

Civil war dbq

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AP US History This DBQ received a 7Civil WarDBQ As American settlers stretched westward in the 1850's, the ambiguity of the Constitution framed 60 years earlier increased sectional tension over the topic of slavery. Initially, the framers of the constitution left the issue of slavery to be worked out in the country's future. This in turn convinced the Southern states that their "peculiar institution" would be "respected and maintained. However, as years passed, the United States acquired more territory, and as more territories applied for statehood, the issue arose whether or not the new states would be admitted as a Slave State or Free State. Americans also disputed the very status of a slave, and whether or not a fugitive slave in the Northern Free States was guaranteed his or her freedom from their masters down south. It was debates like these, due to the vague details of the constitution, that created enormous repercussions-- ones that would trigger a series of Slavery related legislation, and ultimately the destruction the union.

Following President Polk's successful victory against the young Republic of Mexico, Americans gained a significant amount of western land including Utah, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico and most importantly the promising, golden coastal territory of California. To pacify the growing discord between North and South, the Democratic Senator, Stephan Douglas of Illinois, combined 5 Bills that would secure California as a Free State and would abolish slavery in the District of Columbia. It also included the Fugitive Slave Act. In addition, Utah and New Mexico would grant its citizens popular sovereignty.

This was the Compromise of 1850. As a result, New Mexico and Utah became slave states. Due to the Federal Constitution's vagueness, this compromise allowed states to decide for themselves the issue of slavery. Consequently, the most favorable and democratic solution seemed Louis Cass's idea of popular sovereignty. Four years later, the Kansas-Nebraska Act was passed by Congress, which again allowed popular sovereignty in the Nebraska Territory. This also repealed the Missouri Compromise of 1820, which prohibited slavery north of the 36-30 degree of latitude. As a result, Nebraska became a slave state.

However, in the fear of losing Kansas to Anti-Slavery settlers, Pro-Slavery Missourians flooded Kansas to overwhelm the polls on Election Day. Though Slavery had passed in Kansas, it was charged a fraud. In 1856, this erupted into the infamous conflict between the Pro-Slavery " Border Ruffians" and the John Brown supporters of abolitionism. Nicknamed " Bleeding Kansas," it was America's first violent conflict over the unsettled issue of slavery. As a lame duck, Pro-Slavery President Pierce, relied on settling the conflict with the LeCompton Constitution of 1857—a constitution that would legalize slavery in Kansas.

Buchanan, soon after, took office just before congress voted. Though passed by the Senate, the LeCompton Constitution failed in the House of Representatives because Northern Democrats fled to the Republican Party. Pierce's failure to recognize the depth of the Free-Soiler's sentiment in the North led the historic Midterm Elections of 1858. Republicans, the Anti-Slavery party established only four years prior, took a plurality in the House

of Representatives, foreshadowing Lincoln's election in 1861 and ultimately, Southern succession.

As the creation of Slave and Free States spurred political debate, the individual status of a slave remained questionable due to legislation being nonexistent in the Constitution. Following the Compromise of 1850, the Fugitive Slave Act pressured Northerners to recapture and return slaves that fled north. This mandate became the first constitutional law that limited the rights of slaves, nonetheless “ forcing slavery down the throats” of Free Soilers in the north. Northerners could now no longer ride the fence, because now they were coerced by law to act.

This also strengthened the Abolitionist movement led by William Lloyd Garrison, which had already picked up momentum from Harriett Becher Stowe's best-selling novel, Uncle Tom's Cabin, published in 1852. Another historic event that resulted in the Constitution's ambiguity was the Supreme Court case Scott v. Sanford. Being a former slave residing in the free-state of Wisconsin, Dred Scott sued for his freedom. However, in 1857 Chief Justice Roger B. Taney ruled by “ majority opinion” that any blacks, regardless of their territory, possessed no right to sue.

They had rights. This decision angered many Northerners because the ruling was based off opinion alone. There was no clear Constitutional law that had justified prohibiting the rights of Northern free black. Moreover, to maintain national unity, the original absence of any constitutional restriction or protection of the institution of slavery led to sectional discord. Such tension between North and South, due to their polarizing philosophical views on

slavery, led individual states to decide whether or not they were Pro- or Anti-Slavery.

In addition, Federal (Pro-Slavery) legislation ironically began to deny the citizenship of even Free Blacks within Free States, which seems almost hypocritical for the Pro-Slavery leaders to proclaim States' Rights to justify their secession. However, because there was no constitutional restriction, Southerners lawfully claimed had the right to secede from the Union, and did so in 1861 out of fear of Lincoln's Freeport Doctrine. Therefore, because the Constitution circumvented the issue of slavery to achieve national unity, the addition of new states reintroduced the sectional discord rooted in slavery, which ultimately dissolved the Union.