Grade 7 Louisiana Social Studies

A New Spirit of Change

Student Volume

Dred Scott

Harpers Ferry

Sojourner Truth

Women's rights leaders

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A New Spirit of Change

Student Volume

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A New Spirit of Change

Table of Contents

01 Chapter 1:
Reform Movements 2

02 Chapter 2:
Growing Sectionalism and the Experiences of Enslaved People 20

Glossary 37

Chapter 1
Reform Movements

The Framing Question

What concerns caused American reformers to push for change in the 1800s, and how effective were their efforts?

Early women's rights leaders are honored today at the Women's Rights National Historical Park in Seneca Falls, New York. On the far left is Elizabeth Cady Stanton, with Frederick Douglass standing next to her. Martha Wright is on the far right. The two women standing between Douglass and Wright represent other women who supported the women's rights movement.

Reforms for a Better Nation

How can you make life better for people around you? Chances are you have heard and pondered that question before. Maybe you have even shared your ideas on the subject with others. People who spend a lot of time and effort trying to make things better are called reformers.

There have always been reformers in America, more at some times in our history than at others. The 1830s and 1840s were an especially active time for reformers. In this land of growing democracy and equality, Americans believed that everything was possible. The United States experienced a wave of social and political reform movements that would transform the nation. These movements were driven by passionate individuals who sought to create a more just and equitable society.

We hold these truths to be self evident:
women are created equal..."

Think Twice

How do you think social and political reform movements help create a more just and equitable society?

Paving a Path for Equality

In the early to mid-1800s, a growing number of women began advocating for their rights and challenging prevailing societal norms. Angelina and Sarah Grimké were sisters who grew up in South Carolina. They were against the enslavement of people, which was prevalent in their community. Because of their strong beliefs, they decided to leave the South. In the 1830s, the Grimké sisters began giving talks about plantation life and enslavement to audiences in northern towns and cities. Their speeches shocked many people, not because of what they said, but because they were women speaking publicly. At that time, women were often expected to be seen but not heard, and many men believed that a woman's place was in the home. Speaking at public meetings, especially when men were present, was considered a role reserved for men only. In various organizations dedicated to change, men were in charge and made all the public speeches. Women were often told that their role was to listen and learn, not to speak.

This is just one example of how women broke social norms to expand rights in the first half of the 1800s. Another area where women faced inequality was education. While only a small number of people, regardless of gender, received more than a few years of schooling, men were more likely than women to complete high school and to attend college. It was rare to hear of women becoming doctors or lawyers, and when women did work, they usually earned very low wages. Women received low pay because society believed that men were responsible for financially supporting their families.

Furthermore, when a woman got married, everything she owned, including money or property from her parents, became her husband's property. If she worked, her earnings belonged to her husband. In cases of divorce, the children were usually given to the father, not the mother, according to the law. Because women could not vote or hold government office, men would have to be the ones to change these laws. Over time, men did vote for some changes, but they came slowly and were modest.

Sarah Grimké was incredibly frustrated with the laws and prevailing attitudes toward women, and her anger led her to write a pamphlet expressing her outrage. In her pamphlet, she boldly stated that

men and women are created equal and deserve the same rights. She believed that women should have the same opportunities as men and should not be controlled or suppressed by them. Sarah Grimké's powerful words conveyed her strong desire for equality and justice.

While some men did support the advancement of women's rights, many did not. Even though women were more than half of the members of the movement to end slavery, they were not given equal rights. Ministers refused to let women speak at antislavery meetings held in churches.

This unequal treatment of women was not limited to specific organizations or movements. It was a widespread attitude in most parts of the world. For instance, women delegates attending the World Anti-Slavery **Convention** in London, England, were not allowed to participate in the meetings. They were only permitted to observe from a balcony while men assumed active roles. Even in the fight for freedom, women were expected to let men lead.

Vocabulary

convention, n. a formal gathering of people for a purpose

Think Twice

Why do you think women faced such significant barriers and inequalities in the early to mid-1800s?

Despite women's involvement and dedication, they were often overlooked and denied the opportunity to participate fully in causes they believed in. However, this injustice did not deter them from continuing the fight for equal rights. Instead, it sparked a greater determination to challenge prevailing attitudes and demand their rightful place in society.

Find Out the Facts

How did women like the Grimké sisters challenge societal norms and pave the way for a more equal society?

A Turning Point

Something significant happened on July 14, 1848. The *Seneca County Courier* newspaper published a notice about a special event called the "Woman's Rights Convention." It was going to be held in the Wesleyan Chapel in Seneca Falls, New York. This announcement might not have seemed like a big deal at the time, but it marked the beginning of a major reform movement in the United States.

The idea of having a convention to discuss women's rights had begun eight years earlier. Remember the World Anti-Slavery Convention in London, where women delegates could only watch from the balcony? Two of the women on that balcony were Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Their experiences in London would inspire them to take action to bring about change for the rights of women in the United States.

Lucretia Mott and her husband, James, were involved in many reform movements of their time. Mott even organized a campaign urging people to boycott goods produced by enslaved workers, such as cotton clothing, sugar, and rice. She hoped that this would compel plantation owners to abandon the practice of slavery. Despite her efforts in promoting change, Mott always felt that she did not receive the same level of respect as men. Beginning at an early age, she considered women's rights to be the most important issue in her life.

Lucretia Mott decided to take action after not being allowed to participate fully in the World Anti-Slavery Convention.

Elizabeth Cady's awareness of the unequal treatment of women began during childhood. Her father, a lawyer and judge, once expressed his wish for her to be a boy. As a girl, Cady could not pursue a career in law like her father did. Determined to prove herself, she engaged in activities and learned skills that were considered beyond the capabilities of girls and women, such as playing chess and studying subjects like Greek, Latin, and mathematics. However, despite her achievements, she was denied the opportunity to attend college, as higher education institutions were reserved for men. Instead, she attended a women's school as a teenager in Troy, New York.

After completing her studies, Cady became actively involved in various reform movements. It was during this time that she met Henry B. Stanton,

a prominent figure in the antislavery movement. The two eventually decided to marry, but Cady made a significant change to the traditional marriage vows of the day. She insisted on removing the word *obey*. For their honeymoon, the Stantons traveled to London, England, where they attended the World Anti-Slavery Convention.

Writers' Corner

Write a letter from Lucretia Mott to Elizabeth Cady Stanton, detailing the need for a convention discussing women's rights.

During this convention, both Mott and Stanton were outraged by the poor treatment women received. Inspired by their shared frustration, they promised to organize a convention dedicated to women's rights once they returned to the United States.

Seneca Falls

After eight years, Stanton and Mott finally fulfilled their promise of organizing a women's rights convention. Mott visited Stanton's home in Seneca Falls, New York, on July 13, 1848, and the decision was made.

The Seneca Falls Convention was the first women's rights convention held in the United States.

Over a cup of tea, Stanton, Mott, and three local women set the date for the convention, which would be held in Seneca Falls just six days later.

On July 19, the Wesleyan Chapel filled with approximately two hundred women, and even a few men, who had come to attend the convention. The next day, an even larger crowd gathered, including the **abolitionist** Frederick Douglass. Stanton took the stage and read aloud a declaration of Sentiments, which she had written for this occasion. The first words of the declaration echoed the famous opening phrase from the Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal." Stanton then listed fifteen ways in which women were treated unfairly and unequally.

At the end of her speech, Stanton shocked the audience by demanding that women be granted **suffrage**. Some reformers felt that this demand was going too far. Mott initially tried to discourage her friend, believing it would make them look ridiculous, and suggested they should proceed slowly. However, Mott eventually agreed, and the majority of the convention attendees supported the demand for suffrage.

Vocabulary

abolitionist, n. a person who worked to end slavery during the 1700s and 1800s

suffrage, n. the right to vote

Find Out the Facts

Find out more about the Seneca Falls Convention.

Today, it may be hard to imagine anyone disagreeing with the goals of the Seneca Falls Convention. But at the time, few newspapers took the convention seriously. Some mocked the women's demands for voting rights and the right to own property and their suggestion that men should take on traditionally feminine tasks. Despite this, the women's movement continued to gain momentum.

Other Heroes

Following the Seneca Falls Convention, a series of national women's rights conventions were held annually. These conventions provided a platform for women to voice their concerns, propose reforms, and build alliances. One of the notable figures who made influential speeches was

Sojourner Truth, an impassioned advocate for both women's rights and abolition. Truth, a remarkable figure, stood tall both physically and metaphorically. She was a formerly enslaved woman who was neither educated nor literate. However, her powerful speaking abilities made her a prominent presence at public meetings advocating for women's rights. Truth defied stereotypes of women's physical weakness by proclaiming her physical strength and ability to perform demanding tasks traditionally associated with men.

Initially, Sojourner Truth was enslaved by a Dutch family. Having been sold four different times, she had to learn English on her own. She escaped slavery while carrying her infant daughter. As a former enslaved woman, Truth became an outspoken reformer for abolition and women's rights. Beginning in the 1830s, she spoke to groups about the importance of ending slavery and instituting women's suffrage. Her autobiography, *The Narrative of Sojourner Truth*, was written with Olive Gilbert's help in 1850 because she could not read or write.

In 1851, Truth was invited to speak at an Akron, Ohio, women's rights conference, where she delivered her famous speech "Ain't I a Woman?" In it, she challenged the idea that women were somehow less able than men.

Susan B. Anthony

Susan B. Anthony was an important American reformer. Born in 1820, she dedicated her life to advocating for women's suffrage. Anthony co-founded the American Equal Rights Association with Elizabeth Cady Stanton and played a key role in the fight for the Nineteenth Amendment, which extended suffrage to women. Anthony's powerful speeches inspired countless women across the nation to join the suffrage movement. Her determination and relentless efforts made her a trailblazer in the fight for gender equality, leaving a lasting impact on American history.

In addition to Stanton, Mott, and Truth, other remarkable women played key roles in the women's rights movement. One of them was Lucy Stone, known for being the first American woman to give a public speech on women's rights. When Lucy Stone married, she made the unconventional decision to keep her own name. Mary Church Terrell, an African American suffragist, fought for equal rights for women of all races. Margaret Fuller challenged gender roles and expectations with her powerful words and intellect. Additionally, Susan B. Anthony made significant contributions by tirelessly

campaigning for women's suffrage and equal rights.

Another influential woman was Elizabeth Blackwell, the first woman to graduate from a medical college. Her accomplishments paved the way for women in the field of medicine. Amelia Bloomer, who introduced Elizabeth Cady

Suffragist	Contributions
Elizabeth Cady Stanton	Co-founded the women's suffrage movement in the United States, organized the Seneca Falls Convention, and wrote the Declaration of Sentiments advocating for women's rights
Susan B. Anthony	Co-founded the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA) and fought for women's voting rights, campaigning across the country for suffrage laws to be enacted
Lucretia Mott	A Quaker abolitionist and social reformer who was instrumental in organizing the Seneca Falls Convention and co-authored the Declaration of Sentiments, laying the foundation for the women's suffrage movement with her activism
Martha Coffin Wright	Lucretia Mott's sister, an organizer of the First National Woman's Rights Convention and an abolitionist whose home was a station on the Underground Railroad
Mary Church Terrell	Co-founded the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) and fought for racial and gender equality, emphasizing the importance of including African American women in the suffrage movement
Margaret Fuller	Played a key role in the transcendentalist movement and contributed to the early feminist movement, discussing women's rights and gender equality in her book *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*
Sojourner Truth	An influential abolitionist and women's rights advocate whose famous speech, "Ain't I a Woman?," argued for equality
Laura Cornelius Kellogg	A member of the Oneida nation and an advocate for Native American rights who was also a prominent voice in the women's suffrage movement

Important Events in the Women's Rights Movement

A series of conventions in the second half the nineteenth century paved the way for increased women's rights.

Stanton to Susan B. Anthony, was also part of the movement. She challenged traditional clothing norms by wearing loose, comfortable trousers with a short skirt over them. This practical attire offered women more freedom of movement compared to cumbersome dresses.

It took time for significant change to occur. The women's rights movement faced obstacles, but the determination and conviction of these courageous women set the stage for progress. In the following decades, support for increased rights for women would grow. Finally, with the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920, women won the right to vote.

Think Twice

Why do you think it was important for women to have a platform like these conventions to voice their concerns and propose reforms?

The Abolitionist Movement

In the 1800s, a small group of people known as abolitionists were beginning to make their voices heard on the issue

of slavery. The movement had gained traction in the late 1700s and was strongly supported by Quakers, who believed in the equality of all individuals and the immorality of slavery. One important abolitionist was William Lloyd Garrison. In 1831, Garrison started a newspaper called *The Liberator* to carry his message to other Americans. In issue after issue of *The Liberator*, Garrison described the cruelty of slavery and urged his readers to take steps to end it. Garrison also helped organize the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1833.

Another important abolitionist leader was Frederick Douglass. Douglass had once been enslaved himself. While still enslaved, he learned to read and craved freedom. He escaped to the North and gained his freedom. Douglass described the experience of enslavement: "In the deep, still darkness of midnight, I have been often aroused by the dead, heavy footsteps and the piteous cries of the chained gangs that passed our door . . . on the way to the slave markets, where the victims are to be sold like horses,

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REFUGE OF OPPRESSION.

SELECTIONS.

William Lloyd Garrison used his newspaper *The Liberator* to inform people about the evils of slavery. Garrison met with delegates in the United States and traveled overseas to gain support for the antislavery movement.

sheep, and swine. . . . My soul sickens at the sight."

The ideas and works of abolitionists were instrumental in raising awareness and spurring debate. Frederick Douglass delivered a powerful speech titled "The Constitution of the United States: Is It Pro-Slavery or Anti-Slavery?," challenging the notion of the U.S. Constitution as a pro-slavery document. Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* ignited public outrage by exposing the harsh realities of slavery and its impact on enslaved people.

You have already read about the influence of Sojourner Truth on women's rights, but she was also a notable abolitionist. Her 1851 speech "Ain't I a Woman?" called attention to the special problems women endured in slavery.

In 1851, Sojourner Truth delivered her "Ain't I a Woman?" speech. She made history when she became the first African American woman to win a lawsuit in the United States.

Although abolitionists never actually became a large group, Frederick Douglass's words and these attacks on slavery and the southern way of life angered southerners. And they angered many people in the North, too. At this time, the vast majority of northerners didn't support abolition either. To them, Garrison, Douglass, and Truth were troublemakers because they asked people to do the hard work of changing.

Find Out the Facts

Find out more about the abolitionist movement, including the writings of Harriet Beecher Stowe and the work of Sojourner Truth.

The Underground Railroad and Legislation

Besides speeches and books, the fight for abolition took on other forms. The Underground Railroad was a network of people who helped enslaved workers escape to free states in the North or to Canada. These people offered safe places to hide. At each such "station" on the railroad, the runaways rested and received

instructions for getting to the next station. The people who hid these enslaved people and guided them on their journey were known as "conductors." One of the most famous conductors was Harriet Tubman. In 1849, Harriet Tubman escaped from a plantation in Maryland and successfully crossed the border between Maryland and Pennsylvania. This border was also known as the Mason-Dixon line.

After successfully escaping, Harriet Tubman joined the Underground Railroad. Over the next ten years, she made nineteen trips into the South to "conduct" enslaved people to freedom. One famous passenger on the Underground Railroad was Frederick Douglass.

Another important person central to the success of the Underground Railroad was William Still. He was responsible

The Underground Railroad was a network of people who helped hide those fleeing enslavement.

for making sure that people escaping enslavement had a safe place to hide and safe passage through Philadelphia. He raised money, too, so that the work of the Underground Railroad could continue.

Abolitionist efforts also resulted in legislative acts, such as the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, which restricted the expansion of slavery. In 1807, the Act Prohibiting Importation of Slaves was passed, marking the end of the international slave trade.

Writers' Corner

Research the Underground Railroad, then write an essay in which you imagine you are an enslaved person attempting to escape with the help of the Underground Railroad.

Transforming Systems

Other reforms took place during these years as well. Dorothea Dix was a reformer who advocated for prison and mental health reform. Dix began her career as a teacher in Boston when she was just fourteen years old, a practice allowed during that time. After twenty-five years in this role, she became ill and was forced to stop teaching. During this period, a friend approached her to teach a Sunday school class for women prisoners in a Cambridge jail, near Boston. Dix agreed and was transformed by what she witnessed. While she anticipated encountering women accused of committing crimes, she was unprepared to find inmates suffering from severe mental illnesses. These women were poorly dressed and were kept in a single filthy room devoid of heat in winter. More importantly, they had not committed any crimes; they were simply unwell. Unfortunately, effective treatments for mental illness were nonexistent in this era. A few states had hospitals called **asylums**.

Vocabulary

asylum, n. a hospital for people with mental illness

Think Twice

Why do you think the women prisoners were being treated poorly in the Cambridge jail?

After witnessing the deplorable conditions in which mentally ill individuals were kept in prisons, Dix sought to change the system.

She traveled to different states and took notes on how inmates were treated. She lobbied state legislatures and successfully campaigned for the establishment of mental asylums and the separation of mentally ill individuals from the incarcerated population. Because of her efforts, more than a hundred new mental health hospitals were built in the United States.

Another group, who felt that alcohol caused social problems, formed a movement called the **temperance** movement to reduce or eliminate its consumption. It started in the early nineteenth century, and by 1833, more than six thousand local temperance groups had formed in the United States. This movement led to state laws that prohibited the sale of alcohol.

Vocabulary

temperance, n. moderation in or refraining from the consumption of alcoholic beverages

Another reformer of the period, Horace Mann, played a pivotal role in the development of the education reform movement. During Mann's time, there weren't many free public schools. Most were for poor children, but they weren't very good. Wealthy families either hired private tutors or sent their kids to private schools. Parents who were not wealthy either taught their children at home or joined with other parents to hire someone to teach them. Even in places like New England where public schools existed, they weren't very good. Massachusetts, for example, had run-down buildings, untrained teachers, and a school year that only lasted two months. Horace Mann, a Massachusetts resident, experienced this limited schooling himself and later fought for better education as a lawyer and state official. He believed that education was important for every child.

Mann spoke at public meetings about how education could give children better lives and better jobs and keep democracy alive. Many people supported his ideas, but some disagreed, thinking the poor would become lazy or wouldn't want to pay taxes for other people's education. Still, most people agreed that educating children was a good investment. Under Mann's leadership, Massachusetts created schools to train teachers and provided enough money for six months of school every year. The state also divided schools into grades and made attending school mandatory. Other states followed

Massachusetts's lead, and Horace Mann became known as the "father of the American public school."

The reform movements that happened before the Civil War set the stage for more calls for change in the decades that followed. People pushed for the continued expansion of public education, African Americans' rights, women's right to vote, better labor conditions, and other changes to improve the lives of the American people.

Horace Mann on a U.S. postage stamp

PRIMARY SOURCE: EXCERPT FROM *LETTERS ON THE EQUALITY OF THE SEXES, AND THE CONDITION OF WOMAN* BY SARAH GRIMKÉ

I am constrained to say, both from experience and observation, that their education is miserably deficient; that they are taught to regard marriage as the one thing needful, the only avenue to distinction; hence to attract the notice and win the attentions of men, by their external charms, is the chief business of fashionable girls. They seldom think that men will be allured by intellectual acquirements, because they find, that where any mental superiority exists, a woman is generally shunned and regarded as stepping out of her "appropriate sphere," which, in their view, is to dress, to dance, to set out to the best possible advantage her person, to read the novels which inundate the press, and which do more to destroy her character as a rational creature, than any thing else. Fashionable women regard themselves, and are regarded by men, as pretty toys. . . .

Source: Grimké, Sarah. *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes, and the Condition of Woman.* Boston: Isaac Knapp, 1838.

PRIMARY SOURCE: EXCERPT FROM "THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES: IS IT PRO-SLAVERY OR ANTI-SLAVERY?" BY FREDERICK DOUGLASS

The real and exact question between myself and the class of persons represented by the speech at the City Hall may be fairly stated thus: First, does the United States constitution guarantee to any class or description of people in that country the right to enslave, or hold as property, any other class or description of people in that country? Second, is the dissolution of the union between the slave and free states required by fidelity to the slaves or by the just demands of conscience? Or, in other words, is the refusal to exercise the elective franchise, and to hold office in America, the surest, wisest, and best way to abolish slavery in America? To these questions the Garrisonians say, yes. They hold the constitution to be a slave-holding instrument, and will not cast a vote or hold office, and denounce all who vote or hold office, no matter how faithfully such persons labor to promote the abolition of slavery. I, on the other hand, deny that the constitution guarantees the right to hold property in man, and believe that the way to abolish slavery in America is to vote such men into power as will use their powers for the abolition of slavery. This is the issue plainly stated, and you shall judge between us. . . .

We owe it to ourselves to compel the devil to wear his own garments, and to make wicked laws speak out their wicked intentions. Common sense, and common justice, and sound rules of interpretation, all drive us to the words of the law for the meaning of the law.

Source: Douglass, Frederick. "The Constitution of the United States: Is It Pro-Slavery or Anti-Slavery?" *In Frederick Douglass the Orator*, by James M. Gregory. Springfield, MA: Willey Company, 1907, pp.

Chapter 2

Growing Sectionalism and the Experiences of Enslaved People

The Framing Question

How did arguments regarding slavery contribute to the growth of sectionalism and rising tensions?

Over time, tensions grew between the interests and beliefs of the industrial North and the agricultural South.

A Growing Rift

As the United States expanded westward, the country faced numerous challenges related to territory, economics, and social expectations. The North and the South developed different economic systems and over time adopted contrasting views on slavery. As a result, their priorities and interests conflicted, leading to a growing rift between the two regions.

These conflicting ideas were called **sectionalism**. Instead of working together as one united country, people began to show more loyalty to their own part of the country. This led to a division between the northern states and the southern states where different beliefs and interests came into conflict. People from the North and the South had disagreements about westward expansion, economic development, and the use of enslaved labor.

Vocabulary

sectionalism, n. devotion to the interests of a region over those of a country

Sectionalism became a major issue because the North and the South had very different economies and ways of life. Industrial growth in the North meant that more and more people were employed in industries like manufacturing and trade. These industries did not rely on enslaved workers. On the other hand, in the South, the economy was mainly centered on agriculture, specifically growing crops like cotton, tobacco, and rice. This required a

Find Out the Facts

Find out more about how the invention of the cotton gin increased the need for enslaved workers in the South.

lot of labor, and enslaved workers were used to work on the plantations.

Despite their differences, it is crucial to remember that Americans were still part of one nation. They shared the same language and valued their shared history, particularly the accomplishments of the American Revolution. However, various social changes began to create a sense that the North and the South were growing further apart.

Because of these differences, conflicts arose between the two regions over issues such as the expansion of slavery into new territories and the rights of states versus the power of the federal government. Tensions increased as people on each side fought to protect their own interests and way of life.

Life as an Enslaved Person

Before discussing various opinions on slavery that existed at the time, it is important to try to understand the experiences of enslaved people. Although slaveholding was largely concentrated in the hands of the wealthy and powerful minority in the South, many ordinary white southerners accepted the social order that the system of slavery established. For those living in slavery, their quality of life depended on who enslaved them and what type of work they were forced to do. Those who lived on small farms usually worked in the fields alongside their enslavers and also did a range of other chores. On large plantations, however, enslaved workers usually did only one task. Mostly they worked in the fields, planting and harvesting crops. A small number worked in the great house with the enslaver's family. Whether they lived on a small farm or a great plantation, enslaved workers toiled from dawn until dusk.

However, what made slavery so terrible was that these were human beings who were owned, like livestock, by other human beings. In a country said to be built on freedom, they were not free. Enslaved workers could be whipped for

For enslaved persons, quality of life depended on who owned them and the type of work they were forced to do.

not working enough, or for not showing proper respect to members of their enslaver family—and sometimes for no reason at all. Family members, including children, could be sold at will.

Resistance to the practice of enslavement came in various forms. A number of enslaved people organized rebellions. The German Coast uprising occurred in Louisiana in 1811. Enslaved people in the region faced harsh conditions and sought freedom. Led by Charles Deslondes, a group of enslaved people rebelled against plantation owners and marched along the Mississippi River, burning plantation houses. However, the rebellion was suppressed by federal troops, state militias, and slave patrols. Many rebels were killed, captured, punished, or executed.

Another notable person who violently resisted slavery was Nat Turner. Turner was enslaved and lived in Virginia. In 1831, he led an uprising. The uprising he organized lasted for about three days, but in the end, all who took part in Turner's rebellion were executed.

Enslaved people longed to be free. But unlike Nat Turner, many enslaved people believed that armed rebellion was bound to fail. Some chose to attempt to escape to

Nat Turner's rebellion, though unsuccessful, led to greater tension between the North and the South on the issue of slavery. This engraving was done in 1880, nearly fifty years after the rebellion.

northern states instead. They understood that freedom lay hundreds of miles away and risked fleeing, knowing they would be chased by slave catchers and their dogs. If caught, they would be severely punished.

Other ways of resisting were subtler and harder to detect. Acts such as working slowly, becoming suddenly unwell, or "accidentally" breaking tools would cause frustration for slaveholders but could not be clearly identified as rebellion. Enslaved people resisted spiritually, too. They expressed the pain of their existence through songs called spirituals. Most spirituals told of the weariness of the slaves and their hope for a better world to come. Their message was clear in words such as these:

We are (we are)
Climbing (climbing)
Jacob's ladder
We are (we are)
Climbing (climbing)
Jacob's ladder
Soldier (soldier)
of the cross

Ev'ry round goes higher higher / soldier of the cross
Sinner do you love my Jesus / soldier of the cross
If you love Him why not serve Him / soldier of the cross
Do you think I'd make a soldier / soldier of the cross
Faithful prayer will make a soldier / soldier of the cross

In the slave quarters, people created their own communities. They raised small gardens or hunted and fished for more variety in their diet. They told and retold stories and folktales handed down from earlier generations. In many of these stories, a supposedly weak character outwits a strong one.

In Africa, music was an important part of daily activities, including religious ceremonies. However, the colonists of North America were alarmed by the enslaved people's African-influenced way of worship. As a result, their gatherings often had to be held in secret.

Christianity was initially introduced to the African population in the American colonies in the seventeenth century. At first, the enslaved population did not convert, though they appreciated the biblical stories that contained parallels to their own lives. As a result, they created spirituals that retold narratives about biblical figures like Daniel and Moses. Over time, a form of Africanized Christianity emerged among the enslaved population. Spirituals served as a way to express the community's new faith, as well as its sorrows and hopes.

Think Twice

Why might the subtler ways of resisting have been effective?

Restricting the Slave Trade

In 1807, the United States passed a law called the Act Prohibiting Importation of Slaves. This law made it illegal to bring enslaved people into the country from other countries, though it did not stop the domestic slave trade.

This law was largely passed because many people in the United States believed that owning and trading enslaved individuals was wrong. They thought it went against the values of freedom and equality that the country was based on. By outlawing the importation of enslaved people, the government hoped to help put an end to this cruel practice.

The act further contributed to growing sectionalism because it affected the economic interests of the southern states. It limited their ability to bring in new enslaved people to work on their plantations. This increased tensions and disagreements between the North and the South about the future of slavery in the United States. While this law did not end slavery within the country, it marked an important step because it greatly reduced the number of enslaved people being brought into the United States. It also played a role in the ongoing debates and conflicts over slavery that would culminate in the Civil War.

Think Twice

Reflecting on the Act Prohibiting Importation of Slaves, what are your thoughts on the impact it had on the institution of slavery in the United States? Do you think it was a significant step toward ending slavery? Do you believe more should have been done?

Legislation and Compromise

In the previous chapter, you learned a little about the Northwest Ordinance of 1787. The ordinance aimed to provide a process for areas in the Northwest Territory to become states. But it also prohibited slavery in the region, reflecting a growing divide between northern states, where slavery was being abolished, and southern states, which were heavily reliant on it. This difference in ideas contributed to increased sectionalism and tensions.

By the early 1800s, southern slaveholders wanted the government to allow slavery

to spread into America's western lands. Most northerners were against this idea, largely because they wanted to reserve these territories for white settlers. This disagreement between the North and the South would become one of the major issues leading to the Civil War. Before then, however, the two sections of the country tried to settle their disagreement through compromise.

Early in the history of the United States, Congress had decided to set up a three-step process for turning land into new states. In the first step, Congress created a territory, or sometimes several territories. As a part of this first step, Congress made the laws for the territory. The second step came when the population of a territory reached five thousand free adult males. Then the men were allowed to elect their own representatives and make many of their own laws. When a territory's population reached sixty thousand free inhabitants, it could ask Congress to be admitted into the Union with its own state constitution. That was the third and final step—the step that allowed a territory to become a state.

Find Out the Facts

Learn more about how a territory could become a state at this time.

At the time, each state decided for itself whether to allow slavery within its borders. Southern states did. Most northern states did not. But for territories, the issue of slavery was a different matter. During a territory's first step toward statehood, it was Congress that made all the rules, including whether or not to allow slavery.

In 1820, the North and the South had a major disagreement about the expansion of slavery. The argument concerned slavery in the area of land that had been acquired as a result of the Louisiana Purchase. When Congress began to form new territories in this region, it failed to make any laws about slavery. Southern slaveholders felt free to move there with their enslaved workers. The first of these new territories to become a state was Louisiana, which entered the Union in 1812 as a slave state. Seven years later, a second territory was ready for statehood. This was the Missouri Territory, which also asked to come into the Union as a slave state. At that time, there were eleven slave states and eleven free states in the Union. The northern free states were against adding more slave states. For more than a year, Congress angrily debated the Missouri question.

Missouri Compromise

The Missouri Compromise attempted to settle the question of the spread of slavery. Territory north of latitude 36°30′ north was to become free.

Finally, in 1820, a compromise was reached. At this time, Maine, in northern New England, was also ready for statehood. Congress admitted Maine as a free state, and just over a year later, Missouri was admitted as a slave state. At the same time, Congress drew a line starting at Missouri's southern border, which was at latitude 36°30′ north, straight across the rest of the Louisiana Purchase. Congress prohibited slavery in territories north of that line and permitted slavery in territories south of it. This came to be known as the Missouri Compromise.

A Divided Country

In the midst of growing tensions over slavery within its borders, the United States went to war with Mexico over disputed land in a conflict known as the Mexican-American War (1846–48). The United States won the war and gained new land that previously belonged to Mexico, including California, New Mexico, Nevada, and Utah. After the war, the issue of slavery presented itself once more. California, one of the territories looking to gain statehood after

the war, requested entrance as a free state. Southerners feared that free states would soon greatly outnumber slave states, especially if Congress did not allow slavery in the new territories. If that happened, they asked, might the northerners manage to change the Constitution and make all slavery illegal, even in the southern states where it already existed?

Northerners and westerners who argued that the western territories should be free of slavery came to be called "free soilers." Free soilers would eventually start a new political party that would be known as the Republican Party. Southern senators such as John C. Calhoun argued that the issue of allowing slavery in these new territories below the Missouri Compromise line had already been settled by the Missouri Compromise. Also, Calhoun asserted, northerners had a responsibility to help southerners recover their runaway slaves. If northerners could not accept these conditions, he argued, maybe it would be best if the southern states **seceded**, or separated from the rest of the country.

Vocabulary

secede, v. to formally withdraw membership

Compromise of 1850

Slavery could have expanded in the territories of the western United States after the Compromise of 1850.

Writers' Corner

Write an opinion essay arguing that the western territories should not be allowed to have slavery.

Another compromise, called the Compromise of 1850, was eventually reached in order to avoid such a drastic step. California was admitted to the Union as a free state, and the slave trade was banned in Washington, D.C. These rules satisfied the North. The rest of the land gained from Mexico was divided into two territories, forming New Mexico and Utah. The federal government did not place any restrictions on slavery in the new territories. Instead, the people of each territory would decide the issue for themselves. That satisfied the South. Undoubtedly, the most controversial part of the compromise was the Fugitive Slave Law, which replaced an old and similar but weaker federal law. The new law stated that if an enslaved person made it to freedom in the North and was caught, they had to be returned to their enslaver in the South.

Legislation Deepens the Divide

During this time, laws were passed that intensified sectionalism between the northern and southern states. In the 1829 court case of *North Carolina v. Mann*, a question arose about whether slaveholders had the right to treat their enslaved workers harshly. This case brought attention to the treatment of enslaved people and sparked conversations about their rights. The North Carolina Supreme Court ruled that slaveholders had complete authority over their slaves and could not be convicted of crimes against them.

The Nullification Crisis, which took place in South Carolina in 1832–33, focused on the debate over tariffs (taxes on imported goods) and the power of the federal government. Some people, especially John C. Calhoun, believed that states should have the right to reject federal laws they deemed unconstitutional, while others supported the federal government's authority. This crisis highlighted the ongoing disagreement over states' rights and federal power.

The Fugitive Slave Acts of 1793 and 1850 caused significant tension. These laws were intended to help slaveholders recover enslaved persons who had escaped to free states. They required northern states to allow federal agents to capture and return escaped enslaved persons to their enslavers in the South. The acts sparked debates that heightened

sectionalism between the northern and southern states. Abolitionists and some northern states resisted these acts. Abolitionists believed everyone should have the right to freedom, including those who had escaped, and many northerners believed that the acts violated the principles of freedom and justice.

Think Twice

Why might people in the North have struggled to follow a law that required them to return enslaved people who ran away?

The Formation of the Republican Party

A new political party called the Republican Party emerged in 1854 as a response to sectional tensions and the growing influence of antislavery sentiment. You have already heard that free soilers banded together in an effort to oppose the expansion of slavery into new territories. Many northern politicians and citizens were concerned about the power and influence of southern slave states, and they believed that the spread of slavery was not only morally wrong but also a threat to the economic and political interests of the North.

The Republican Party provided a political platform for those who wanted to halt the expansion of slavery and promote free labor in the growing western territories.

Members of the Republican Party made it clear that they opposed allowing slavery to spread to new territories. They also wanted the United States to remain together as a unified country and called for the **containment** of slavery, promoting the idea that its spread into new territories should be prohibited. They believed that the federal government should not favor slaveholders and that Congress should have the power to ban slavery. Additionally, members of the Republican Party advocated for economic policies that supported industrialization, which appealed to many northern business interests. The party's founding platform helped solidify its stance against slavery and position it as a major political force in the years leading up to the Civil War.

Vocabulary

containment, n. the act of keeping something under control or within limits

Find Out the Facts

Find out more about the early days of the Republican Party.

Crisis Point

Despite compromises in Congress, slavery continued to be a source of heated debate and disagreement. In 1854, Congress passed a law called the Kansas-Nebraska Act, allowing settlers, not Congress, to determine whether slavery would be allowed in more territories north of the Missouri Compromise line. Many people with different opinions on slavery rushed to the Kansas Territory, which was seeking to be admitted to the Union as a state.

There were three main groups: those who supported slavery, those who wanted the state to be free of both slavery and African Americans, and abolitionists who wanted to completely end slavery and welcome African Americans as equals. Almost immediately, these groups clashed in a conflict that became known as "Bleeding Kansas." Clashes between those on different sides led to some people being tarred and feathered, kidnapped, or even killed. The violence escalated when proslavery supporters set fire to the Free State Hotel, destroyed printing presses, and looted homes and stores in the town of Lawrence, Kansas, on May 21, 1856. In response, an abolitionist named John Brown led a group of men to Pottawatomie Creek, where they brutally killed five supporters of slavery.

The Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854

The Kansas-Nebraska Act gave new territories the ability to determine whether to allow slavery, ignoring the Missouri Compromise.

A year later and many miles from Kansas, an African American man named Dred Scott sued for his freedom, and the lawsuit went all the way to the Supreme Court. Scott was told by the Supreme Court that he was not a citizen, and thus he did not have the right to use the American justice system to gain his freedom. This case, *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, became known simply as the *Dred Scott* case. Chief Justice Roger B. Taney ruled that African Americans could never be U.S. citizens, even when free, and that slavery had to be permitted in all federal territories. The ruling had far-reaching consequences for the legal status of African Americans and the nation's political landscape.

In the *Dred Scott* case of 1857, the Supreme Court ruled that even free African Americans were not considered citizens and had no rights under the Constitution.

In 1858, heated debates between two men wanting to be senators represented the conflict over slavery. One of these men was Stephen A. Douglas, the **incumbent** senator from Illinois, who was running for reelection. His opponent was a Republican named Abraham Lincoln, whom few people outside of Illinois even knew. Although from a humble background, Lincoln had become a lawyer, a representative in the Illinois General Assembly, and a congressman.

Vocabulary

incumbent, adj. holding a position or political office

At first, Lincoln was not an abolitionist. He simply opposed allowing slavery to expand into areas where it did not already exist. Lincoln feared that the issue of slavery would tear the country apart. He said, "A house divided against itself cannot stand." In the heated political debates between Douglas and Lincoln, Douglas pointed to the fact that his opponent had disagreed with the Supreme Court's decision in the *Dred Scott* case. He said that Lincoln openly supported freedom and equality for African Americans.

Debates between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas introduced Lincoln to the nation.

Lincoln responded by saying that he did not want equality between the races, but slavery was morally wrong. He also said, "There is no reason in the world why the Negro is not entitled to all the natural rights enumerated in the Declaration of Independence." Lincoln went on to lose the election to Douglas, but when he ran for president two years later, he was well known to many Americans.

Think Twice

Why do you think Lincoln was not an abolitionist at first?

In 1859, John Brown, the same man who had been involved in the Bleeding Kansas conflict three years earlier, attacked a federal **arsenal** at Harpers Ferry, which was then in Virginia and now in West Virginia. He hoped to seize the weapons and give them to enslaved people in the area. Brown and his co-conspirators were eventually executed, but he became a hero to many northern abolitionists. The raid generated fear and tension between people who supported slavery and those who opposed it. Many people in the South saw Brown as a dangerous criminal, while some in the North saw him as a hero fighting for justice. Although the raid itself did not lead to the end of slavery, it became an important event that reinforced how divided the country was over the issue.

Vocabulary

arsenal, n. a place where weapons and other military equipment are stored

John Brown and his co-conspirators held hostages before the authorities captured Brown and his group.

PRIMARY SOURCE: EXCERPT FROM *TWELVE YEARS A SLAVE* BY SOLOMON NORTHUP

On larger estates, employing fifty or a hundred, or perhaps two hundred hands, an overseer is deemed indispensable. These gentlemen ride into the field on horseback, without an exception, to my knowledge, armed with pistols, bowie knife, whip, and accompanied by several dogs. They follow, equipped in this fashion, in rear of the slaves, keeping a sharp lookout upon them all. The requisite qualifications in an overseer are utter heartlessness, brutality and cruelty. It is his business to produce large crops, and if that is accomplished, no matter what amount of suffering it may have cost. The presence of the dogs are necessary to overhaul a fugitive who may take to his heels, as is sometimes the case, when faint or sick, he is unable to maintain his row, and unable, also, to endure the whip. The pistols are reserved for any dangerous emergency, there having been instances when such weapons were necessary. Goaded into uncontrollable madness, even the slave will sometimes turn upon his oppressor. . . .

Besides the overseer, there are drivers under him, the number being in proportion to the number of hands in the field. The drivers are black, who, in addition to the performance of their equal share of work, are compelled to do the whipping of their several gangs. Whips hang around their necks, and if they fail to use them thoroughly, are whipped themselves. They have a few privileges, however; for example, in cane-cutting the hands are not allowed to sit down long enough to eat their dinners. Carts filled with corn cake, cooked at the kitchen, are driven into the field at noon. The cake is distributed by the drivers, and must be eaten with the least possible delay.

When the slave ceases to perspire, as he often does when taxed beyond his strength, he falls to the ground and becomes entirely helpless. It is then the duty of the driver to drag him into the shade of the standing cotton or cane, or of a neighboring tree, where he dashes buckets of water upon him, and uses other means of bringing out perspiration again, when he is ordered to his place, and compelled to continue his labor.

Source: Northup, Solomon, and D. Wilson. *Twelve Years a Slave*. New York: C. M. Saxton, 1859, pp. 223-225.

PRIMARY SOURCE: EXCERPT FROM ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S SPEECH TO THE ILLINOIS REPUBLICAN CONVENTION (1858)

In this excerpt from a speech delivered at the 1858 Illinois Republican Convention, Abraham Lincoln addresses the ongoing issue of sectionalism. He poses the question of whether the United States can continue to exist as a nation divided between states where slavery is allowed and states where it is not, highlighting the growing divide and the need for resolution on the issue.

We are now far into the fifth year since a policy was initiated with the avowed object and confident promise of putting an end to slavery agitation. Under the operation of that policy, that agitation has not only not ceased, but has constantly augmented. In my opinion, it will not cease until a crisis shall have been reached and passed. "A house divided against itself cannot stand." I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved; I do not expect the house to fall; but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing, or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction, or its advocates will push it forward till it shall become alike lawful in all the States, old as well as new, North as well as South.

Source: Lincoln, Abraham. "Speech of Hon. Abraham Lincoln, at Springfield, June 17, 1858." In *Political Debates Between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas, in the Celebrated Campaign of 1858 in Illinois: Including the Preceding Speeches of Each at Chicago, Springfield,* Etc. Cleveland, OH: O. S. Hubbell & Company, 1895, p. 1.

Glossary

A

abolitionist, n. a person who worked to end slavery during the 1700s and 1800s **(8)**

arsenal, n. a place where weapons and other military equipment are stored **(33)**

asylum, n. a hospital for people with mental illness **(15)**

C

containment, n. the act of keeping something under control or within limits **(30)**

convention, n. a formal gathering of people for a purpose **(5)**

I

incumbent, adj. holding a position or political office **(32)**

S

secede, v. to formally withdraw membership **(28)**

sectionalism, n. devotion to the interests of a region over those of a country **(21)**

suffrage, n. the right to vote **(8)**

T

temperance, n. moderation in or refraining from the consumption of alcoholic beverages **(16)**

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Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas debating at Charleston, Illinois on 18th September 1858, 1918 (oil on canvas), Root, Robert Marshall (1863–1937) / Private Collection / Bridgeman Images: 33

Cotton manufacture: mule spinning. Engraving c1830. / Universal History Archive/UIG / Bridgeman Images: i, iii, 20–21

Dred Scott, c.1857 (oil on canvas), American School, (19th century) / Collection of the New-York Historical Society, USA / Bridgeman Images: Cover A, 32

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Harper's Ferry insurrection - Interior of the Engine-House, just before the gate is broken down by the storming party - Col. Washington and his associates as captives, held by Brown as hostages, pub. 1859 (engraving)/American School, (19th century) / American/Private Collection/The Stapleton Collection / Bridgeman Images: Cover B, 34

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