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Drifting Toward Disunion, 1854–1861

PART I: Reviewing the Chapter

A. Checklist of Learning Objectives

After mastering this chapter, you should be able to

1. relate the sequence of major crises that led from the Kansas-Nebraska Act to secession.
2. explain how and why “bleeding Kansas” became a dress rehearsal for the Civil War.
3. trace the growing power of the Republican party in the 1850s and the increasing divisions and helplessness of the Democrats.
4. explain how the Dred Scott decision and Brown’s Harpers Ferry raid deepened sectional antagonism.
5. trace the rise of Lincoln as the leading exponent of the Republican doctrine of no expansion of slavery.
6. analyze the complex election of 1860 in relation to the sectional crisis.
7. describe the movement toward secession, the formation of the Confederacy, and the failure of the last compromise effort.

B. Glossary

To build your social science vocabulary, familiarize yourself with the following terms.

1. **puppet government** A government set up and controlled by outside forces. “The slavery supporters triumphed and then set up their own puppet government at Shawnee Mission.” (p. 413)
2. **bigoted** Blindly or narrowly intolerant. “. . . the allegation . . . alienated many bigoted Know-Nothings. . . .” (p. 416)
3. **public domain** Land or other things belonging to the whole nation, controlled by the federal government. “Financial distress . . . gave a new vigor to the demand for free farms of 160 acres from the public domain.” (p. 419)
4. **bandwagon** In politics, a movement or candidacy that gains rapid momentum because of people’s purported desire to join a successful cause. “After mounting the Republican bandwagon, he emerged as one of the foremost politicians and orators of the Northwest.” (p. 420)
5. **apportionment** The allotment or distribution of legislative representatives in districts according to population. (**re-apportionment** occurs after each census according to growth or loss of population.) “Yet thanks to inequitable apportionment, the districts carried by Douglas supporters represented a smaller population. . . .” (p. 422)
6. **splintering** Concerning the small political groups left after a larger group has divided or broken apart. “But Douglas . . . hurt his own chances . . . while further splitting his splintering party.” (p. 422)
7. **affidavit** A sworn, written testimony, usually attested to by a notary public or legal officer. “His presumed insanity was supported by affidavits from seventeen friends and relatives. . . .” (p. 422)

8. **martyr** One who is tortured or killed for adherence to a belief. "... Ralph Waldo Emerson compared the new martyr-hero with Jesus." (p. 424)
9. **border state** The northernmost slave states contested by North and South; during the Civil War the four border states (Maryland, Delaware, Kentucky, and Missouri) remained within the Union, though they contained many Confederate sympathizers and volunteers. "... a man of moderate views from the border state of Kentucky." (p. 425)
10. **vassalage** The service and homage given by a feudal subordinate to an overlord; by extension, any similar arrangement between political figures or entities. "... secession [w]as a golden opportunity to cast aside their generations of 'vassalage' to the North." (p. 431)

PART II: Checking Your Progress

A. True-False

Where the statement is true, mark **T**. Where it is false, mark **F**, and correct it in the space immediately below.

- ___ 1. Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* proved to be the most influential publication in arousing the northern and European publics against the evils of slavery.
- ___ 2. Prosouthern Kansas pioneers brought numerous slaves with them in order to guarantee that Kansas would not become a free state.
- ___ 3. The violence in Kansas was provoked by both radical abolitionists and militant pro-slavery forces.
- ___ 4. By opposing the proslavery Lecompton Constitution in Kansas, Senator Stephen A. Douglas was able to unite the Democratic party.
- ___ 5. Both South Carolina and Massachusetts defiantly reelected the principal figures in the Brooks-Sumner beating incident.
- ___ 6. Although the Republican candidate lost to Buchanan, the election of 1856 demonstrated the growing power of the new antislavery party.
- ___ 7. The Dred Scott decision upheld the doctrine of popular sovereignty that the people of each territory should determine whether or not to permit slavery.
- ___ 8. Republicans considered the Supreme Court's *Dred Scott* decision invalid and vowed to defy it.
- ___ 9. In the Lincoln-Douglas debates, Lincoln's criticisms forced Douglas to back away from his support for popular sovereignty.
- ___ 10. John Brown's raid at Harpers Ferry failed to set off a slave uprising but succeeded in inflaming passions in both North and South.
- ___ 11. Northern Democrats walked out of the Democratic party in 1860 when southerners nominated Stephen A. Douglas for president.
- ___ 12. The election of 1860 was really two campaigns, Lincoln versus Douglas in the North and Bell versus Breckinridge in the South.

- ___ 13. Lincoln won a solid majority of the popular vote but only a minority in the Electoral College.
- ___ 14. Seven states seceded and formed the Confederate States of America during the “lame-duck” period between Lincoln’s election and his inauguration.
- ___ 15. Lincoln made a strong effort to get the South to accept the Crittenden Compromise in order to avoid a civil war.

B. Multiple Choice

Select the best answer and write the proper letter in the space provided.

- ___ 1. Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*
- greatly strengthened northern antislavery feeling.
 - argued that nonslaveholding whites suffered the most from slavery.
 - increased the desire for sectional compromise on the issue of slavery.
 - was based on Stowe’s long personal experience with slavery in the Deep South.
- ___ 2. Hinton R. Helper’s *The Impending Crisis of the South* contended that
- slavery violated the essential principles of the U.S. Constitution.
 - slavery was contrary to the religious values held by most Americans.
 - slavery did great harm to the poor whites of the South.
 - slavery violated the human rights of African-Americans.
- ___ 3. The conflict over slavery in Kansas
- came about because the first settlers brought substantial numbers of slaves to the territory.
 - was resolved by the Crittenden Compromise.
 - was temporarily resolved by the Compromise of 1850.
 - was greatly escalated by abolitionist-funded settlers and proslavery “border ruffians” from Missouri.
- ___ 4. As presented to Congress, the Lecompton Constitution provided for
- the admission of Kansas as a free state.
 - a statewide referendum on slavery to be held after Kansas’s admission to the Union.
 - a prohibition against either New England or Missouri involvement in Kansas politics.
 - the admission of Kansas as a slave state.
- ___ 5. The fanatical abolitionist John Brown made his first entry into violent antislavery politics by
- killing five proslavery settlers at Pottawatomie Creek, Kansas.
 - organizing a slave rebellion in Missouri.
 - leading an armed raid on the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia.
 - organizing an armed militia of blacks and whites to conduct escaped slaves to Canada.

- ___ 6. The Sumner-Brooks affair revealed
 - a. that antislavery northerners were as willing to turn to violence as proslavery southerners.
 - b. that violent disagreements about slavery were being felt in the halls of Congress.
 - c. that neither northerners nor southerners were yet ready to tolerate political violence over slavery.
 - d. how loyalty to section was beginning to supersede loyalty to political party.

- ___ 7. The election of 1856 was most noteworthy for
 - a. the Democrats' surprising loss of the White House.
 - b. the support immigrants and Catholics gave to the American Party.
 - c. the dramatic rise of the Republican party.
 - d. the absence of the slavery issue from the campaign.

- ___ 8. In the *Dred Scott* decision, the Supreme Court
 - a. avoided controversy by ruling that the slave Dred Scott had no right to sue in federal court.
 - b. ruled that the Kansas-Nebraska Act was unconstitutional.
 - c. ruled that Congress could not prohibit slavery in the territories because slaves were private property.
 - d. ruled that slaves could sue in federal court only if their masters permitted them to do so.

- ___ 9. The panic of 1857 encouraged the South to believe that
 - a. its economy was fundamentally stronger than that of the North.
 - b. it ought to take new steps to develop its own banking and manufacturing institutions.
 - c. it would be wise to support the Homestead Act.
 - d. its economic future was closely tied to that of the North.

- ___ 10. A key issue in the Lincoln-Douglas debates was
 - a. whether secession from the Union was legal.
 - b. whether the people of a territory could prohibit slavery in light of the *Dred Scott* decision.
 - c. whether Illinois should continue to prohibit slavery.
 - d. whether Kansas should be admitted to the Union as a slave or a free state.

- ___ 11. Southerners were particularly enraged by the John Brown affair because
 - a. so many slaves had joined the insurrection.
 - b. they believed Brown's violent abolitionist sentiments were shared by the whole North.
 - c. Brown had expressed his contempt for the southern way of life.
 - d. Brown escaped punishment by pleading insanity.

- ___ 12. In the campaign of 1860, the Democratic Party
 - a. tried to unite around the compromise "popular sovereignty" views of Stephen A. Douglas.
 - b. campaigned on a platform of restoring the compromises of 1820 and 1850.
 - c. split in two, with each faction nominating its own presidential candidate.
 - d. threatened to support secession if the sectionally-based Republicans won the election.

- _____ 13. Lincoln won the presidency
- with an electoral majority derived only from the North.
 - with a majority of both the electoral and the popular vote.
 - primarily because of the divisions in the Democratic party.
 - with an electoral majority evenly derived from all sections of the nation.
- _____ 14. Within two months after the election of Lincoln,
- Northerners were mobilizing for a civil war.
 - seven southern states had seceded and formed the Confederate States of America.
 - all the slaveholding states had held conventions and passed secessionist resolutions.
 - President Buchanan appealed for troops to put down the secessionist rebellion.
- _____ 15. Lincoln rejected the proposed Crittenden Compromise because
- it did not address the issue of the future of slavery.
 - it permitted the further extension of slavery north of the line of 36° 30'.
 - it represented a further extension of Douglas's popular sovereignty idea.
 - the Supreme Court would probably have ruled it unconstitutional.

C. Identification

Supply the correct identification for each numbered description.

- _____ 1. A powerful, personal novel that altered the course of American politics
- _____ 2. A book by a southern writer that argued that slavery especially oppressed poor whites
- _____ 3. Rifles paid for by New England abolitionists and brought to Kansas by anti-slavery pioneers
- _____ 4. Term that described the prairie territory where a small-scale civil war erupted in 1856
- _____ 5. Tricky proslavery document designed to bring Kansas into the Union but blocked by Stephen A. Douglas
- _____ 6. Anti-immigrant party headed by former President Fillmore that competed with Republicans and Democrats in the election of 1856
- _____ 7. Controversial Supreme Court ruling that blacks had no civil or human rights and that Congress could not prohibit slavery in the territories
- _____ 8. Sharp economic decline that increased northern demands for a high tariff and convinced southerners that the North was economically vulnerable
- _____ 9. Thoughtful political discussions during an Illinois Senate campaign that sharply defined national issues concerning slavery
- _____ 10. Newly formed middle-of-the-road party of elderly politicians that sought compromise in 1860, but carried only three border states
- _____ 11. First state to secede from the Union in December 1860
- _____ 12. A new nation that proclaimed its independence in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1861

- _____ 13. A last-ditch plan to save the Union by providing guarantees for slavery in the territories
- _____ 14. Four-way race for the presidency that resulted in the election of a sectional minority president
- _____ 15. Period between Lincoln's election and his inauguration, during which the ineffectual President Buchanan remained in office

D. Matching People, Places, and Events

Match the person, place, or event in the left column with the proper description in the right column by inserting the correct letter on the blank line.

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|---|---|
| ___ 1. Harriet Beecher Stowe | A. Southern congressman whose bloody attack on a northern senator fueled sectional hatred |
| ___ 2. Hinton R. Helper | B. Leading northern Democrat whose presidential hopes fell victim to the conflict over slavery |
| ___ 3. New England Emigrant Aid Company | C. Black slave whose unsuccessful attempt to win his freedom deepened the sectional controversy |
| ___ 4. John Brown | D. Former United States senator who in 1861 became the president of what called itself a new nation |
| ___ 5. James Buchanan | E. "The little woman who wrote the book that made this great war" (the Civil War) |
| ___ 6. Charles Sumner | F. Fanatical and bloody-minded abolitionist martyr admired in the North and hated in the South |
| ___ 7. Preston Brooks | G. Southern-born author whose book attacking slavery's effects on whites aroused northern opinion |
| ___ 8. John C. Frémont | H. Scene of militant abolitionist John Brown's massacre of proslavery men in 1856 |
| ___ 9. Dred Scott | I. Site where seven seceding states united to declare their independence from the United States |
| ___ 10. Harpers Ferry, Virginia | J. Romantic western hero and the first Republican candidate for president |
| ___ 11. Stephen A. Douglas | K. Abolitionist senator whose verbal attack on the South provoked a physical assault that severely injured him |
| ___ 12. Pottawatomie Creek, Kansas | L. Site of a federal arsenal where a militant abolitionist attempted to start a slave rebellion |
| ___ 13. John C. Breckenridge | M. Buchanan's vice president, nominated for president by breakaway southern Democrats in 1860 |
| ___ 14. Montgomery, Alabama | N. Weak Democratic president whose manipulation by proslavery forces divided his own party |
| ___ 15. Jefferson Davis | O. Abolitionist group that sent settlers and "Beecher's Bibles" to oppose slavery in Kansas |

E. Putting Things in Order

Put the following events in correct order by numbering them from 1 to 6.

- ___ A black slave's attempt to win freedom produces a controversial Supreme Court decision.
- ___ A newly organized territory becomes a bloody battleground between proslavery and anti-slavery forces.

- _____ The hanging of a fanatically violent abolitionist makes him a martyr in the North and a hated symbol in the South.
- _____ A “black Republican” whose minority sectional victory in a presidential election provokes southern secession.
- _____ The fictional tale of a black slave’s vicious treatment by the cruel Simon Legree touches millions of northern hearts and creates stronger opposition to slavery.
- _____ A group of states calling itself a new southern nation declares its independence and chooses its first president.

F. Matching Cause and Effect

Match the historical cause in the left column with the proper effect in the right column by writing the correct letter on the blank line.

Cause	Effect
_____ 1. H. B. Stowe’s <i>Uncle Tom’s Cabin</i>	A. Moved South Carolina to declare immediate secession from the Union
_____ 2. The exercise of “popular sovereignty” in Kansas	B. Shattered one of the last links between the sections and almost guaranteed Lincoln’s victory in 1860
_____ 3. Buchanan’s support for the pro-slavery Lecompton Constitution	C. Convinced southerners that the North generally supported murder and slave rebellion
_____ 4. The Dred Scott case	D. Made Lincoln a leading national Republican figure and hurt Douglas’s presidential chances
_____ 5. The 1858 Illinois senate race	E. Ended the last hopes of a peaceable sectional settlement and an end to secession
_____ 6. John Brown’s raid on Harpers Ferry	F. Paralyzed the North while the southern secessionist movement gained momentum
_____ 7. The splitting of the Democratic party in 1860	G. Infuriated Republicans and made them determined to defy the Supreme Court
_____ 8. The election of Lincoln as president	H. Offended Senator Douglas and divided the Democratic party
_____ 9. The “lame-duck” period and Buchanan’s indecisiveness	I. Persuaded millions of northerners and Europeans that slavery was evil and should be eliminated
_____ 10. Lincoln’s rejection of the Crittenden Compromise	J. Led to a “mini” prairie civil war between proslavery and antislavery factions

G. Developing Historical Skills

Interpreting Primary-Source Documents

In order properly to interpret primary-source documents in history, two skills are essential: first, the ability to read closely and carefully for the intended meaning; and second, the ability to understand the historical context and possible implications of a text or statement.

The small, boxed samples of primary documents in this chapter demonstrate these principles. The questions below will help you practice the skills of textual interpretation by asking you to read the documents very carefully for meaning and to consider some of their implications.

1. Lincoln's statement from the Lincoln-Douglas debate (p. 421).
 - a. In what ways does Lincoln claim that blacks are *equal* to whites, and in what ways does he claim that whites are *superior*?
 - b. What do the first two sentences tell you about the *reason* Lincoln is making a distinction between equality of natural rights and complete equality of the races?
2. John Brown's letter before his hanging (p. 423).
 - a. What does Brown mean when he writes that "I am worth inconceivably more to hang than for any other purpose. . . ."?
 - b. What does Brown's statement imply about how abolitionists might make use of Brown's impending death?
3. Greeley's New York *Tribune* editorial (p. 437).
 - a. What two arguments does Greeley use for letting the seceding states "go in peace?"
 - b. The editorial was written three days after Lincoln's election. What fear is motivating Greeley?
4. Letter of South Carolina Senator Hammond (p. 429).
 - a. What does the letter suggest will be the federal government's response to secession?
 - b. Why did the attitude reflected in the letter make efforts like the Crittenden Compromise fail?
5. London *Times* editorial (p. 431).
 - a. What is the editorial's view of the relation between the southern states and the United States government?
 - b. What position does it appear the London *Times* would advocate the British government take regarding the American Civil War?

6. Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (pp. 411 and 412).
 - a. What details in Stowe's account of Tom's last morning in the cabin before the sale of his family might especially appeal to female readers?
 - b. How does Stowe characterize the black slave Tom and his wife Chloe?
 - c. What details in the excerpts in *Examining the Evidence* (p. 411) and on p. 412 show Stowe's explicit appeal to the religious sentiments of her readers?

H. Map Mastery

Map Discrimination

Using the maps and charts in Chapter 19, answer the following questions.

1. *Presidential Election of 1856*: In the presidential election of 1856, how many electoral votes did Buchanan get from the free states? (See map of *The Legal Status of Slavery*, Chapter 17, for free and slave states.)
2. *Presidential Election of 1856; Presidential Election of 1860 (electoral vote by state)*: Which four states carried by Democrat Buchanan in 1856 were also carried completely by Republican Lincoln in 1860?
3. *Presidential Election of 1860 (showing popular vote by county)*: Using this map of the presidential voting by counties in 1860, indicate which five states gave Douglas his strongest support.
4. *Presidential Election of 1860 (showing popular vote by county)*: In which five states did Bell receive his strongest support?
5. *Presidential Election of 1860 (showing popular vote by county)*: Which Border State was the most closely divided among Douglas, Bell, and Breckenridge?
6. *Presidential Election of 1860 (showing popular vote by county)*: Which state was the only one divided among Lincoln, Douglas, and Breckenridge?

7. *Presidential Election of 1860 (showing vote by county)*: In which six northern states did Lincoln carry every single county?
8. *Southern Opposition to Secession, 1860–1861*: In which four future Confederate states was the opposition to secession strongest?
9. *Southern Opposition to Secession, 1860–1861*: In which three states did every single county for which returns are available support secession?
10. *Southern Opposition to Secession, 1860–1861*: In which two states were many county conventions divided about secession?

Map Challenge

Using the electoral maps of *The Presidential Election of 1856* and *The Presidential Election of 1860*, write a brief essay in which you describe what political changes enabled the Republicans to turn defeat in 1856 into victory in 1860.

PART III: Applying What You Have Learned

1. How did each of the crisis events of the 1850s help lead toward the Civil War?
2. What role did violence play in increasing the sectional conflict?
3. How did the political developments of the period work to fragment the Democratic party and benefit the Republicans?
4. Explain the crucial role of Stephen A. Douglas in the political events of the 1850s. Why did Douglas's attempts to shove aside the conflict over slavery fail?
5. Could the Crittenden Compromise or some other proposal have prevented or at least postponed the Civil War? Why was compromise successful in 1820 and 1850 but not 1860?
6. How did the North and the South each view the various events of the 1850s? Why were their views so different?