

2 The Crisis Deepens

TERMS & NAMES

Harriet Beecher Stowe
Uncle Tom's Cabin
 Fugitive Slave Act
 popular sovereignty
 Kansas–Nebraska Act
 John Brown

MAIN IDEA

Turmoil over slavery led to acts of violence.

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

Violence can make compromise more difficult.

ONE AMERICAN'S STORY

Harriet Beecher Stowe was outraged when she heard about the part of the Compromise of 1850 that would help slaveholders recapture runaway slaves. She described her feelings about the law.

A VOICE FROM THE PAST

Since the legislative act of 1850, when [I] heard . . . Christian and humane people actually recommending the remanding [returning of] escaped fugitives into slavery, as a duty binding on good citizens, . . . [I] could only think, These men and Christians cannot know what slavery is.

Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

Stowe's anger motivated her to write *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, a novel that portrayed slavery as brutal and immoral. In this section, you will learn how the Compromise of 1850 deepened the division between the North and the South.



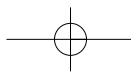
Harriet Beecher Stowe

The Fugitive Slave Act

The 1850 law to help slaveholders recapture runaway slaves was called the **Fugitive Slave Act**. People accused of being fugitives under this law could be held without an arrest warrant. In addition, they had no right to a jury trial. Instead, a federal commissioner ruled on each case. The commissioner received five dollars for releasing the defendant and ten dollars for turning the defendant over to a slaveholder.

Southerners felt that the Fugitive Slave Act was justified because they considered slaves to be property. But Northerners resented the Fugitive Slave Act. It required Northerners to help recapture runaway slaves. It placed fines on people who would not cooperate and jail terms on people who helped the fugitives escape. In addition, Southern slave catchers roamed the North, sometimes capturing free African Americans.

The presence of slave catchers throughout the North brought home the issue of slavery to Northerners. They could no longer ignore the fact that, by supporting the Fugitive Slave Act, they played an important role in supporting slavery. They faced a moral choice. Should they



obey the law and support slavery, or should they break the law and oppose slavery?

Uncle Tom's Cabin

Reading History

A. Analyzing

Points of View

How does Harriet Beecher Stowe present slavery in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*?

Stowe published *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in 1852. It dramatically portrayed the moral issues of slavery. In fact, a play based on the book increased the popularity of theater as well as abolitionism. The book's main character was Uncle Tom, a respected older slave. The plot centers on Tom's life under three owners. Two of the owners were kind, but the third was cruel. The novel includes dramatic scenes, such as the dangerous escape of a slave named Eliza and her baby across the Ohio River.

A VOICE FROM THE PAST

Eliza made her desperate retreat across the river just in the dusk of twilight. The gray mist of evening, rising slowly from the river, enveloped her as she disappeared up the bank, and the swollen current and floundering masses of ice presented a hopeless barrier between her and her pursuer.

Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

Stowe's book was wildly popular in the North. But white Southerners believed the book falsely criticized the South and slavery.

The Kansas–Nebraska Act

While the Fugitive Slave Act and *Uncle Tom's Cabin* heightened the conflicts between the North and the South, the issue of slavery in the territories brought bloodshed to the West. In 1854, Senator Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois drafted a bill to organize territorial governments for the Nebraska Territory. He proposed that it be divided into two territories—Nebraska and Kansas.

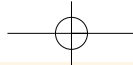
To get Southern support for the bill, he suggested that the decision about whether to allow slavery in each of these territories be settled by popular sovereignty. **Popular sovereignty** is a system where the residents vote to decide an issue. If this bill passed, it would result in getting rid of the Missouri Compromise by

In 1854, Bostonians protested the capture of an African American by federal marshals under the Fugitive Slave Act.

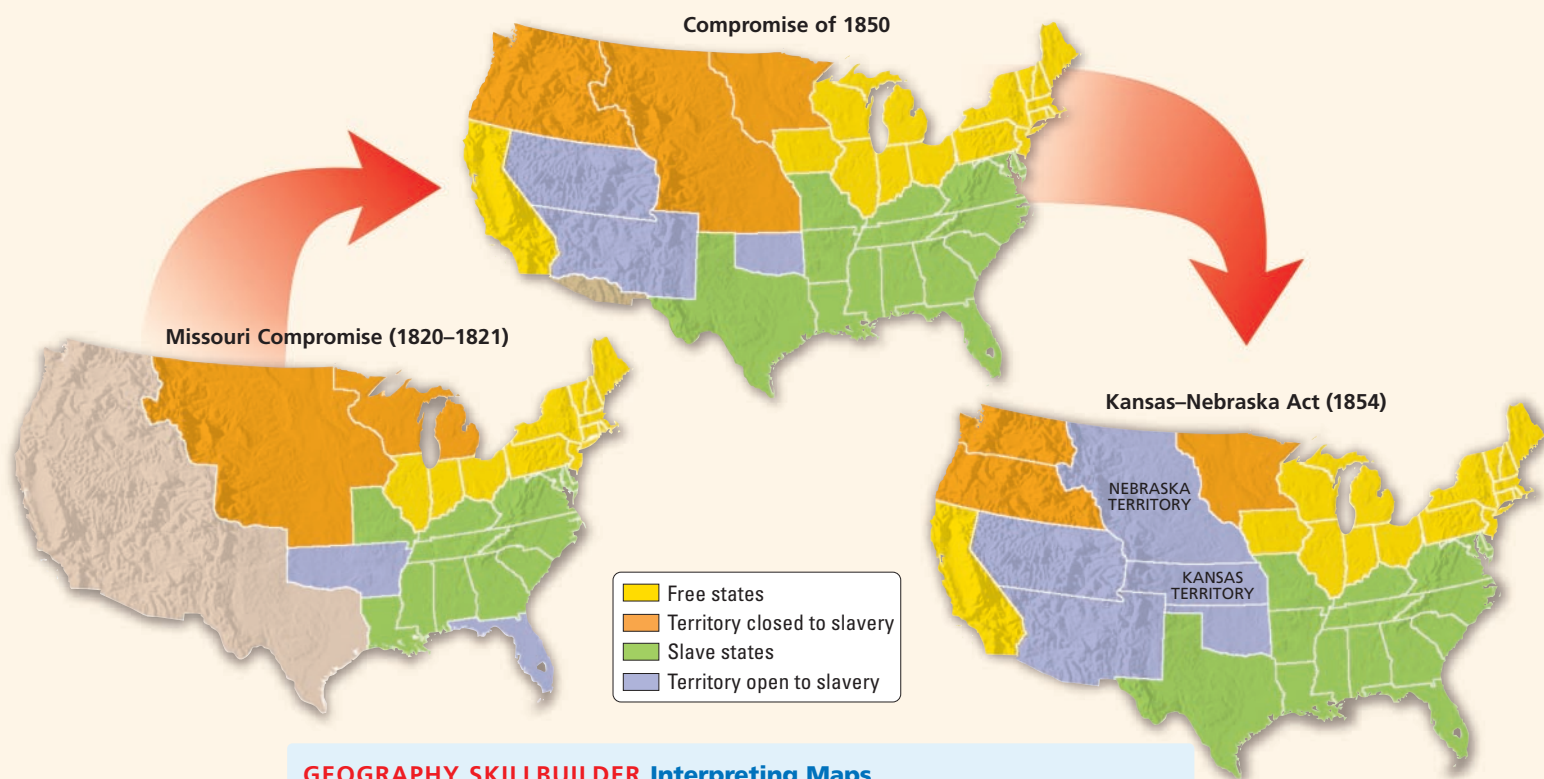
Background

The Nebraska Territory was part of the Louisiana Purchase. It lay north of the 36° 30' line, so the Missouri Compromise banned slavery there.





Free and Slave States and Territories, 1820–1854



GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER Interpreting Maps

- 1. Region** What new free states and slave states entered the Union between 1820 and 1854?
- 2. Region** How did the Kansas–Nebraska Act change the amount of territory open to slavery?

allowing people to vote for slavery in territories where the Missouri Compromise had banned it.

As Douglas hoped, Southerners applauded the repeal of the Missouri Compromise and supported the bill. Even though the bill angered opponents of slavery, it passed. It became known as the **Kansas–Nebraska Act**. Few people realized that the act would soon turn Kansas into a battleground over slavery.

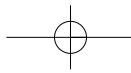
“Bleeding Kansas”

Proslavery and antislavery settlers rushed into the Kansas Territory, just west of Missouri, to vote for the territorial legislature. At the time of the election in March 1855, there were more proslavery settlers than antislavery settlers in the territory. But the proslavery forces did not want to risk losing the election. Five thousand Missourians came and voted in the election illegally. As a result, the official Kansas legislature was packed with proslavery representatives.

Antislavery settlers boycotted the official government and formed a government of their own. With political authority in dispute, settlers on both sides armed themselves. In May, a proslavery mob attacked the town of Lawrence, Kansas. The attackers destroyed offices and the

Vocabulary

boycott: refuse to participate in



house of the governor of the antislavery government. This attack came to be known as the Sack of Lawrence.

Onto this explosive scene came **John Brown**, an extreme abolitionist. To avenge the Sack of Lawrence, Brown and seven other men went to the cabins of several of his proslavery neighbors and murdered five people. This attack is known as the Pottawatomie Massacre, after the creek near where the victims were found. As news of the violence spread, civil war broke out in Kansas. It continued for three years, and the territory came to be called “Bleeding Kansas.”

ReadingHistory

B. Sequencing

Events What events in Kansas preceded the Pottawatomie Massacre?

Violence in Congress

While violence was spreading in Kansas in the spring of 1856, blood was also being shed in the nation’s capital. In late May, Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts delivered a speech attacking the proslavery forces in Kansas. His speech was packed with insults. Sumner even made fun of A. P. Butler, a senator from South Carolina.

Preston Brooks, a relative of Butler, heard about Sumner’s speech. To defend Butler and the South, he attacked Sumner, who was sitting at his desk. Brooks hit Sumner over the head with his cane. Sumner tried to defend himself, but his legs were trapped. Brooks hit him 30 times or more, breaking his cane in the assault. (The painting on page 439 shows this event.)

Many Southerners cheered Brooks’s defense of the South. But most Northerners were shocked at the violence in the Senate. “Bleeding Kansas” and “Bleeding Sumner” became rallying cries for antislavery Northerners and slogans for a new political party. In the next section, you will learn about the creation of the Republican Party.

STRANGE but True

PRESTON BROOKS’S CANE

Many Americans, Northerners and Southerners alike, were ashamed of the behavior of Sumner and Brooks. But sectional tensions were so high at the time that a large number of Southerners cheered Brooks for his actions.

A number of Brooks’s supporters sent him new canes to replace the one he had broken while hitting Sumner on the head. Some of the canes were inscribed with mottoes such as “Hit Him Again.”

Section **2** Assessment

1. Terms & Names

Explain the significance of:

- Harriet Beecher Stowe
- *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*
- Fugitive Slave Act
- popular sovereignty
- Kansas–Nebraska Act
- John Brown

2. Taking Notes

Use a chart like the one below to compare Northern and Southern views of the issues listed.

Northern View	Issue	Southern View
	Fugitive Slave Act	
	Kansas–Nebraska Act	
	“Bleeding Kansas”	

3. Main Ideas

- How did the book *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* influence national politics?
- Why was the Kansas–Nebraska Act so controversial?
- What was the cause of “Bleeding Kansas”?

4. Critical Thinking

Solving Problems What would you have done to prevent the violence in Kansas?

THINK ABOUT

- the repeal of the Missouri Compromise
- popular sovereignty
- the actions of John Brown

ACTIVITY OPTIONS

- LITERATURE**
- ART**

Read a chapter of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Write a **book review** or make a series of **drawings** illustrating the story.