

CHAPTER 18

Sectional Struggle, 1848–1854

(Note: As you read the next two chapters on the march of events leading to the thoroughly devastating Civil War, think about the question of inevitability. Perhaps draw a timeline of the key events between 1848 and 1861, and try to decide at what point you think an armed conflict between the two regions became inevitable—beyond which even extraordinary statesmanship could not have healed the wounds.)

1. Slavery in the New Territories (pp. 390–396)

a. One proposed solution to the question of whether slavery should be allowed into the new territories acquired from Mexico was called “popular sovereignty.” What was “popular sovereignty” and why did it appeal to many moderates?

(1) Popular sovereignty:

(2) Appeal:

b. The authors say that, in 1848, both the Whigs and the Democrats were national parties, providing a “vital bond of national unity.” The first truly sectional party to appear (“foreshadowing the emergence of the Republican Party six years later”) was the Free-_____ Party. How did they propose to handle the question of slavery in the territories?

c. In 1848, Whig General Zachery _____, a potential Southern ally, was elected president. Sectional passions were aroused, however, when a gold rush prompted the new territory of _____ to apply for early admission as a free state in 1849. If accepted, this would upset the delicate North-South sectional balance, then existing of _____ states each. Southerners were concerned about what they called the fugitive slave problem (facilitated by people like Harriet _____ and the “Underground _____” to Canada). Does this worry appear to have been a practical one or more a matter of the principle of protecting property rights? Why?

2. Compromise of 1850 (pp. 396–401)

a. In the momentous debate sparked by California’s request for statehood, summarize the positions and critical roles played by the following three Old Guard politicians in putting together the Compromise of 1850.

(1) Henry Clay:

(2) John C. Calhoun:

(3) Daniel Webster (“7th of March Speech”):

b. The Compromise of 1850 achieved some Northern objectives by admitting _____ as a free state, taking away some disputed territory from the slave-holding state of _____, and abolishing the slave trade (although not slavery per se) in _____ D.C. In return, the main concession to the South was the tightening up of the _____ Slave Law. Why do the authors conclude that the North “got the better deal” and that emphasizing fugitive slaves was “an appalling blunder on the part of the South”?

3. Expansionism in the 1850s (pp. 401–404)

a. In 1852, the Democrat and “pro-southern northerner” Franklin _____ won the presidency. Why, on p. 401, do the authors conclude that this election was “fraught with frightening significance”?

b. Expansionists, especially in the South, had a field day in the early 1850s. Note the adventures of William _____ in Nicaragua and the resolution of disputes with Britain over a potential canal route across the Isthmus of Panama in the Clayton-_____ Treaty of 1850. A fleet under Commodore Matthew _____ helped open _____ to trade ties in 1854. And plans to grab _____ from Spain were foiled when the _____ Manifesto became public in 1854.

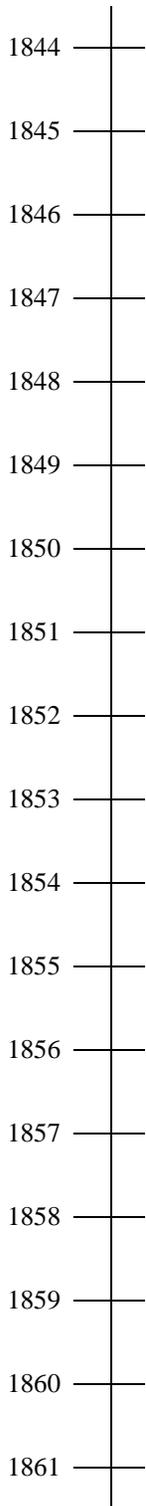
4. Douglas and the Kansas-Nebraska Act, 1854 (pp. 404–408)

a. The issue of a railroad to the Pacific precipitated a major sectional split in 1853 when the _____ Purchase of territory from _____ seemed to favor the technically easier southern route. Motivated by a desire to benefit both his region and himself, Illinois Senator Stephen A. _____ countered in 1854 with a northern route proposal that would require the area west of the Missouri River to be formally organized into a territory. His proposal was to split this territory into two parts, with the status of slavery to be decided on the principle of “_____ sovereignty.” The northern territory, to be called _____, would presumably vote for “free-soil,” while the southern territory, to be called _____, was expected to favor slavery. Despite opposing a northern railroad route, why did the South “rise to the bait” (p. 406) and support this act?

b. The authors obviously consider pushing the Kansas-Nebraska Act to have been a major blunder on the part of Douglas, making the “dreaded sectional rift” permanently irreversible. The act he pushed through in 1854 required repeal of the _____ Compromise of 1820, which had prohibited slavery in any territories formed from the _____ Purchase north of the southern boundary of Missouri (latitude 36° 30'). Why did Northern free-soilers, soon to form the purely-sectional _____ Party around this very issue, so vehemently oppose the bill, even though it would promote a railroad that would benefit their region economically?

TIMELINE TO CIVIL WAR

Refer to the note at the beginning of these questions. Draw a timeline of the key events between 1848 and 1861 and try to decide at what point you think an armed conflict between the two regions became inevitable—beyond which even extraordinary statesmanship could not have healed the wounds.



CHAPTER 18 TERM SHEET

Sectional Struggle

Pages 390–396

1848 election

Gen. Lewis Cass (Dem.)

Gen. Zachery Taylor (Whig)

“Popular sovereignty”

“Free-Soil” Party

Martin Van Buren

California gold rush (1848)

California admission application (1849)

Underground Railroad

Harriet Tubman

Fugitive slave laws

Pages 396–401

Henry Clay

John C. Calhoun

Daniel Webster

Seventh of March Speech (1850)

William H. Seward

Millard Fillmore (1850)

Compromise of 1850

Pages 401–404

Election of 1852

Franklin Pierce (Dem.)

Gen. Winfield Scott (Whig)

Whig Party demise (1852)

William Walker

Clayton-Bulwer Treaty (1850)

Com. Matthew C. Perry (Japan, 1854)

Ostend Manifesto (1854)

Pages 404–408

Pacific railroad route

Jefferson Davis

Gadsden Purchase (1853)

Sen. Stephen A. Douglas

Kansas-Nebraska Act (1854)

Missouri Compromise of 1820

Republican Party (1854)