

Major Themes

Union in peril / Impending Crisis

Territorial Expansion

War with Mexico

End of the 2nd Party System

Election of 1860

Names, Terms, and Events

Stephen F. Austin

- A young immigrant from Missouri who had established the first legal American settlement in Texas in 1822. Him and others were effective in recruiting American immigrants to Texas, but they also created centers of power in the region that competed with the Mexican government.

Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna

- In the mid-1830s, Santa Anna seized power as a dictator and imposed a new, more conservative and autocratic regime on the nation and its territories.
- Santa Anna led a large army into Texas, where the American settlers were having enormous difficulties organizing an effective defense of their new “nation.” Several different factions to be the legitimate government of Texas, and American soldiers could not even agree on who their commanders were.
- Mexican forces annihilated an American garrison at the Alamo mission in San Antonio after a famous, futile, defense by a group of Texas, “patriots,” a group that included, among others, the renowned frontiersman and former Tennessee congressman Davy Crockett. Americans were fleeing east toward Louisiana to escape Santa Anna’s army
- Was taken prisoner by Sam Houston

Texas Revolution

- Friction between American settlers and the Mexican government grew due to their desire to create stronger bonds with their former home and their desire to legalize slavery which the Mexican government had made illegal in Texas
- Sporadic fighting between Americans and Mexicans in Texas began in 1835 and escalated as the Mexican government sent more troops into the territory.
- Mexican forces annihilated American garrisons at the Alamo and Goliad. By 1836 Americans were fleeing east toward Louisiana to escape Santa Anna’s army
- Sam Houston defeated the Mexican army at the Battle of San Jacinto and took Santa Anna prisoner

- Under pressure, Santa Anna signed a treaty giving Texas independence and while the Mexican treaty repudiated the treaty, there were no further military efforts to win Texas back

The Alamo

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Sam Houston

- General Sam Houston managed to keep a small force together.
- On April 23, 1836, at the Battle of San Jacinto (near Houston), he defeated the Mexican army and took Santa Anna prisoner.
- American troops then killed many of the Mexican soldiers in retribution for the executions at Goliad.
- Under pressure from his captors, Santa Anna signed a treaty giving Texas independence.

Republic of Texas

- American Texans hoped for annexation by the U.S. but there was opposition for statehood of Texas. Many American northerners opposed acquiring a large new slave territory, and others opposed increasing the southern votes in Congress and in the electoral college. (President Jackson was opposed to annexation)
- President Jackson refused recognizing the republic until 1837
- Texas cast out on its own and its leaders sought money and support from Europe
- Some of them dreamed of creating a vast southwestern nation, stretching to the Pacific, that would rival the United States.
- England and France quickly recognized and concluded trade treaties with Texas
 - In response, President Tyler persuaded Texas to apply for statehood again in 1844
 - The Texas question quickly became the central issue in the election of 1844

James Polk

- Favors war with Mexico
- Believes U.S. will get Texas, Mexico, and California
- Polk himself resolved the Oregon question.
 - After bickering with the British, the British government accepted Polk's original proposal and on June 15, 1846, the Senate approved a treaty that fixed the boundary at the 49th parallel (containing Oregon).
- California issue:
- Polk dispatched a special prime minister, John Slidell, to try to buy off the Mexicans. Mexican leaders rejected Slidell's offer to purchase the disputed territories.
- Polk ordered Taylor to march into Texas, move across the Nueces River, and wait for the Mexicans.
- For months, the Mexicans refused to fight, but finally some Mexican troops crossed the Rio Grande and attacked a unit of American soldiers. This started a war.
- Whigs critics charged from the beginning that Polk had deliberately maneuvered the country into the conflict and had precipitated the declaration.

Zachary Taylor

- The presidential campaign of 1848 dampened the controversy for a time as both Democrats and Whigs tried to avoid the slavery question.
- The Democrats nominated Lewis Cass of Michigan
- The Whigs nominated Zachary Taylor. The people were unsettled by the candidates so Martin Van Buren emerged as the leader of the Free-Soil system.
- Zachary Taylor believed statehood could become the solution to the issue of slavery in the territories.

Winfield Scott

- The commanding general of the army and its finest soldier, launched a bold new campaign.
- After Kearny had taken Cali, the Mexicans still refused to concede defeat
- Scott assembled an army at Tampico, which the navy transported down the Mexican coast to Veracruz.
- With an army that never numbered more than 14,000, Scott advanced 260 miles to Mexico City, kept American casualties low, and never lost a battle before seizing the Mexican capital.
- A new Mexican government took power and began to negotiate a treaty

Republic of California

- In this vast region lived members of several western tribes and perhaps 7,000 Mexican, mostly descendants of Spanish colonists.

- White Americans began to arrive gradually: first maritime traders and captains of Pacific whaling ships, who stopped to barter goods or buy supplies; then merchants, who established stores, imported merchandise, and developed a profitable trade with the Mexicans and Indians; and finally pioneering farmers.
- Some settlers started to dream of bringing California into the United States
- President Polk shared their ideas and committed himself to getting California and New Mexico.
- Polk ordered Stephen W. Kearny and he captured Santa Fe with no opposition
 - He then moved to California where he joined a conflict already in progress that was being staged jointly by American settlers, a well-armed exploring party led by John C. Fremont, and the American Navy: the so called **Bear Flag Revolution**
- By 1846 Kearny had successfully acquired California
- Winfield Scott then took care of the rest of the Mexicans until they opted for a treaty

Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo

- Polk send Nicholas Trist to negotiate a treaty for the Mexican War on February 2, 1848
 - On this day Trist reached an agreement with the new Mexican government on the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo
 - **Mexico agreed to cede California and New Mexico to the United States and acknowledge the Rio Grande as the boundary of Texas.**
 - **In return, the U.S. promised to assume any financial claims its new citizens had against Mexico and pay the Mexicans \$15 million**
- **Polk became mad when he found out that Trist had not acquired Mexico but he settled for the treaty anyway**
- The Treaty was sent to the Senate where it was voted on 38 to 14
 - The war was over

Gadsden Purchase

- Jefferson Davis of Mississippi removed one obstacle to a southern route
- Surveys indicate that a railroad with a southern terminus would have to pass through an area in Mexican territory
- In 1853 Davis send James Gadsden to Mexico, where he persuaded the Mexican government to accept \$10 million in exchange for a strip of land that today comprises part of Arizona and New Mexico

Gold Rush

- In January of 1848, James Marshall, working on John Sutter's sawmills, found traces of gold in the foothills of the Sierra Nevadas

- By May, word had reached San Francisco and by later summer it had reached the east coast and rest of the world
- Almost immediately thousands of people began flocking to California in a frantic search for gold
- The non-Indian population increased nearly twenty fold in four years: from 14,000 in 1848 to over 220,000 in 1852
- Populations of California cities decreased as people rushed up the mountains for gold
- Many migrants came such as the Chinese
- This led to a labor shortage in California and created opportunities for people who needed work
- It also led to an exploitation of Indians
 - Indians were hunted and their population decreased from 150,000 to 30,000 between the 1850s and 1870
- The gold rush was crucial to the growth of California and led to it becoming so heterogeneous
- As a result of migrants, pressure grew to create a more stable and effective government

Forty Niners

- California migrants who abandoned farms, jobs, homes, families, and piled onto ships
- 95% of them were men and the society was completely fluid due to the absence of women and children

Wilmot Proviso

- Representative David Willmot of Pennsylvania, an antislavery Democrat, introduced an amendment to the appropriation bill prohibiting slavery in any territory acquired from Mexico. It passed in the House but failed in the Senate

Secession

- Southerners demanded a stringent law that would require northern states to return fugitive slaves to their owners.
- The southerners were now talking about secession from the Union. They resisted the abolition of slavery.

Compromise of 1850

- A compromise was needed to settle sectional controversy
- Henry Clay believed no compromise could last unless it settled all the issues in dispute between the sections
- On January 29, 1850 he presented his piece to the legislation
- It called for:
 - Admission of California as a free state

- The formation of territorial governments in the rest of the lands acquired from Mexico, without restrictions on slavery
- The abolition of the slave trade, but not slavery itself, in the District of Columbia
- A new and more effective fugitive slave law
- Clay, like many of the national leaders, was an old man of 73 years
- Calhoun insisted that the North grant the South equal rights in the territories, that it agree to observe the laws concerning fugitive slaves, that it cease attacking slavery, and that it amend the Constitution to create dual presidents, one from the North and one from the South, each with a veto
- Daniel Webster delivered a speech trying to rally northern moderates to support Clay's compromise
- Congress defeated the Clay proposal and with that the controversy moved into its second phase
- Clay, ill and tired, left Washington to spend the summer resting in the mountains
- Calhoun had died before the vote in July
- Webster accepted a new appointment as secretary of state, thus removing himself from the Senate and the debate
- William H. Seward, a young leader, emerged
 - The ideas of Union to him were less important than the issue of eliminating slavery
 - Jefferson Davis was another important face
 - He believed that the slavery issue was less one of principles and ideals than one of economic self-interest
- Most important of all was Stephen A. Douglas
 - He stood for sectional gain and personal self-promotion
- One spur to the compromise was the most powerful obstacle to it: the president
 - Zachary Taylor had died unexpectedly leaving Millard Fillmore, a supporter of the compromise, in the seat of presidency
- Douglas's first plan was to break up Clay's old plan and to introduce instead a series of separate measures to be voted on one by one
 - Thus, representatives of different sections could vote on what they liked and what they didn't
- By mid-September Congress had enacted and the president had signed all the components of the compromise
- The Compromise was a victory of self-interest

Popular Sovereignty

- The idea of popular sovereignty would call for the people of each territory to decide the status of slavery there

- Douglas was a strong advocate of this

Stephen Douglas

- Strong advocate of popular sovereignty which led to the south fearing him as much as Lincoln
- Most important of all was Stephen A. Douglas
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- **Douglas** wanted the transcontinental railroad for his own city and section. He introduced his bill in January of 1854 to organize a huge new territory, known as Nebraska, west of Iowa and Missouri. (Kansas-Nebraska Act)
- He inserted a provision that the status of slavery in the territory would be determined by the territorial legislature -- popular sovereignty.
- When Southern Democrats wanted more, he agreed to an additional clause explicitly repealing the Missouri Compromise. He also agreed to divide the area into two territories... Nebraska and Kansas.
- No piece of legislation had ever brought such ominous consequences. It divided and destroyed the Whig party, it divided the northern Democrats, and most of all it spurred the creation of a new party that was frankly sectional in composition and creed. The Republican party arose out of this.
- Went against Lincoln
 - Had no moral position on the issue of Slavery and did not care whether slavery was voted up or down

Millard Fillmore

- Zachary Taylor had died unexpectedly leaving Millard Fillmore, a supporter of the compromise, in the seat of presidency
- His presidency led to the approval of the Compromise of 1850

Fugitive Slave Law Act

- Franklin Pierce, a charming amiable man of no particular distinction, attempted to maintain party and national harmony by avoiding the issue of slavery
- Northern opposition to the Fugitive Slave Act intensified quickly after 1850, when southerners began appearing occasionally in northern states to pursue people they claimed were fugitives.
- Mobs formed in some northern cities to prevent enforcement of the law, and several northern states also passed their own laws barring the deportation of fugitive slaves.

John Brown

- **Pottawatomie Massacre**

- John Brown, a grim, fiercely committed zealot who considered himself God's instrument to destroy slavery, gathered six followers and in one night murdered five pro-slavery settlers, leaving their mutilated bodies to discourage other supporters of slavery from entering Kansas.

Kansas-Nebraska

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Bleeding Kansas

- Events in Kansas for the next two years increased the political turmoil in the North
- White settlers from both the north and south began moving into the territory almost immediately after the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act
- In the spring of 1855, elections were held for a territorial legislature
- There were only 1,500 legal voters in Kansas but there were 6,000 Missourians who came to vote
 - As a result, pro-slavery forces elected a majority to the legislature, which immediately legalized slavery
 - Out-raged free staters elected their own delegates to a constitutional convention, which met at Topeka and adopted a constitution excluding slavery
 - They then chose their own governor and legislature and petitioned Congress for statehood.
 - President Pierce denounced them as traitors and threw full support of the federal government behind the pro-slavery territorial legislature
- A few months later, a pro-slavery federal marshal assembled a large posse, consisting mostly of Missourians, to arrest the free-state leaders, who had set up their headquarters in Lawrence.
- The posse sacked the town, burned the "governor's" house, and destroyed several printing presses.

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Free Soil

- In the North, assumptions about the proper structure of society came to center on the belief in “free soil” and “free labor.”
- Although abolitionists generated some support for their argument that slavery was a moral evil and must be eliminated, most white northerners came to believe that the existence of slavery was dangerous not because of what it did to blacks but because of what it threatened to do to whites
- They opposed expansion of slavery

The Pro-Slavery Argument

- Southern whites were pressured by the Nat Turner uprising in 1831, the expansion of the cotton economy into the deep South, and the growth of the Garrisonian abolitionist movement.
- Some argued that slavery was good for the slaves because they enjoyed better conditions than industrial workers in the North.
- Slavery was good for southern society as a whole because it was the only way the two races could live together in peace.
- It was good for the entire country because the southern economy was the key to prosperity of the nation.
- Above all, slavery was good because it served as the basis of the southern way of life.

James Buchanan

- The Democrats chose James Buchanan of Pennsylvania, while the Republicans chose John C. Fremont (first candidate ever for the Republicans).
- The Native American (Know-Nothing Party) nominated Millard Fillmore.
- Buchanan won the election and took office at 65 making him the second oldest president ever.
- He was painfully timid and a very indecisive president during a critical time for the U.S.

Dred Scott v. Sandford

- In 1857 the Supreme Court projected itself into the sectional controversy of Dred Scott v. Sandford. Dred Scott was a Missouri slave, once owned by a surgeon who had taken Scott with him into Illinois and Wisconsin, where slavery was forbidden. In 1846, after the surgeon died, Scott sued his master's widow for freedom on the grounds that his residence in free territory had liberated him from slavery. At this point, John Sandford, the brother of the surgeon's widow, was claiming ownership of Scott, and he appealed the circuit court ruling to the state supreme court.

- **How did the courts rule?**

The Supreme Court was so divided that it was unable to issue a single ruling on the case. Chief Justice Roger Taney declared that Scott could not bring a suit in the federal courts because he was not a citizen.

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Abraham Lincoln

- Lincoln was a successful lawyer who had long been involved in state politics
- He had served several terms in the Illinois legislature and one undistinguished term in Congress
- He, however, was not a national figure like Douglas so he engaged Douglas in a series of debates
- The Lincoln-Douglas debates attracted enormous crowds and received wide attention
- Lincoln's eloquent and passionate attacks on slavery made him nationally prominent
- If the nation could accept that blacks were not entitled to basic human rights, he argued, then it could accept that other groups -- immigrant, laborers -- could be deprived of rights too
- If slavery were to extend into the western territories opportunities for poor white laborers to better their lots there would be lost
- The nation's future, he argued, rested on the spread of free labor
- He believed that slavery was morally wrong but he was not an abolitionist
 - He could not envision an easy alternative to slavery in the areas where it already existed

- He shared the view that the black race was not ready to live on equal terms with the whites
- He wanted to prevent the spread of slavery into further territories
 - He would not challenge where it already existed but halt expansion and hope that it would die out on its own
- Lincoln lost in Congress and Douglas won but it would be different in the big election

Election of 1860

- This election had the most momentous consequences of any in American history and was the most complex
- The Democratic party was torn apart by a battle between southerners, who demanded a strong endorsement of slavery, and westerners, who supported the idea of popular sovereignty
- The decimated convection dominated Douglas for president
- In the meantime, disenchanted southern Democrats met in Richmond and nominated John C. Breckinridge of Kentucky
- Later, a group of conservative Ex-Whigs met in Baltimore and nominated John Bell
- The Republican party chose Lincoln
 - He was a representative of the West, a considerable asset in a race against Douglas
- Lincoln won in the November election
 - His election led southerners to know that their position in the Union was hopeless
- Within a few weeks of Lincoln's election the process of disunion began