**Dividing a Nation 5.1**

**SSUSH8 Explore the relationship between slavery, growing north-south divisions, and westward expansion that led to the outbreak of the Civil War.**

**a. Explain the impact of the Missouri Compromise on the admission of states from the Louisiana Territory.**

**Impact of the Missouri Compromise**

As the US acquired new territories in the West, the debate over slavery grew more intense. New territories would eventually become states. States would send representatives and senators to Congress. Therefore, whether or not these territories should allow slavery was the object of much heated debate among political leaders. No political issue caused more division in the United States as it expanded west than the institution of slavery.

**Document Analysis** **1**



Free northern states opposed the addition of new slave states. Conversely, southern states feared that the addition of free-states would leave them at a political disadvantage. In 1819, a debate raged in Congress over Missouri's application for statehood. Slave states and free-states were equally represented in the Senate, and Missouri's admission would disrupt the balance of power. Senator **Jesse B. Thomas** of Illinois proposed a bill calling for the admission of Missouri as a slave state and Maine as a free state. In addition, the southern boundary of Missouri, 36°30' N, would become a dividing line for any new states admitted to the Union. All new states north of that line would be free-states, while those to the south would be slave states. Congress passed the bill and President Monroe signed it into law in 1820. It became known as the **Missouri Compromise**, and it was designed to maintain the balance of power in Washington, DC.

**b. Examine James K. Polk’s presidency in the fulfillment of Manifest Destiny including the Texas annexation and Oregon.**

**Presidency of James K. Polk**

One of the controversial aspects of Manifest Destiny is that in America's quest to expand there were native people's displaced and land that was controlled by Mexico was taken by war. President James Polk took office in 1845 and pursued an aggressive policy of expansion. Polk ultimately negotiated with Great Britain concerning Oregon in an attempt to avoid armed conflict over the region. Instead of acquiring the entire Oregon territory to the 54° 40" line, a compromise was reached. The Oregon territory would be divided and the northern section would remain in Great Britain's possession and the southern section would be annexed by the United States. The Senate ratified the Oregon Treaty in 1846, the same year the United States went to war with Mexico over Texas. Polk had fulfilled the Manifest Destiny of the United States to span the North American continent from the Atlantic to the Pacific coastlines.

**c. Analyze the impact of the Mexican War on growing sectionalism.**

**Mexican American War**

Mexico was angry with the US for annexing Texas. However, this did not deter President **James K. Polk** and leaders in Congress who believed in Manifest Destiny. In June 1845, Polk ordered General Zachary Taylor to lead his troops to the Texas border. He also sent **John Slidell** to Mexico to settle the disputes over the US-Mexico border and negotiate for the purchase of California and New Mexico (the area between Texas and California). After the Mexican president refused to meet with Slidell, Polk ordered Taylor to move into the disputed territory between the **Nueces** and **Rio Grande** rivers. In response, Mexican troops crossed the Rio Grande and attacked Taylor's forces. Immediately, Polk demanded that Congress declare war on Mexico, proclaiming that the Mexicans had "shed American blood on American soil." Though some representatives disagreed, Congress passed a declaration of war on May 13, 1846. The war was a series of US victories leading up to September 14, 1847, when General Winfield Scott finally marched his troops into Mexico City and forced Mexico to surrender. After months of negotiations, the US and Mexico finally ended the war with the **Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo** on February 2, 1848. The treaty required Mexico to surrender the New Mexico and California territories to the United States in exchange for financial compensation. However, in 1853, boundary disputes with Mexico still remained. President **Franklin Pierce** sent **James Gadsden** to settle the problem and to purchase land for a southern transcontinental railroad. The **Gadsden Purchase** gave the United States parts of present-day New Mexico and Arizona in exchange for $10 million. The acquisition of these territories all but completed the continental expansion envisioned by those who believed in **Manifest Destiny**.

**Document Analysis 2**



**Wilmot Proviso**

The United States went to war with Mexico in 1846. Even before the war was over, it became evident that the issue of slavery would once again be a major problem. Victory over Mexico would mean new territories and the question of whether or not they should allow slavery. Sectionalism (Division between two or more regions in a country) continued to divide the North that wanted more free states and the South that wanted more slave states. During the conflict, a Pennsylvania congressman named **David Wilmot** put forth what would come to be known as the **Wilmot Proviso**. This proviso, or condition, proposed banning slavery from any land purchased from Mexico. Northerners embraced the idea, but southerners denounced it. Congress eventually voted down the Wilmot Proviso. Still, the Mexican American War and the Wilmot Proviso exposed the serious sectional divisions over slavery that existed in the country.

**d. Explain how the Compromise of 1850 arose out of territorial expansion and population growth.**

**California**

In 1848, settlers discovered gold just north of Sacramento, California. The following year, gold seekers came from all over the world as part of the **California Gold Rush of 1849**. These new arrivals came to be known as "49ers," and they served to rapidly increase California's population. This growth produced a need for stable government almost overnight. When the debate over slavery prevented Congress from organizing the territory, Californians took matters into their own hands by drafting and approving their own constitution. Finally, thanks to the **Compromise of 1850**, Congress admitted California as a free state on September 9, 1850.

**Compromise of 1850**

The Compromise of 1850 admitted California to the Union as a free state and declared the unorganized western territories free as well. The Utah and New Mexico territories, however, were allowed to decide the issue by popular sovereignty (the will of the majority). In other words, the people living in these territories would vote on whether or not to allow slavery. Attached to the compromise was the **Fugitive Slave Law**. This law required that northern states forcibly return escaped slaves to their owners in the South. Because the law was unpopular in the North, however, many northern citizens refused to obey it. Ultimately, the Compromise of 1850 was attempt by politicians to solve the issue of territorial expansion and population growth.

**e. Evaluate the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the failure of popular sovereignty, Scott v. Sanford, John Brown’s Raid on Harper’s Ferry, and the election of 1860 as events leading to the Civil War.**

**Kansas-Nebraska Act**

In 1854, Congress passed the **Kansas-Nebraska Act**. This act allowed the previously free and unorganized territories of Kansas and Nebraska to choose whether or not to permit slavery by **popular sovereignty**(Rule by the people, when the population is allowed to vote on a political issue). Its guidelines effectively repealed the Missouri Compromise and reignited the slavery issue. Both supporters of slavery and abolitionists rushed into Kansas, eventually setting up rival governments. The territory became known as "**Bleeding Kansas**" as armed clashes between the
two sides became common. Meanwhile, in Washington, the act inspired emotional reaction. **Charles Sumner**, a fiery senator from Massachusetts who opposed slavery, strongly denounced the act and the senators who wrote it in a speech that spanned two days. A couple of days after the speech, South Carolina congressman, **Preston Brooks**, approached Sumner on the Senate floor. He was insulted by Sumner's words both because he was from the South and because he was related to one of the act's authors. Brooks beat Sumner with a heavy cane, almost killing him, the attack caused Sumner to be absent from the Senate for three years while he recovered from his injuries. The Sumner-Brooks incident was a brutal example of how inflamed passions had become over the slavery issue. The end result of the Kansas-Nebraska Act was the failure of popular sovereignty and politicians inability to solve the issue of slavery

**Scott v. Sanford**

The 1857 **Scott v. Sanford** case threw the nation further into turmoil. Dred Scott, a slave in Missouri, went with his owner into free territory where he lived for four years. The owner later returned to Missouri, where he died. After his death, Dred Scott sued for his freedom. The Supreme Court ruled that Scott had no right to sue because, as a slave, he was not a citizen. It also declared that a slave owner could not be deprived of his "property" without due process of law. The decision struck down the Missouri Compromise because it declared that it was a violation of the Fifth Amendment to declare slaves free of their owners without due process of law, even if that slave had entered a free state. The decision outraged both abolitionists and those favored popular sovereignty because it suggested that slaveholders could keep their slaves in any state.

**Document Analysis 3**

 “**Until mankind recognizes that all men have the right to be born free, society will never warrant being called civilized. No matter what color a man’s skin, he is entitled to liberty, and if it takes blood to gain it, so be it!”**

 **Source: John Brown**

**John Brown’s Raid on Harper’s Ferry**

In October 1859, a group of radical abolitionists led by **John Brown** attacked the federal arsenal location where weapons are made and/or stored) at **Harper's Ferry**. They hoped to seize weapons and give them to slaves who could then rise up in armed rebellion. Their plan failed, however, when US troops under the command of Colonel Robert E. Lee surrounded the arsenal and forced Brown's surrender. Although Brown was hanged, his actions intensified southern resentment of the abolitionist movement and many saw it as proof that the South would have to shed blood to protect its way of life. Northerners eventually saw John Brown as a Martyr and Southerners saw him as a terrorist.

**Document Analysis 2**

**The Election (of Abraham Lincoln) was not the Cause [of secession] it was but the last feather which you know breaks the Camel’s back. Sectional hostility manifested in hostile legislation by states and raids of organized bodies sustained by Contributions . . . of northern Society furnish to us sufficient cause. . . .**

**Source: letter that Jefferson Davis wrote to George Lunt on January 17, 1861**

**Abraham Lincoln and the Election of 1860**

In 1854, a coalition of northern Democrats who opposed slavery, Whigs, and Free Soilers (a party opposing slavery in new territories) came together and formed the Republican Party. While the Republicans did not call for the immediate abolition of slavery, they did adopt the Free Soilers' position of opposing the extension of slavery into new US territories. Within a few years, former Illinois congressman, **Abraham Lincoln**, emerged as one of the party's most formidable political figures. After losing his bid for a US Senate seat in 1858, Lincoln bounced back to become the Republican's presidential candidate two years later. By the time of the presidential election of 1860, the country was at a boiling point regarding slavery. The issue caused deep division among members of the Democratic Party. At their convention, the Democrats split along sectional lines. Northern Democrats supported popular sovereignty and nominated **Stephen Douglas**. Southern Democrats wanted federal protection of slavery in all US territories and nominated Vice President **John Breckinridge.** The Republicans, of course, chose Lincoln. The South felt threatened by Lincoln's candidacy because, unlike Douglas who considered slavery a legitimate choice, Lincoln considered it a moral evil. The southern states feared that Lincoln would seek not only to prevent slavery in the new territories, but to dismantle it in the South as well. When Lincoln won the election, South Carolina responded by **seceding** (withdrawing) from the Union on December 20, 1860. Within two months, six other states had seceded as well: Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Louisiana and Texas. In February 1861, southern delegates from the seceded states met in Montgomery, Alabama to draft their own constitution and elected **Jefferson Davis** to serve as president of the new **Confederate States of America.** (They chose a Georgian, **Alexander Stephens**, to be their Vice President.)