



Course Learning Outcomes for Unit VII

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

8. Discuss the evolution of American philosophies or ideals.

Reading Assignment

Schur, J. (n.d.). Eli Whitney's patent for the cotton gin. Retrieved from <http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/cotton-gin-patent/>

Whitman, W. (n.d.). *Leaves of grass*. Retrieved from <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1322/1322-h/1322-h.htm>

In order to access the articles below, you must first log into the myCSU Student Portal and access the America: History and Life with Full Text database within the CSU Online Library.

Fountain, D. L. (2014). A broader footprint: Slavery and slaveholding households in antebellum piedmont North Carolina. *North Carolina Historical Review*, 91(4), 407-444.

Rousey, D. C. (2001). Friends and foes of slavery: Foreigners and northerners in the old South. *Journal Of Social History*, 35(2), 373.

Unit Lesson

Jim Crow was not a President, Senator, or Congressman; he was not even a local figure of power. Jim Crow was a minstrel show character portrayed most famously by T.D. "Daddy" Rice in the early nineteenth century. However, there is absolutely no doubt that this fictional personification of racism and subjugation ranks among the most influential icons of the American antebellum period, and it is still recognizable today.



"I wheel about an' turn about And do jis' so And ebry time I wheel about I
jump Jim Crow." – T.D. "Daddy" Rice (as cited in "Antebellum Period
Quotes," 2014, para 1).

(Thomas Rice as Jim Crow, n.d.)

From the earliest days of the American colonies, amongst the feelings of unification, freedom from unlawful taxation, and desire to self-govern, there were also feelings of great division and entitlement across the American settlements. So far, we have discussed several of these debates, but the one that remained constant was the question of what “freedom” really meant.

Evils of Slavery

Even today in America, there are conflicting teachings of what the true catalysts of the Civil War were. For the South, the “War of Northern Aggression” was a direct attack by subjecting the Southern economy for the pure benefit of Northern industry, which threatened the agricultural culture and virtues that Jefferson had represented so famously. As we will review later, however, slavery was not a universal good for all Southerners. In fact, in the years leading up to, and during, the war, there were well-established regions of anti-slavery sentiment in every future Confederate state, save one: South Carolina.

For the North, with the exception of the few wealthy outliers who benefitted from the transport and sale of Southern goods, slavery was being viewed more and more clearly as an unnecessary evil—one that had already been banned in many European nations. Alexis de Tocqueville, a French political observer, noted as early as 1831 how obvious the slavery question was in the ongoing disputes between the two sides. However, just as labor was a question in the South, so it would be in the North as well, but in a different way: what would the immediate increase of the American population by hundreds of thousands of former slaves looking for any kind of work do to the already overcrowded, unskilled labor pool growing daily due to immigrants?

The one major question that plagued anti-slavery advocates on both sides was straightforward enough: was abolition beneficial to the future of the growing American citizenry? Could slavery be abolished without jeopardizing the American dream? Pondering this question, we turn our focus to the antebellum era in the visibly divided South. As we left off in the last unit, with the success of the Market and Transportation Revolutions, the focus of the nation was the American West. And like almost everything, there were two clear political agendas requiring the attention of the voting public.

Roots of the Economy

Perhaps an argument can be made, though unfairly, that Eli Whitney should be blamed for the growth of slavery in the nineteenth century. His 1793 cotton gin, whose simplistic function was to comb tiny sticky green seeds from white cotton fibers, can be considered the tool that made cotton production profitable, so much so that the Southeast United States (with westward expansion now being an appropriate label) was dubbed by many as a “cotton kingdom.” (For more information see <http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/cotton-gin-patent/> .) This crop was not new to the plantation owners. Cotton was a luxury for any who could afford it, because at one time it was too slow and labor-intensive to process to justify using otherwise rich farm land to grow it.



Example of an industrial-style cotton gin
(Murray, 2005)

Due to the cotton gin’s development, new territories emerged throughout the nation, but it was the Southern states that caused significant concerns on the federal level. The annexation of Texas soon spread into population development in Arkansas and other areas of prime cotton growth. Now so outrageously lucrative because of Whitney’s invention, areas that could grow the crop, generally those below the Mason-Dixon Line, rebounded. Many of these regions had suffered from an economic lull caused by better technologies and exhausted soil in previous decades, and the need for inexpensive unskilled labor led to the shipment of over a million new laborers from Africa. By 1860, these laborers more than doubled the slave population and made up three out of four people in the South, a number that shattered the statistics from the Middle Passage. The question quickly became whether a state would be a “slave” or “free” state. This is a discussion that we will pick up again later, with the Missouri Compromise.

By the 1820s, the South had already dealt with a significant assault on the culture and labor question, most of which were blamed exclusively on the increasing northern industrial base. In order to ensure the continued demand and need for slave labor, the laws of many Southern states would evolve to include a series of laws

called the “slave codes” which, in short, legalized ideas and actions of White superiority and Black inferiority. These laws granted owners complete and total rights to treat their slaves as nothing other than working tools, or perhaps more appropriately, livestock. With a few exceptions, owners decided every aspect of a slave’s life, including relationships, food, shelter, clothing, and even if the slaves would share basic commonalities such as language. This last had become a major concern after a pattern of rebellions, such as Nat Turner’s Raid, had ravaged slave-owning communities.

Forms of Slave Labor

Ways in which this treatment was regulated had many sides. On the farm, the three most common forms of labor would be field labor (by a wide margin), house labor (which grew in popularity first in all colonies), and finally artisan labor for those with a skill. Artisan roles can be somewhat misleading by name. For many, this meant the slave had shown an exceptional talent with a skill or necessary job that benefitted their masters financially, such as carpentry, mechanics, or working with livestock. For some, this would mean being loaned out to people in exchange for a stipend to the master; for others, their work would remain closer to the plantation. This position was generally Southern-focused for a few reasons, including that high migrations led to labor needs, slaves were a threat to even low-paying opportunities, and because many of the Southern laws concerning slaves were not followed or respected in Northern states.

House slaves may sound initially like the preferred situation of the three. These slaves stayed in the master’s house and would generally serve as cooks, caretakers, maids, and child care, and they were fed and clothed appropriately. This, however, was usually only a public face.

All too often, house labor was dominated by females, depending on the required skill, and, especially in houses with many men, unique abuses were committed, varying from verbal to physical or even sexual abuse. In houses with a master and wife, infidelity by the master could lead to negative reaction by the wife toward the slave, causing contact unwanted by the slave to lead to additional physical harm from the master’s wife. Perhaps the most heinous fate for these women (all too often young girls) was a complete separation from their families and communities of support, described below. It is not so hard to believe, then, that these house slaves were generally found to be the most likely to attempt to flee, especially in cases of chaos or danger from the work of anti-slavery advocates.

The overwhelming majority of slaves, and the most common image associated with slavery during this period, were in the fields. Approximately three out of four slaves would be field workers. In the Lower South, for example, where planting would last for 9-10 months of the year, these laborers would work from daybreak to dusk with only a break for lunch and maybe some opportunities for hydration, depending on the master. The further south the plantation, generally the worse the conditions, and all too often the more dangerous the situation. This was not lost on slave owners in the Chesapeake, especially, who could use the threat of sending a slave “down the river” (south) to literally instill fear.

The Slave Community

For most slaves, night was a time for community. Food wise, most plantation slaves were given only scraps of unwanted meat from the master’s kitchen and either cornmeal or rice (as they were often the cheapest available staples) to eat, but the community made sure man, woman, and child were fed. And this was important for the master as well, who needed his labor to be fit for work to guarantee a return on investment.

These communities served other purposes as well. As a community of family, children, whether they had a mother or father or not, would call other slaves names like brother, sister, aunt, and uncle. Some masters even allowed slave marriages, though it was usually because it was deemed beneficial as an agent to calm the more dangerous men and potentially breed new slaves. Individual families that were split up due to sale or death would know that their child was in loving hands, even if not their own. The community was also a way to ensure that important lessons were passed on about heritage and life skills. Some of the best known of the stories survive, as spiritual hymns or folktales.

Perhaps the most famous collection of these folktales is Joel Chandler Harris’s anthology titled *Uncle Remus and Brer Rabbit* (“Brother Rabbit”). These allegories were especially popular with children, White and Black, as the main characters were general representations of outrageous attitudes personified by common animals recognizable in the Chesapeake and Lower South. These included Br’er B’ar, the dim-witted strong man; Br’er Fox, the devious schemer; Br’er Wolf, the overly aggressive enforcer; and finally Br’er Rabbit, the

trickster and hero. Even the narrator was painted as a jolly, soft-spoken, Uncle Tom (master apologist) type of character who may have reminded the audience of a particular person, or persons, in the community.

Seen as harmless entertainment by masters, stories such as these were passed down as stories of survival, quick thinking, and problem solving that were of realistic significance for children learning to survive a slave's life. The Harris collection retained its popularity through much of the twentieth century, even being turned into a Disney movie called *Song of the South*. Both it and the book were only removed from regular circulation due to recent advances in the removal of hate speech and growth of tolerance in the last few decades.

Right: "Uncle Remus and his deceitful jug"
(Church & Moser, 1881b)
Below: Illustration of Br'er Rabbit and Br'er Wolf
(Church F., & Moser, 1881a)



Slave Religion

The masters also played an important part in the spread of the Second Great Awakening. Slaves were often dressed and brought to the master's church, where they were segregated to the back or balcony and taught sermons about obedience. In addition, warped views of how slavery benefitted the greatest empires, and how even biblical heroes were slave masters, were presented. Also, this was a platform to instill the ideas of sin, especially miscegenation, which masters hoped would protect their way of life. This helped the masters secure a public sense of honor and chivalry, even if it was not true in private. Also appealing was that Sundays were commonly days of rest, and sometimes even church festivals, such as Christmas, worked in the master's favor as reason to provide an off-season time of rest.

A separate community of faith would emerge on the plantation, however, as slaves would develop their own practicing religion, often in secret, and led by free men who found their ways onto the plantation. Slave services were used to spread stories of freedom from oppression and provide some opportunity to impart parts of the African culture into American-born generations. Religious songs and hymns were especially popular as they taught stories of perseverance, such as that of Moses leading his people. Family histories were also very popular to raise the spirit of the often subjugated and downtrodden. It was from these secret services that many modern traditions would emerge, including the spiritual type of song/chant, some of the more passionate dances, and zealous outcries that are still seen in many revivalist congregations today.



Illustration depicting the capture of Nat Turner

(Shelton, ca. 1832-ca. 1876)

The call to these meetings was double-edged however. In the wake of rebellions and rising anti-slavery sentiment, owners often feared large, spirited gatherings of slaves, which was why most of these plantation

services were held in secret. Even then, such congregation only fueled the belief in the need for laws and codes to arm the master against potential uprisings, such as that of Nat Turner.

The Slave Laws

Under the new slave codes, the White plantation master had all of the power that the law needed to provide him to act on the idea of White superiority under a veil of paternalism. The following is a notable quote of the time:

“The slaves of a good master are his warmest, most constant, and most devoted friends.” – Thomas R. Dew, a Virginia planter. (as cited in Roark et. al., 2013, p. 337, para 1.)

While there are records of some slaves, especially on smaller farms, being treated with respect and kindness, these were generally most common on poorer farms whose owners could not afford separate housing, or as a part of a family without the luxury of numerous offspring. The horrific abuses on the significantly larger plantations cast light on the horrors that slavery and legalized ownership of another human brought, no matter the job, position, or location. These owners believed that the institution of slavery was a blessing that removed class warfare, but the truth is that only elites could afford that lifestyle.

Even in the booming South, where cash crops supplied the vast majority of its exports, only one in four families could afford slaves, and little more than one in ten actually had the means for an iconic plantation house and assorted mills. As we will see, though slavery would be one of the essential elements of a prosperous Southern economy, the slavery question was becoming as divided in the South as it was in the North. There was still one big difference, however—the Southern reliance on slavery was growing, while the mixed economy and rapid work demands shunned the practice in the North almost entirely.

As hinted at previously, as significant as the slave system was for the southern economy, and as drastic as the population statistics politicized the voice of plantation owners, three out of four White citizens, including a high number of farmers and those dependent on agriculture, actually did not own slaves. Some of these farmers were lower class, others lived in terrain that was not sufficient for plantation style farming, and many simply did not agree with the idea of “owning” another person. In addition, even despite the rural agrarian structure, there were growing cities in the South which echoed the same basic needs found in cities in the North. Still, abolition was a dreadful idea to be considered by most southerners; even if not directly, the cash crop was the life-blood of any town, and the concerns raised by abolitionists were met with great concern.

Climatic Impacts

Cotton was king in the South. But just as there had been both a Chesapeake (Upper South) and Lower South during the tobacco craze, again there was a geological and climatic divide in the Southern territory. The plantation belt was just as it sounds: the inland plains from South Carolina to Texas, which provided the most opportune region for cotton growth. Towards the sea, other traditional crops such as rice were still grown as well, as it was a relatively cheap staple and would feed many of the inland slaves. The Chesapeake region would be renamed the Upcountry, which now is probably best recognized as the Appalachian Mountain range, stretching along areas now known as North Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, and Virginia. It would be more geared toward the growth of produce, and still in some areas, tobacco.



Slaves harvesting cotton on a plantation
(*Picking cotton in the South, n.d.*)

For these non-plantation southerners, separated from any large urban areas, there was still a strong devotion and call toward the revivalist congregations, community get-togethers, and opportunities to shop their wares and meet neighbors. Education, although beginning to spread in areas such as Boston (as discussed in a previous unit), was far from common in this region, so these social gatherings were important for sharing stories, experiences, and discoveries with those of most immediate proximity. Interestingly enough, despite the differences in perspective about the morality of slavery, Whites of all classes and walks shared a common sense of superiority. Fear of what abolition might bring was a dangerous thought, as it was

far from just the elites who had everything to lose. As the number of free Blacks strengthened throughout the nineteenth century, this ideology of superiority was challenged, and fear grew.

In short, free Blacks were American citizens subjugated under the earliest forms of Jim Crow. The “inalienable rights” that Jefferson promised were not denied, but there was clear legal precedent in favor of the White man over any claim of any other free man or woman, no matter how successful they might have been. Land, service, opportunity, and benefit were all questionable. The elites had their wish; the law made Whites united across class lines, even dropping class restrictions in politics, and that would be the way slavery continued being considered a necessary evil.

Slavery’s Impact on the American West

This idea of a “necessary evil” would gain additional traction as the Mexican-American War came to an end. As we discussed in the previous unit, even foreign-held territories in the American West had generally been welcoming to U.S. settlers who voluntarily pledged to abide by local customs and laws. Also, their presence along the border regions was often of great use as a buffer with Native American tribes and potential international threats. It was the unexpected change in policy that sparked the series of violent affairs beginning with the Alamo.



Prospector during the 1849
Gold Rush
(McClure, 1850)

Now, as the U.S. had successfully annexed Texas and much of the former Spanish Southwest, and with a Gold Rush, among other precious mineral rushes, taking place from Colorado to California, Americans searching for their opportunity and a new life quickly rushed to stake a claim. From the same Independence, Missouri, that served as a starting point for the Oregon Trail, the Santa Fe Trail would also thrive, becoming an important line of services while transportation and communication infrastructure were built.

Briefly going back to last unit, tying up any political debate not focused on slavery were the ongoing in the American West. With much of the former Mexican and Spanish lands now officially in the hands of the United States, and with the success of the Gold Rush at attracting immigrants, the western coast was quickly growing with the same success as had been seen in the East. The reason for debate, however, was again voting rights. As states began to form borders, they would earn representation in Washington D.C., but what had to be decided was the slavery question. What emerged was a series of plans intended to settle the expansion measure before any more states were welcomed into the union.

The 1848 Election

Looking back at the previous unit briefly, four key debate topics were at the core of Manifest Destiny:

1. Slave state vs. Free state votes
2. Whig vs. Republican platforms
3. Industry vs. Plantation economies
4. Slavery vs. Providence (religion)

From these stemmed much of the debate in regards to how these new lands would influence the political balance in Washington D.C. To address these were a handful of political actions. The first, called the 1846 Wilmot Proviso after Pennsylvania congressman David Wilmot, said simply that because Mexico had already forbidden slavery, that anti-slavery (free soil) is how these newly added lands should remain. Considering how many of the most famous figures to fight in the war, from the Alamo to Santa Anna's surrender, were Southerners, this was a hotly contested perspective.

If the proviso passed, it meant two things: first, the remaining slave laws were essentially “grandfathered” in. Simply put, the standing tradition of laborers freely choosing their working conditions (free labor) received rave support from the North and great disdain from the South. Uniquely, it was carried along geographical, not Party, lines.

The second outcome was that with this constraint in the West, ongoing anti-Southern sentiment in the North, and a third (somewhat unexpected) support from northern segregationists who wanted lands free of other races, the representation of slave states would quickly become the extreme minority in both chambers. For most Southerners, slaveholders or not, this was considered a direct attack on the South's culture, economy, and society by a growing Northern majority with conflicting values. There was already a growing population majority against slave states, as evidenced by the House vote. It was only by the slimmest of margins that the slave states were able to defeat the measure in the Senate.

The next suggestion, called popular sovereignty, believed that part of a state's application should include a decision by popular vote of that territory's citizens concerning which economic situation was preferred. What killed this plan was disagreement in details. Slave states wanted the vote to be late in the process to give time for slavery to show its economic benefit, while Northern states knew they could stuff the ballots quickly during the first steps in statehood, and cut the head from the snake while it was still young.

In 1847, the key advocate for this plan was the Democratic Senator Lewis Cass from Michigan. Despite its ill fate here, this is a plan that would become very instrumental over the next decade, even ironically deciding a pivotal election as the nation was on the brink of division. There being no clear solution from these debates, the issue would carry over to the 1848 election. Cass would be the Democratic representative, and opposing him would be the war hero and Whig, Zachary Taylor, who had not weighed in on the labor discussion in either direct

1848 would be representative of just how divided the nation was at this time, and the voting results made



Characterization of the Whig candidate, whether it be Taylor or Scott
(Currier, 1848)

it clear that geography was not the deciding factor. Interestingly, because of Taylor's silence on the matter, this would not be simply a question of party politics. Taylor was from Mississippi and had plantation properties in the Southeast. Southern Democrats saw him as another Jackson: strong military tradition, planter, and defender of agricultural rights.

The northern Democrats and Whigs feared what this could mean if he were to be elected and decided to abdicate to form the first heavily northern-biased party since the Federalists: the "Free-Soil" Party. They selected former President and Vice President Martin Van Buren to lead them. Van Buren, like most third party candidates, did not make a dent in the election. Winning zero electoral votes and barely ten percent of the popular vote, if he made any waves at all, it was by taking popular votes away from fellow northerner Cass. Many hoped that Taylor's victory would reunite the nation. His support ranged from Vermont to Florida, and he scored every major state, save Virginia. What was not yet clear was how the rise of the Free-Soil Party had hurt the two major parties.

Taylor was a man of immediate action. He felt that by striking quickly, that there would be almost an entire four-year term to calm the fears of the nation, giving the politics time to rebalance. As hopeful as this was, it was not realistic. Taylor's proactive attitude fit directly into the Northern

plan for a quick vote, denying the slave owners a chance to impact the economy. California and New Mexico were the next likely territories to ratify, and under this plan, both would be free-soil states. Many spoke out, including Henry Clay of Kentucky, who argued for compromise and was probably lucky to still be welcomed home, followed by Ohio's Salmon P. Chase, who offered an opposing perspective, and finally Mississippi's fiery Henry S. Foote, who would have probably started a raid against Clay had the Northern delegates not dominated Congress. South Carolina's John C. Calhoun, a veteran politician and former Vice President, gave perhaps the most worrying prediction: "As things now stand, [...the South] cannot with safety remain in the Union."

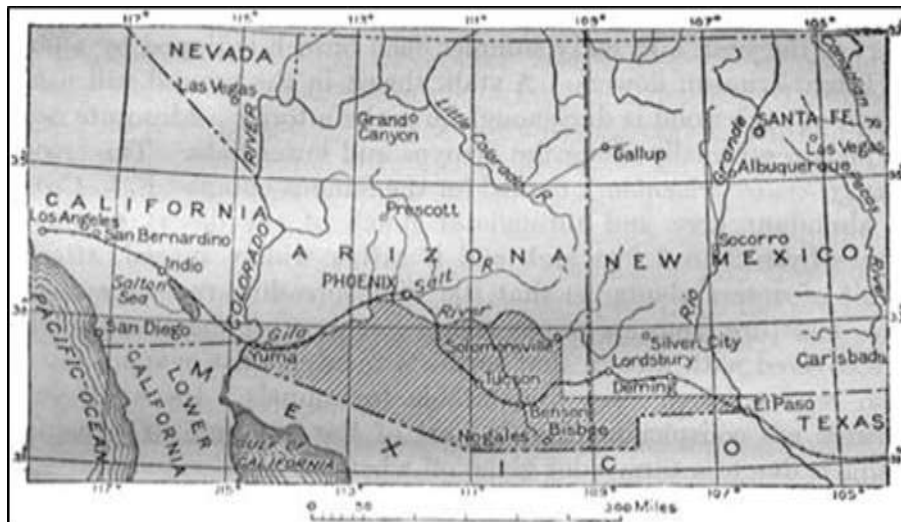
Compromise of 1850

Almost poetically, Zachary Taylor, the hope for reunification, died in office in July 1850 before a decision was made, and Millard Fillmore would oversee the next stages of debate. Despite his upbringing, Taylor was a nationalist who literally confronted any secessionist talk face-to-face. He understood what it meant to preserve the union, and his temper earned him the name "Old Rough and Ready." He famously said that

anyone “taken in rebellion against the Union, he would hang ... with less reluctance than he had hanged deserters and spies in Mexico.” With this dedication to service, it should be no surprise that Taylor’s son, Richard, would become a general himself. Ironically, however, Richard would be in the service of the Confederate Army, and a brother-in-law to future Confederate President Jefferson Davis.

After a series of hot tempers and refusals, the outcome would be the Compromise of 1850. It essentially opened California as a free-soil state, decreed that states that were already pro-slave would be grandfathered in, and that any future territories would be given the opportunity to vote. This was essentially Clay’s original plan, but it came from a much less imposing political presence, the relatively young Senator from Illinois, Stephen Douglas. It included two stipulations: an end to the slave trade in Washington DC, which was technically located between two slave states, and the Fugitive Slave Act, which guaranteed that any runaway slaves would be returned to their rightful owners, even if caught on free soil. This act, of course, required the willing acceptance of the law by those harboring fleeing slaves, and it did not take long for this to become a mess.

In 1852, Fillmore would not run for reelection. Instead, the Whigs would try to once again elect a war hero in General Winfield Scott. However, Democrat Franklin Pierce of New Hampshire, with a noted sympathy for the Southern condition, would carry the election easily, as the Free-Soil Party was still politically active, and the deep divisions from 1848 were still quite apparent. Perhaps his most successful accomplishment was the Gadsden Purchase in 1853, solidifying the border with Mexico and providing the necessary lands for southern tracks through the American West, meaning the Santa Fe Trail was no longer the only safe option for passage.



Gadsden Purchase represented by the shaded section at the bottom of Arizona and New Mexico

(Gadsden Purchase Southern Pacific Railroad Map, n.d.)

What may have been the only saving grace for the U.S. at this time was the nationwide brand that both major parties had. Neither wanted to relinquish their Northern or Southern bases of support, and the Free-Soil Party’s failures had shown where the line between economics and political leadership was drawn. Despite this apparent lull in the fighting, continued western settlement and transportation infrastructure would also stoke the fires of the slavery question, such as with the debates to incorporate Nebraska and Kansas in 1854.

Violent Reaction

New York’s Senator, William H. Seward, is arguably best remembered for a controversial 1867 purchase of a patch of seemingly uninhabitable Russian tundra west of British Columbia in exchange for approximately half the cost of the entire Louisiana Territory. What was known as “Seward’s Folly”—that is, before the discovery of vast natural resources and precious metals approximately three decades later—we call Alaska.

In 1854, with the Kansas-Nebraska Act ink still waiting to dry, Seward challenged pro-slave advocates to allow for the inhabitants of Kansas to decide via popular sovereignty if they would prefer slave or free-soil status.

To settle this, both sides had numbers pile into the territory, but the pro-slavery potential settlers clearly dominated the election, causing Kansas to enter its statehood process with a pro-slave agenda, despite the less than ethical means. This, of course, upset the free-soil advocates, who took the only logical action—they set up a rival government. On May 21, 1856, began a small-scale civil conflict near the Missouri border. This conflict would end with numerous battles, but the same result. Interestingly, among the free-soil leaders would be one John Brown, a struggling settler who was not afraid to use violent means, and who would become a national figure after a violent 1859 incident in Harpers Ferry, Virginia.

Couple this with the violent beating of Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner by South Carolina congressman Preston Brooks on the Senate floor in the same month, and it became clear that the slavery question was as hot as ever. In fact, the geographical division of the remaining Louisiana Territories and repeal of the Missouri Compromise may have been just the spark necessary to fade that line as two new parties emerged out of the shell of the Whigs: the Republican Party (not to be confused with Jefferson's earlier Democratic-Republicans) and the Know-Nothings (American Party).

The Republican Platform

The Republican origin is pretty straightforward: this was primarily a group of Northern anti-slavery advocates, and their organization derived from the slavery debates. The Know-Nothings were less expected and emerged out of a different labor controversy: anti-immigration. The name was essentially a playful reminder of its origins as a secret club, but the nativist belief was quickly gaining massive support. Many who joined this Party feared how the continued immigration numbers threatened available jobs and the American culture, specifically Protestantism, a fear for which it was easy to recruit support in the North, East, South, and West.

The Republicans knew that they must keep the slavery question at the forefront to guarantee success. Going into the election of 1856, their platform was that by stopping any further slavery advancement, none of the new territories would be open for slave labor, resulting in a land of fresh opportunity. This platform was very successful. In addition to the clear leadership of the party, it also attracted the support of groups without direct influence, such as women, who were being highly sought after in the male-dominated northwest and saw this as an opportunity to resurrect some of their own reforms introduced in previous units. The Democrats remained overwhelmingly strong, especially in the now united South, and elected James Buchanan. What should be taken from this was that the slavery question remained more of a hot button issue than immigration. It is also important to remember that abolition was not the same as anti-slavery.

Dred Scott

Perhaps the most notable challenge to the slave laws would be the landmark case *Dred Scott v. Sandford* in 1857. Known simply as the "Dred Scott decision" today, this reviewed if Dred Scott, a slave chaperoned by his master into free-soil lands, was officially freed thereby, in accordance with recent laws.

They had for more than a century before been regarded as beings of an inferior order, and altogether unfit to associate with the white race either in social or political relations, and so far inferior that they had no rights which the white man was bound to respect, and that the negro might justly and lawfully be reduced to slavery for his benefit."
– Chief Justice Roger B. Taney, presenting the opinion of the Supreme Court in *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, 1857 (Taney, 1857.)

In short, Scott lost, but would be freed soon after thanks to the charity of a wealthy free-soil advocate. The importance of this decision, however, was that it set the legal precedent that free men were only free on free-soil, which invalidated the Missouri Compromise and provided the first true constitutional rendering of the slavery issue, which, as we discussed in earlier units, was consciously set aside during the heat of the Constitutional Convention. What this also did was essentially draw the first political border between what would become Confederate and Union territories in only a few years' time. It also provided a necessary boost for the struggling Republican Party, which was trying to unite against the Southern-dominated Democrats.



Portrait of Dred Scott
later in life.
(Schultze, 1888)

Leading this Republican resurgence would be former congressman and current lawyer Abraham Lincoln of Illinois. Lincoln, outspoken and clearly anti-slavery, understood and admitted the double edge of the abolition debate. However, he also understood that slavery had divided the union, and to survive, the nation had to unite under one set of laws.

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Suggested Reading

In order to locate the articles below, you must first log into the myCSU Student Portal and access the America: History and Life with Full Text database within the CSU Online Library.

The following describes the Whitman Massacre account along the Oregon Trail travels.

Addis, C. (2005). The Whitman massacre. *Journal Of The Early Republic*, 25(2), 221-258.

The following article brings to light the struggles of slave families, specifically marriage, during plantation times.

DePuydt, P. J. (2011). "I bind myself": An antebellum slave marriage. *Southern Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal Of The South*, 18(1), 46-57.

Learning Activities (Non-Graded)

Flash cards

For a review of the key terms of the unit, click [here](#) to access the interactive Unit VII Questions Game in PowerPoint form. (Click [here](#) to access a PDF version.)

Non-graded Learning Activities are provided to aid students in their course of study. You do not have to submit them. If you have questions, contact your instructor for further guidance and information.