward’s Folly;” that is, of course, before the discovery of vast natural resources and precious metals approximately three decades later. In 1854, with the Kansas-Nebraska Act (Johnson, 2012, doc. 14-1) ink still waiting to dry, Seward challenged pro-slave advocates to allow for the inhabitants of Kansas to decide via popular sovereignty if they would prefer slave or free-soil status. To settle this, both sides had numbers pile into the territory, but the pro-slavery potential settlers clearly dominated the election, causing Kansas to enter its statehood process with a pro-slave agenda, despite the less than ethical means. This of course upset the free-soil advocates who took the only logical action: they set up a rival government. May 21, 1856, began a small scale civil conflict near the Missouri border. This conflict would end with numerous battles, but the same result. Interestingly, among the free-soil leaders would be one John Brown, a struggling settler who was not afraid to use violent means, and who would become a national figure after a violent 1859 incident in Harpers Ferry (Roark et al., 2014 pp. 358-359; Johnson, 2012, doc. 14-5), Virginia.

Couple this with the violent beating (Roark et al., 2014, pp. 375-376) of Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner by South Carolina congressman Preston Brooks in the same month, and it became clear that the slavery question was as hot as ever. In fact, the geographical division of the remaining Louisiana Territories and repeal of the Missouri Compromise, may have been just the spark (Roark et al., 2014, p. 371) necessary to fade that line as two new parties emerged out of the shell of the Whigs: the Republican Party (not to be confused with Jefferson’s Democratic-Republicans) and the Know-Nothings (American Party).

The Republican origin is pretty straightforward: this was primarily a group of northern anti-slavery advocates, and their organization derived from the slavery debates. The Know-Nothings were less expected and actually emerged out of a different labor controversy: anti-immigration. The name was essentially a playful reminder of

its origins as a secret club; aside, the nativist belief was quickly gaining massive support. Many who joined this Party feared how the continued immigration numbers threatened available jobs and the American culture, specifically Protestantism, a fear that was easy to recruit support in the North, East, South, and West. The Republicans knew that they must keep the slavery question at the forefront to guarantee success. Going into the election of 1856, their platform was that by stopping any further slavery advancement, none of the new territories would be open for slave labor, meaning a land of fresh opportunity. This platform was very successful; in addition to the clear leadership of the party, it also attracted the support of groups without direct influence, such as women, who were being highly sought after in the male dominated northwest, and saw this as an opportunity to resurrect some of their own reforms introduced in previous units. As the map on page 372 shows, the Democrats remained overwhelmingly strong, especially in the now united South, and elected James Buchanan, running away. What should be taken from this was that the slavery question remained more of a hot button issue than immigration, and it is also important to remember that abolition was not the same as anti-slavery.

Perhaps the most notable challenge to the slave laws would be the landmark case *Dred Scott v. Sandford* in 1857. Known simply as the *Dred Scott decision* today (Roark et al., 2014, p. 376), this reviewed if the travel by Dred Scott, a slave, chaperoned by his master into free-soil lands officially freed him according to recent laws. Chief Justice Roger B. Taney, presenting the opinion of the Supreme Court, stated the following:

They had for more than a century before been regarded as beings of an inferior order, and altogether unfit to associate with the white race either in social or political relations, and so far inferior that they had no rights which the white man was bound to respect, and that the negro might justly and lawfully be reduced to slavery for his benefit. (as cited in *Scott v. Sandford*, 1857, para. 100)

In short, Scott lost, but would be freed soon after thanks to the charity of a wealthy free-soil advocate. The importance of this decision, however, was that it set the legal precedent that free men were only free on free-soil, which invalidated the Missouri Compromise and provided the first true constitutional rendering of the slavery issue, which, as we discussed in earlier units, was consciously set aside during the heat of the Constitutional Convention. What this also did was essentially draw the first political border between what would become Confederate and Union territories in only a few years' time, and provided a necessary boost for the struggling Republican Party that was trying to unite against the southern dominated Democrats.

Leading this Republican resurgence would be former congressman and current lawyer Abraham Lincoln of Illinois; outspoken and clearly anti-slavery, Lincoln understood and admitted the double edge of the abolition debate, but he also understood that slavery had divided the union, and to survive, the nation had to unite under one set of laws:

I can not but hate [the prospect of slavery's expansion]. I hate it because of the monstrous injustice of slavery itself. I hate it because it deprives our republican example of its just influence in the world—enables the enemies of free institutions, with plausibility, to taunt us as hypocrites—causes the real friends of freedom to doubt our sincerity. Abraham Lincoln, 1854 (as cited in National Park Service, n.d., para. 18)

Lincoln's first test was not in Washington, but in Illinois, where he practiced law and was raising a young family. The Republicans needed a forum for his ideas, and the Senatorial election of 1858 was just that forum. Illinois, a free-soil state, was still very divided concerning the issue of abolition. Though Lincoln did not advertise himself as one as it was political suicide, he did hold strong convictions that containment was not at all enough. To challenge him would be the incumbent Senator Stephen Douglas, who had burst onto the scene with his successful proposal of the Compromise of 1850, but had since had a less-stellar record. He was recognized by many as a deciding factor in the controversial Kansas vote; Douglas himself was not an advocate of slavery, but his party was, and his platform of popular sovereignty had taken a sure victory out of the hands of free-soil supporters. His unwillingness to vote with the party caused a rift between him and President Buchanan:

I deny the right of Congress to force a slaveholding State upon an unwilling people. I deny their right to force a free State upon an unwilling people. I deny their right to force a good thing upon a people who are unwilling to receive it. The great principle is the right of every community to judge and decide for itself, whether a thing is right or wrong, whether it would be good or evil for them to adopt it; and the right of free action, the right of free thought, the right of free judgment upon the question is dearer

to every true American than any other under a free government. (as cited in "Political Debates Between Lincoln and Douglas," n.d., para. 1)

For Douglas, this election was a necessary victory for his political career.

The campaign tour would be a series of stops throughout the state of Illinois; in the northern areas, Lincoln's strong anti-slave stand came to great applause, whereas Douglas generally dominated in the southern stops. The greater significance of this campaign, however, were the debates themselves; Douglas was a national figure, and Lincoln fed off of that press. Also significant, this being a state election, for a national issue like slavery to be the main platform was rare; it was clear from the divided receptions that this was the topic on many American minds, even over local affairs, and that even committed states were not universal in their support one way or another. Douglas would narrowly keep his seat, a position that also kept him in a key position for a run at the Presidency in 1860, but more significantly, Lincoln was now a national name, and the Republicans had an outspoken leader.

With the multitude of individual battles throughout the nation, it was clear that both sides had dug in and were unwilling to budge. Each side had great orators and political strategists, both had specific examples of aggression egged on and supported by the opposition, and both found ways to justify their perspective as the constitutional and religious right. At the center of everyone's attention was an election. So divided were the causes and views that the majority of states came down to a battle between two candidates. In the North, it was a rematch between Lincoln and Douglas, and in the South, between Buchanan's Vice President John C. Breckinridge and Tennessee Senator John Bell. Lincoln's chances at victory were so unlikely that his name only appeared on one third of southern ballots. Despite this, Lincoln would win all but one northern state outright, and despite not gaining a popular majority, or a single southern electoral vote, his electoral totals (Roark et al., 2014, p. 382) far surpassed his closest contender, Breckinridge.

Lincoln's election proved that a united North now politically trumped the South. With this understanding, the secessionist rhetoric was never stronger, and on December 20, 1860, before Lincoln was even inaugurated into office, South Carolina formally seceded, followed closely after by Mississippi (Jan. 9th), Florida (Jan 10th), Alabama (Jan 11th), Georgia (Jan 19th), Louisiana (Jan 26th), and Texas (Feb 1st). Representatives of each would meet on February 7th in Montgomery, Alabama, to officially designate themselves unprotected by the northern states and a separate nation: the Confederate States of America (CSA). Lincoln would officially take his oath of office on March 4, 1861, and the six border states of Virginia, Arkansas, North Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Missouri would also secede later that year and join their neighbors as part of the CSA. In his inaugural address, President Lincoln (1860) stated, "You can have no conflict, without being yourselves the aggressors. You have no oath registered in Heaven to destroy the government, while I shall have the most solemn one to 'preserve, protect, and defend' it" (as cited in "First Inaugural Address," n.d., para 39)

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Learning Activities (Non-Graded)

Flash cards

For a review of the Key Terms of the unit, click [here](#) to access the interactive Unit IV Flashcards in PowerPoint form. (Click [here](#) to access a PDF version.)

Non-graded Learning Activities are provided to aid students in their course of study. You do not have to submit them. If you have questions, contact your instructor for further guidance and information.