AP United States History

Unit 5 Part 1: Chapter 13 Materials



*A House Divided*, 1840-1861

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| **Chapter 13: A House Divided, 1840-1861** | | |
| Manifest Destiny  West Florida Republic  Secession  Annexation  Mexican Independence  Tejanos / Texans  Santa Anna  Texas Revolution  Siege of the Alamo  Battle of San Jacinto  “Remember the Alamo!”  Sam Houston  Stephen F. Austin  Republic of Texas  John Tyler  Texas Annexation  James K. Polk  Election of 1844  Oregon Country  Oregon Trail  “Fifty-Four Forty or Fight!”  California Gold Rush  Forty-niners  *What effect did the pioneer experience have on women and gender roles?* | Republic of California  Zachary Taylor (as General)  Winfield Scott  Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo  Gadsden Purchase  Wilmot Proviso  Free Soil (vs. Abolitionism)  Zachary Taylor (as President)  Millard Fillmore  California Statehood  Compromise of 1850  1.  2.  3.  4.  5.  *Views of Webster, Clay, and Calhoun*  Role of Stephen A. Douglas | Fugitive Slave Act of 1850  Personal Liberty Laws  *De Facto* vs. *De Jure*  Franklin Pierce [319]  Kansas-Nebraska Act  “Bleeding Kansas”  Henry Ward Beecher  “Beecher’s Bibles”  Sack of Lawrence  John Brown  Pottawatomie Creek Massacre  Lecompton Constitution  Republican Party  Chivalry  Charles Sumner  Preston Brooks  Brooks/Sumner Incident  Nativism  Philadelphia Nativist Riots  “Know-Nothing” Party  James Buchanan  *Dred Scott* Decision  [Judicial Activism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judicial_activism)  “Slave Power” Conspiracy  Abraham Lincoln  [“House Divided” Speech](http://showcase.netins.net/web/creative/lincoln/speeches/house.htm)  Lincoln-Douglas Debates  Harpers Ferry  Election of 1860  Secession |

**NOTE: Students will be responsible for identifying U.S. territorial acquisitions on a map.**

*(Louisiana Purchase, West Florida, East Florida, Texas, Oregon Country, Mexican Cession, Gadsden Purchase)*

***John O’Sullivan, "The Great Nation of Futurity," 1839.***

***HIPP/NOTES:***

The American people having derived their origin from many other nations, and the Declaration of National Independence being entirely based on the great principle of human equality, these facts demonstrate at once our disconnected position as regards any other nation; that we have, in reality, but little connection with the past history of any of them, and still less with all antiquity, its glories, or its crimes. On the contrary, our national birth was the beginning of a new history, the formation and progress of an untried political system, which separates us from the past and connects us with the future only; and so far as regards the entire development of the natural rights of man, in moral, political, and national life, we may confidently assume that our country is destined to be the great nation of futurity….

Yes, we are the nation of progress, of individual freedom, of universal enfranchisement. Equality of rights is the cynosure of our union of States, the grand exemplar of the correlative equality of individuals; and while truth sheds its effulgence, we cannot retrograde, without dissolving the one and subverting the other. We must onward to the fulfilment of our mission -- to the entire development of the principle of our organization -- freedom of conscience, freedom of person, freedom of trade and business pursuits, universality of freedom and equality. This is our high destiny, and in nature's eternal, inevitable decree of cause and effect we must accomplish it. All this will be our future history, to establish on earth the moral dignity and salvation of man -- the immutable truth and beneficence of God. For this blessed mission to the nations of the world, which are shut out from the life-giving light of truth, has America been chosen; and her high example shall smite unto death the tyranny of kings, hierarchs, and oligarchs, and carry the glad tidings of peace and good will where myriads now endure an existence scarcely more enviable than that of beasts of the field. Who, then, can doubt that our country is destined to be *the great nation*of futurity?

### 1. What does John O’Sullivan think America stands for?

2. What, according to John O’Sullivan, is America’s mission?

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| **Historical Content & Context** |  |  |
| **Intended Audience** |  |  |
| **Point of View** |  |  |
| **Purpose** |  |  |

***John O’Sullivan, “Annexation,” 1845.***

***HIPP/NOTES:***

It is now time for the opposition to the Annexation of Texas to cease, all further agitation of the waters of bitterness and strife, at least in connexion with this question, --even though it may perhaps be required of us as a necessary condition of the freedom of our institutions, that we must live on for ever in a state of unpausing struggle and excitement upon some subject of party division or other. But, in regard to Texas, enough has now been given to party. It is time for the common duty of Patriotism to the Country to succeed;--or if this claim will not be recognized, it is at least time for common sense to acquiesce with decent grace in the inevitable and the irrevocable.

Texas is now ours. Already, before these words are written, her Convention has undoubtedly ratified the acceptance, by her Congress, of our proffered invitation into the Union; and made the requisite changes in her already republican form of constitution to adapt it to its future federal relations. Her star and her stripe may already be said to have taken their place in the glorious blazon of our common nationality; and the sweep of our eagle's wing already includes within its circuit the wide extent of her fair and fertile land. She is no longer to us a mere geographical space--a certain combination of coast, plain, mountain, valley, forest and stream. She is no longer to us a mere country on the map….

Why, were other reasoning wanting, in favor of now elevating this question of the reception of Texas into the Union, out of the lower region of our past party dissensions, up to its proper level of a high and broad nationality, it surely is to be found, found abundantly, in the manner in which other nations have undertaken to intrude themselves into it, between us and the proper parties to the case, in a spirit of hostile interference against us, for the avowed object of thwarting our policy and hampering our power, limiting our greatness and checking the fulfillment of our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions….

1. What do you think John O’Sullivan means by “*our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions”?*

### 2. Based on these two documents, how did Americans feel about expanding westward?

3. Are you surprised by the reasons that O’Sullivan gives for expansion? Do you think he really believes that God wants Americans to expand?

4. This theory that Americans are special is called “American Exceptionalism.” It’s this idea that America has had such a unique history and has become so powerful that there’s something really special about it. *What do you think about this theory?*

**Henry David Thoreau**

“Resistance to Civil Government”

***HIPP/NOTES:***

I heartily accept the motto, "That government is best which governs least"; and I should like to see it acted up to more rapidly and systematically. Carried out, it finally amounts to this, which also I believe- "That government is best which governs not at all"; and when men are prepared for it, that will be the kind of government which they will have. Government is at best but an expedient; but most governments are usually, and all governments are sometimes, inexpedient…

This American government- what is it but a tradition, though a recent one, endeavoring to transmit itself unimpaired to posterity, but each instant losing some of its integrity? It has not the vitality and force of a single living man; for a single man can bend it to his will. It is a sort of wooden gun to the people themselves. But it is not the less necessary for this; for the people must have some complicated machinery or other, and hear its din, to satisfy that idea of government which they have. Governments show thus how successfully men can be imposed on, even impose on themselves, for their own advantage. It is excellent, we must all allow. Yet this government never of itself furthered any enterprise, but by the alacrity with which it got out of its way. It does not keep the country free. It does not settle the West. It does not educate. The character inherent in the American people has done all that has been accomplished; and it would have done somewhat more, if the government had not sometimes got in its way. For government is an expedient by which men would fain succeed in letting one another alone; and, as has been said, when it is most expedient, the governed are most let alone by it…

But, to speak practically and as a citizen, unlike those who call themselves no-government men, I ask for, not at once no government, but at once a better government. Let every man make known what kind of government would command his respect, and that will be one step toward obtaining it.

After all, the practical reason why, when the power is once in the hands of the people, a majority are permitted, and for a long period continue, to rule is not because they are most likely to be in the right, nor because this seems fairest to the minority, but because they are physically the strongest. But a government in which the majority rule in all cases cannot be based on justice, even as far as men understand it…Must the citizen ever for a moment, or in the least degree, resign his conscience to the legislation? Why has every man a conscience, then? I think that we should be men first, and subjects afterward. It is not desirable to cultivate a respect for the law, so much as for the right. The only obligation which I have a right to assume is to do at any time what I think right…

How does it become a man to behave toward this American government today? I answer, that he cannot without disgrace be associated with it. I cannot for an instant recognize that political organization as my government which is the slave's government also.

All men recognize the right of revolution; that is, the right to refuse allegiance to, and to resist, the government, when its tyranny or its inefficiency are great and unendurable. But almost all say that such is not the case now…But when…and oppression and robbery are organized, I say, let us not have such a machine any longer. In other words, when a sixth of the population of a nation which has undertaken to be the refuge of liberty are slaves, and a whole country is unjustly overrun and conquered by a foreign army, and subjected to military law, I think that it is not too soon for honest men to rebel and revolutionize. What makes this duty the more urgent is the fact that the country so overrun is not our own, but ours is the invading army…

***HIPP/NOTES:***

Practically speaking, the opponents to a reform in Massachusetts are not a hundred thousand politicians at the South, but a hundred thousand merchants and farmers here, who are more interested in commerce and agriculture than they are in humanity, and are not prepared to do justice to the slave and to Mexico, cost what it may. I quarrel not with far-off foes, but with those who, near at home, cooperate with, and do the bidding of those far away, and without whom the latter would be harmless. We are accustomed to say, that the mass of men are unprepared; but improvement is slow, because the few are not materially wiser or better than the many. It is not so important that many should be as good as you, as that there be some absolute goodness somewhere; for that will leaven the whole lump. There are thousands who are in opinion opposed to slavery and to the war, who yet in effect do nothing to put an end to them; who, esteeming themselves children of Washington and Franklin, sit down with their hands in their pockets, and say that they know not what to do, and do nothing; who even postpone the question of freedom to the question of free trade, and quietly read the prices-current along with the latest advices from Mexico, after dinner, and, it may be, fall asleep over them both…

Unjust laws exist: shall we be content to obey them, or shall we endeavor to amend them, and obey them until we have succeeded, or shall we transgress them at once? Men generally, under such a government as this, think that they ought to wait until they have persuaded the majority to alter them. They think that, if they should resist, the remedy would be worse than the evil. But it is the fault of the government itself that the remedy is worse than the evil. It makes it worse. Why is it not more apt to anticipate and provide for reform? Why does it not cherish its wise minority? Why does it cry and resist before it is hurt? Why does it not encourage its citizens to be on the alert to point out its faults, and do better than it would have them? Why does it always crucify Christ, and excommunicate Copernicus and Luther, and pronounce Washington and Franklin rebels?

As for adopting the ways which the State has provided for remedying the evil, I know not of such ways. They take too much time, and a man's life will be gone. I have other affairs to attend to. I came into this world, not chiefly to make this a good place to live in, but to live in it, be it good or bad. A man has not everything to do, but something; and because he cannot do everything, it is not necessary that he should do something wrong. It is not my business to be petitioning the Governor or the Legislature any more than it is theirs to petition me; and if they should not bear my petition, what should I do then? But in this case the State has provided no way: its very Constitution is the evil…

I do not hesitate to say, that those who call themselves Abolitionists should at once effectually withdraw their support, both in person and property, from the government of Massachusetts, and not wait till they constitute a majority of one, before they suffer the right to prevail through them. I think that it is enough if they have God on their side, without waiting for that other one. Moreover, any man more right than his neighbors constitutes a majority of one already.

Under a government which imprisons any unjustly, the true place for a just man is also a prison. The proper place today, the only place which Massachusetts has provided for her freer and less desponding spirits, is in her prisons, to be put out and locked out of the State by her own act, as they have already put themselves out by their principles. It is there that the fugitive slave, and the Mexican prisoner on parole, and the Indian come to plead the wrongs of his race should find them; on that separate, but more free and honorable, ground, where the State places those who are not with her, but against her- the only house in a slave State in which a free man can abide with honor. If any think that their influence would be lost there, and their voices no longer afflict the ear of the State, that they would not be as an enemy within its walls, they do not know by how much truth is stronger than error, nor how much more eloquently and effectively he can combat injustice who has experienced a little in his own person. Cast your whole vote, not a strip of paper merely, but your whole influence. A minority is powerless while it conforms to the majority; it is not even a minority then; but it is irresistible when it clogs by its whole weight. If the alternative is to keep all just men in prison, or give up war and slavery, the State will not hesitate which to choose. If a thousand men were not to pay their tax-bills this year, that would not be a violent and bloody measure, as it would be to pay them, and enable the State to commit violence and shed innocent blood. This is, in fact, the definition of a peaceable revolution, if any such is possible…

***HIPP/NOTES:***

The authority of government, even such as I am willing to submit to- for I will cheerfully obey those who know and can do better than I, and in many things even those who neither know nor can do so well- is still an impure one: to be strictly just, it must have the sanction and consent of the governed. It can have no pure right over my person and property but what I concede to it. The progress from an absolute to a limited monarchy, from a limited monarchy to a democracy, is a progress toward a true respect for the individual. Even the Chinese philosopher was wise enough to regard the individual as the basis of the empire. Is a democracy, such as we know it, the last improvement possible in government? Is it not possible to take a step further towards recognizing and organizing the rights of man? There will never be a really free and enlightened State until the State comes to recognize the individual as a higher and independent power, from which all its own power and authority are derived, and treats him accordingly. I please myself with imagining a State at least which can afford to be just to all men, and to treat the individual with respect as a neighbor; which even would not think it inconsistent with its own repose if a few were to live aloof from it, not meddling with it, nor embraced by it, who fulfilled all the duties of neighbors and fellow-men. A State which bore this kind of fruit, and suffered it to drop off as fast as it ripened, would prepare the way for a still more perfect and glorious State, which also I have imagined, but not yet anywhere seen.

**Questions:**

1. What does Thoreau see as the relationship between government and freedom?

2. How does he justify an individual’s deciding to break the law?

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| **Historical Content & Context** |  |
| **Intended Audience** |  |
| **Point of View** |  |
| **Purpose** |  |

**Sen. John C. Calhoun, Speech on the Clay Compromise Measures**

**(March 4, 1850)**

***HIPP/NOTES:***

I have, senators, believed from the first that the agitation of the subject of slavery would, if not prevented by some timely and effective measure, end in disunion. Entertaining this opinion, I have, on all proper occasions, endeavored to call the attention of both the two great parties which divided the country to adopt some measure to prevent so great a disaster, but without success. **The agitation has been permitted to proceed with almost no attempt to resist it, until it has reached a point when it can no longer be disguised or denied that the Union is in danger. You have thus had forced upon you the greatest and gravest question that can ever come under your consideration: How can the Union be preserved?**

To give a satisfactory answer to this mighty question, it is indispensable to have an accurate and thorough knowledge of the nature and the character of the cause by which the Union is endangered… The first question, then, presented for consideration in the investigation I propose to make in order to obtain such knowledge is: What is it that has endangered the Union?

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One of the causes is, undoubtedly, to be traced to the long-continued agitation of the slave question on the part of the North, and the many aggressions which they have made on the rights of the South…

There is another lying back of it--with which this is intimately connected--that may be regarded as the great and primary cause. This is to be found in the fact that **the equilibrium between the two sections in the government as it stood when the Constitution was ratified and the government put in action has been destroyed**. At that time there was nearly a perfect equilibrium between the two, which afforded ample means to each to protect itself against the aggression of the other; but, as it now stands, one section has the exclusive power of controlling the government, which leaves the other without any adequate means of protecting itself against its encroachment and oppression.

The result of the whole is to give the Northern section a predominance in every department of the government, and thereby concentrate in it the two elements which constitute the federal government: a majority of States, and a majority of their population, estimated in federal numbers. Whatever section concentrates the two in itself possesses the control of the entire government.

…The census is to be taken this year, which must add greatly to the decided preponderance of the North in the House of Representatives and in the Electoral College. The prospect is, also, that a great increase will be added to its present preponderance in the Senate, during the period of the decade, by the addition of new States…

On the contrary, there is not a single Territory in progress in the Southern section, and no certainty that any additional State will be added to it during the decade. The prospect then is, that the two sections in the Senate, should the efforts now made to exclude the South from the newly acquired Territories succeed, will stand, before the end of the decade, twenty Northern States to fourteen Southern (considering Delaware as neutral), and forty Northern senators to twenty-eight Southern. This great increase of senators, added to the great increase of members of the House of Representatives and the Electoral College on the part of the North, which must take place under the next decade, will effectually and irretrievably **destroy the equilibrium** which existed when the government commenced.

**Had this destruction been the operation of time without the interference of government, the South would have had no reason to complain; but such was not the fact. It was caused by the legislation of this government, which was appointed as the common agent of all and charged with the protection of the interests and security of all….**

***HIPP/NOTES:***

The next is the system of revenue and disbursements which has been adopted by the government. It is well known that the government has derived its revenue mainly from duties on imports. I shall not undertake to show that such duties must necessarily fall mainly on the exporting States, and that the South, as the great exporting portion of the Union, has in reality paid vastly more than her due proportion of the revenue; because I deem it unnecessary, as the subject has on so many occasions been fully discussed. Nor shall I, for the same reason, undertake to show that a far greater portion of the revenue has been disbursed in the North, than its due share; and that the joint effect of these causes has been to transfer a vast amount from South to North, which, under an equal system of revenue and disbursements, would not have been lost to her. If to this be added that many of the duties were imposed, not for revenue but for protection--that is, intended to put money, not in the Treasury, but directly into the pocket of the manufacturers--some conception may be formed of the immense amount which in the long course of sixty years has been transferred from South to North. There are no data by which it can be estimated with any certainty; but it is safe to say that it amounts to hundreds of millions of dollars. Under the most moderate estimate it would be sufficient to add greatly to the wealth of the North, and thus greatly increase her population by attracting immigration from all quarters to that section.

This, combined with the great primary cause, amply explains why the North has acquired a preponderance in every department of the government by its disproportionate increase of population and States. The former, as has been shown, has increased, in fifty years, 2,400,000 over that of the South….

There is a question of vital importance to the Southern section, in reference to which the views and feelings of the two sections are as opposite and hostile as they can possibly be. I refer to the relation between the two races in the Southern section, which constitutes a vital portion of her social organization. Every portion of the North entertains views and feelings more or less hostile to it. Those most opposed and hostile regard it as a sin, and consider themselves under the most sacred obligation to use every effort to destroy it.

Indeed, to the extent that they conceive that they have power, they regard themselves as implicated in the sin, and responsible for not suppressing it by the use of all and every means. Those less opposed and hostile regard it as a crime--an offense against humanity, as they call it and, although not so fanatical, feel themselves bound to use all efforts to effect the same object; while those who are least opposed and hostile regard it as a blot and a stain on the character of what they call the "nation," and feel themselves accordingly bound to give it no countenance or support. On the contrary, the Southern section regards the relation as one which cannot be destroyed without subjecting the two races to the greatest calamity, and the section to poverty, desolation, and wretchedness; and accordingly they feel bound by every consideration of interest and safety to defend it.

Unless something decisive is done, I again ask, What is to stop this agitation before the great and final object at which it aims--the abolition of slavery in the States--is consummated? Is it, then, not certain that if something is not done to arrest it, the South will be forced to choose between abolition and secession? Indeed, as events are now moving, it will not require the South to secede in order to dissolve the Union. Agitation will of itself effect it, of which its past history furnishes abundant proof--as I shall next proceed to show.

It is a great mistake to suppose that disunion can be effected by a single blow. The cords which bind these States together in one common Union are far too numerous and powerful for that. Disunion must be the work of time. It is only through a long process, and successively, that the cords can be snapped until the whole fabric falls asunder. Already the agitation of the slavery question has snapped some of the most important, and has greatly weakened all the others.

***HIPP/NOTES:***

If the agitation goes on, the same force, acting with increased intensity, as has been shown, will finally snap every cord, when nothing will be left to hold the States together except force. But surely that can with no propriety of language be called a Union when the only means by which the weaker is held connected with the stronger portion is force. It may, indeed, keep them connected; but the connection will partake much more of the character of subjugation on the part of the weaker to the stronger than the union of free, independent, and sovereign States in one confederation, as they stood in the early stages of the government, and which only is worthy of the sacred name of Union.

Having now, senators, explained what it is that endangers the Union, and traced it to its cause, and explained its nature and character, the question again recurs, How can the Union be saved? To this I answer, there is but one way by which it can be, and that is by adopting such measures as will satisfy the States belonging to the Southern section that they can remain in the Union consistently with their honor and their safety… The question, then, is, How can this be done? There is but one way by which it can with any certainty; and that is by a full and final settlement, on the principle of justice, of all the questions at issue between the two sections. **The South asks for justice, simple justice, and less she ought not to take. She has no compromise to offer but the Constitution, and no concession or surrender to make. She has already surrendered so much that she has little left to surrender.** Such a settlement would go to the root of the evil, and remove all cause of discontent, by satisfying the South that she could remain honorably and safely in the Union, and thereby restore the harmony and fraternal feelings between the sections which existed anterior to the Missouri agitation. Nothing else can, with any certainty, finally and forever settle the question at issue, terminate agitation, and save the Union.

But can this be done? Yes, easily; not by the weaker party, for it can of itself do nothing--not even protect itself--but by the stronger. The North has only to will it to accomplish it--to do justice by conceding to the South an equal right in the acquired territory, and to do her duty by causing the stipulations relative to fugitive slaves to be faithfully fulfilled--to cease the agitation of the slave question, and to provide for the insertion of a provision in the Constitution, by an amendment, which will restore to the South, in substance, the power she possessed of protecting herself before the equilibrium between the sections was destroyed by the action of this government. There will be no difficulty in devising such a provision--one that will protect the South, and which at the same time will improve and strengthen the government instead of impairing and weakening it.

But will the North agree to this? It is for her to answer the question… The South cannot save [the Union] by any act of hers, and the North may save it without any sacrifice whatever, unless to do justice and to perform her duties under the Constitution should be regarded by her as a sacrifice.

It is time, senators, that there should be an open and manly avowal on all sides as to what is intended to be done. If the question is not now settled, it is uncertain whether it ever can hereafter be; and we, as the representatives of the States of this Union regarded as governments, should come to a distinct understanding as to our respective views, in order to ascertain whether the great questions at issue can be settled or not. If you who represent the stronger portion, cannot agree to settle them on the broad principle of justice and duty, say so; and let the States we both represent agree to separate and part in peace.

***HIPP/NOTES:***

If you are unwilling we should part in peace, tell us so; and we shall know what to do when you reduce the question to submission or resistance. If you remain silent, you will compel us to infer by your acts what you intend…

I have now, senators, done my duty in expressing my opinions fully, freely, and candidly on this solemn occasion. In doing so I have been governed by the motives which have governed me in all the stages of the agitation of the slavery question since its commencement. I have exerted myself during the whole period to arrest it, with the intention of saving the Union if it could be done; and if it could not, to save the section where it has pleased providence to cast my lot, and which I sincerely believe has justice and the Constitution on its side. Having faithfully done my duty to the best of my ability, both to the Union and my section, throughout this agitation, I shall have the consolation, let what will come, that I am free from all responsibility.

**Questions:**

1. How does Calhoun fear the conflict over slavery will end?

2. What conflicts have driven the opposing parties to the brink of this outcome?

3. How does Calhoun characterize the political relationship between the two sections of the country?

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| **Historical Content & Context** |  |
| **Intended Audience** |  |
| **Point of View** |  |
| **Purpose** |  |

**Sen. Daniel Webster, “Seventh of March” Speech**

**(March 7, 1850)**

***HIPP/NOTES:***

Mr. President [of the Senate], - I wish to speak to-day, not as a Massachusetts man, nor as a Northern man, but as an American, and a member of the Senate of the United States. It is fortunate that there is a Senate of the United States; a body not yet moved from its propriety, not lost to a just sense of its own dignity and its own high responsibilities, and a body to which the country looks, with confidence, for wise, moderate, patriotic, and healing counsels. It is not to be denied that we live in the midst of strong agitations, and are surrounded by very considerable dangers to our institutions and our government. The imprisoned winds are let loose. The East, the North, and the stormy South combine to throw the whole sea into commotion, to toss its billows to the skies, and disclose its profoundest depths. I do not affect to regard myself, Mr. President, as holding, or as fit to hold, the helm in this combat with the political elements; but I have a duty to perform, and I mean to perform it with fidelity, not without a sense of existing dangers, but not without hope. I have a part to act, not for my own security or safety, for I am looking out for no fragment upon which to float away from the wreck, if wreck there must be, but for the good of the whole, and the preservation of all… I speak to-day for the preservation of the Union. "Hear me for my cause." I speak to-day, out of a solicitous and anxious heart for the restoration to the country of that quiet and harmonious harmony which make the blessings of this Union so rich, and so dear to us all…

Now, Sir, upon the general nature and influence of slavery there exists a wide difference of opinion between the northern portion of this country and the southern. It is said on the one side, that, although not the subject of any injunction or direct prohibition in the New Testament, slavery is a wrong; that it is founded merely in the right of the strongest; and that is an oppression, like unjust wars, like all those conflicts by which a powerful nation subjects a weaker to its will; and that, in its nature, whatever may be said of it in the modifications which have taken place, it is not according to the meek spirit of the Gospel… These are the sentiments that are cherished, and of late with greatly augmented force, among the people of the Northern States. They have taken hold of the religious sentiment of that part of the country, as they have, more or less, taken hold of the religious feeling of a considerable portion of mankind. The South, upon the other side, having been accustomed to this relation between two races all their lives, from their birth, having been taught, in general, to treat the subjects of this bondage with care and kindness, and I believe, in general, feeling great kindness for them, have not taken the view of the subject which I have mentioned. There are thousands of religious men, with consciences as tender as any of their brethren at the North, who do not see the unlawfulness of slavery; and there are more thousands, perhaps, that whatsoever they may think of it in its origin, and as a matter depending upon natural right, yet take things as they are, and, finding slavery to be an established relation of the society in which they live, can see no way in which, let their opinions on the abstract question be what they may, it is in the power of the present generation to relieve themselves from this relation…

The honorable Senator from South Carolina [John C. Calhoun] the other day alluded to the seperation of that great religious community, the Methodist Episcopal Church. That separation was brought about by differences of opinion upon this particular subject of slavery. I felt great concern, as that dispute went on, about the result. I was in hopes that the difference of opinion might be adjusted, because I looked upon that religious denomination as one of the great props of religion and morals throughout the whole country, from Maine to Georgia, and westward to our utmost boundary. The result was against my wishes and against my hopes. I have read all their proceedings and all their arguments; but I have never yet been able to come to the conclusion that there was any real ground for that separation; in other words, that any good could be produced by that separation. I must say I think there was some want of candor or charity. Sir, when a question of this kind seizes on the religious sentiments of mankind, and comes to be discussed in religious assemblies of the clergy and laity, there is always to be expected, or always to be feared, a great degree of excitement. It is in the nature of man, manifested in his whole history, that religious disputes are apt to become warm in proportion to the strength of the convictions which men entertain of the magnitude of the questions at issue. In all such disputes, there will sometimes be found men with whom everything is absolute; absolutely wrong, or absolutely right. They see the right clearly; they think others ought so to see it, and they are disposed to establish a broad line of distinction between what is right and what is wrong. They are not seldom willing to establish that line upon their own convictions of truth or justice; and are ready to mark and guard it by placing along it a series of dogmas, as lines of boundary on the earth's surface are marked by posts and stones. There are men who, with clear perception, as they think, of their own duty, do not see how too eager a pursuit of one duty may involve them in the violation of others, or how too warm an embracement of one truth may lead to a disregard of other truths equally important. As I heard it stated strongly, not many days ago, these persons are disposed to mount upon some particular duty, as upon a war-horse, and to drive furiously on and upon and over all other duties that may stand in the way. There are men who, in reference to disputes of that sort, are of the opinion that human duties may be ascertained with the exactness of mathematics. They deal with morals as with mathematics; and they think what is right may be distinguished from what is wrong with the precision of an algebraic equation. They have, therefore, none too much charity towards others who differ from them. They are apt, too, to think that nothing is good but what is perfect, and that there are no compromises or modifiations to be made in consideration of difference of opinion or in deference to other men's judgment. If their perspicacious vision enables them to detect a spot on the face of the sun, they think that a good reason why the sun should be struck down from heaven. They prefer the chance of running into utter darkness to living in heavenly light, if that heavenly light be not absolutely without any imperfection. There are impatient men; too impatient always to give heed to the admonition of St. Paul, that we are not to "do evil that good may come"; too impatient to wait for the slow progress of moral causes in the improvement of mankind...

***HIPP/NOTES:***

Mr. President, in the excited times in which we live, there is found to exist a state of crimination and recrimination between the North and South. There are lists of grievances produced by each; and those grievances, real or supposed, alienate the minds of one portion of the country from the other, exasperate the feelings, and subdue the sense of fraternal affection, patriotic love, and mutual regard. I shall bestow a little attention, Sir, upon these various grievances existing on the one side and on the other. I begin with complaints of the South… and especially… one which has in my opinion just foundation; and that is, that there has been found at the North, among individuals and among legislators, a disinclination to perform fully their **constitutional duties** in regard to the return of persons bound to service who have escaped into the free States. **In that respect, the South, in my judgment, is right, and the North is wrong.** Every member of every Northern legislature is bound by oath, like every other officer in the country, to support the Constitution of the United States; and the article of the Constitution which says to these States that they shall deliver up fugitives from service is as binding in honor and conscience as any other article. No man fulfills his duty in any legislature who sets himself to find excuses, evasions, escapes from this constitutional obligation. I have always thought that the Constitution addressed itself to the legislatures of the States or to the States themselves. It says that those persons escaping to other States "shall be delivered up," and I confess I have always been of the opinion that it was an injunction upon the States themselves. When it is said that a person escaping into another State, and coming therefore within the jurisdiction of that State, shall be delivered up, it seems to me the import of the clause is, that the State itself, in obedience to the Constitution, shall cause him to be delivered up. That is my judgment. I have always entertained that opinion, and I entertain it now. But when the subject, some years ago, was before the Supreme Court of the United States, the majority of the judges held that the power to cause fugitives from service to be delivered up was a power to be exercised under the authority of this government. I do not know, on the whole, that it may not have been a fortunate decision. My habit is to respect the result of judicial deliberations and the solemnity of judicial decisions. As it now stands, the business of seeing that these fugitives are delivered up resides in the power of Congress and the national judicature, and my friend at the head of the Judiciary Committee [James M. Mason] has a bill on the subject now before the Senate, which, with some amendments… I propose to support, with all its provisions, to the fullest extent**. And I desire to call the attention of all sober-minded men at the North, of all conscientious men, of all men who are not carried away by some fanatical idea or some false impression, to their constitutional obligations.** I put it to all the sober and sound minds at the North as a question of morals and a question of conscience. What right have they, in their legislative capacity or any other capacity, to endeavor to get round this Constitution, or to embarrass the free exercise of the rights secured by the Constitution to the persons whose slaves escape from them? None at all; none at all. Neither in the forum of conscience, nor before the face of the Constitution, are they, in my opinion, justified in such an attempt… I repeat, therefore, Sir, that here is a well-founded ground of complaint against the North… Wherever I go, and whenever I speak on the subject, and when I speak here I desire to speak to the whole North, I say that the South has been injured in this respect, and has a right to complain; and the North has been too careless of what I think the Constitution peremptorily and emphaticually enjoins upon her as a duty...

***HIPP/NOTES:***

Then, Sir, there are the Abolition societies, of which I am unwilling to speak, but in regard to which I have very clear notions and opinions. I do not think them useful. I think their operations for the last twenty years have produced nothing good or valuable. At the same time, I believe thousands of their members to be honest and good men, perfectly well-meaning men. They have excited feelings; they think they must do something for the cause of liberty; and, in their sphere of action, they do not see what else they can do than to contribute to an Abolition press, or an Abolition society, or to pay an Abolition lecturer. I do not mean to impute gross motives even to the leaders of these societies, but I am not blind to the consequences of their proceedings. I cannot but see what mischiefs their interference with the South has produced. And its it not plain to every man? Let any gentleman who entertains doubts on this point recur to the debates in the Virginia House of Delegates in 1832, and he will see with what freedom a proposition made by Mr. [Thomas] Jefferson Randolph for the gradual abolition of slavery was discussed in that body. Every one spoke of slavery as he thought; very ignominious and disparaging names and epithets were applied to it. The debates in the House of Delegates on that occasion, I believe, were all published. They were read by every colored man who could read, and to those who could not read, those debates were read by others. At that time Virginia was not unwilling or unafraid to discuss this question, and to let that part of her population know as much of discussion as they could learn. That was in 1832. As has been said by the honorable member from South Carolina [Calhoun], these Abolition societies commenced their course of action in 1835. It is said, I do not know how true it may be, that they sent incendiary publications into the slave States; at any rate, they attempted to arouse, and did arouse, a very strong feeling; in other words, they created great agitation in the North against Southern slavery. Well, what was the result? The bonds of the slave were bound more firmly than before, their rivets were more strongly fastened. Public opinion, which in Virginia had begun to be exhibited against slavery, and was opening out for the discussion of the question, drew back and shut itself up in its castle. I wish took now whether anybody in Virginia can now talk openly as Mr. Randoph… and others talked in 1832 and sent their remarks to the press? We all know the fact, and we all know the cause; and everything that these agitating people have done has been, not to enlarge, but to restrain, not to set free, but to bind faster the slave population of the South...

***HIPP/NOTES:***

Mr. President, I should much prefer to have heard from every member on this floor declarations of opinion that this Union could never be dissolved, than the declaration of opinion by anybody, that, in any case, under the pressure of any circumstances, such a dissolution was possible. I hear with distress and anguish the word "secession," especially when it falls from the lips of those who are patriotic, and known to the country, and known all over the world, for their political services. Secession! Peaceable secession! Sir, your eyes and mine are never destined to see that miracle. The dismemberment of this vast country without convulsion! …**There can be no such thing as peaceable secession. Peaceable** **secession is an utter impossibility.** Is the great Constitution under which we live, covering this whole country, is it to be thawed and melted away by secession, as the snows on the mountain melt under the influence of a vernal sun, disappear almost unobserved, and run off? No, Sir! No, Sir! I will not state what might produce the disruption of the Union; but, Sir, I see as plainly as I see the sun in heaven what that disruption itself must produce; **I see that it must produce war, and such a war as I will not describe…**

**Peaceable secession! Peaceable secession! The concurrent agreement of all the members of this great republic to separate! A voluntary separation, with alimony on one side and on the other. Why, what would be the result? Where is the line to be drawn? What States are to seceded? What is to remain American? What am I to be? An American no longer? Am I to become a sectional man, a local man, a separatist, with no country in common with the gentlemen who sit around me here, or who fill the other house of Congress? Heaven forbid! Where is the flag of the republic to remain? Where is the eagle still to tower? or is he to cower, and shrink, and fall to the ground?** Why, Sir, our ancestors, our fathers and our grandfathers, those of them that are yet living amongst us with prolonged lives, would rebuke and reproach us; and our children and our grandchildren would cry out shame upon us, if we of this generation should dishonor these ensigns of the power of the government and the harmony of that Union which is every day felt among us with so much joy and gratitude… I know, although the idea has not been stated distinctly… I do not mean to say that it is true, but I have heard it suggested elsewhere, that the idea has been entertained, that, after the dissolution of this Union, a Southern Confederacy might be formed. I am sorry, Sir, that it has ever been thought of, talked of, or dreamed of, in the wildest flights of human imagination. But the idea, so far as it exists, must be of a separation, assigning the slave States to one side and the free States to the other… but there are impossibilities in the natural as well as in the physical world, and I hold the idea of a separation of these States, those that are free to form one government, and those that are slave-holding to form another, as such an impossibility. We could not separate the States by any such line, if we were to draw it. We could not sit down here to-day and draw a line of separation that would satisfy any five men in the country…

…Sir, I am ashamed to pursue this line of remark. I dislike it, I have an utter disgust for it. I would rather hear of natural blasts and mildews, war, pestilence, and famine, than to hear gentlemen talk of secession. To break up this great government! to dismember this glorious country! to astonish Europe with an act of folly such as Europe for two centuries has never beheld in any government or any people! No, Sir! no, Sir! There will be no secession! Gentlemen are not serious when they talk of secession...

***HIPP/NOTES:***

And now, Mr. President, I draw these observations to a close. I have spoken freely, and I meant to do so. I have sought to make no display. I have sought to enliven the occasion by no animated discussion, nor have I attempted any train of elaborate argument. I have wished only to speak my sentiments, fully and at length, being desirous, once and for all, to let the Senate know, and to let the country know ,the opinions and sentiments which I entertain on all these subjects…

And now, Mr. President, instead of speaking of the possibility or utility of secession, instead of dwelling in those caverns of darkness, instead of groping with those ideas so full of all that is horrid and horrible, let us come out into the light of day; let us enjoy the fresh air of Liberty and Union; let us cherish those hopes which belong to us… Let us make our generation one of the strongest and brightest links in that golden chain which is destined, I fondly believe, to grapple the people of all the States to this Constitution for ages to come. We have a great, popular, constitutional government, guarded by law… and defended by the affections of the whole people… Its daily respiration is liberty and patriotism; its yet youthful veins are full of enterprise, courage, and honorable love of glory and renown.

**Questions:**

1. Why does Webster recollect the opinions of the parties involved in the framing and ratification of the Constitution on the subject of slavery in this speech?

2. How does Webster answer the charges against the North levied by Calhoun three days earlier?

3. Why does Webster vow that he would never vote for a measure to outlaw slavery in New Mexico?

4. What is Webster's opinion of the fugitive slave laws? Why does he hold this opinion?

5. What consequences does Webster predict if the South leaves the union?

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| **Historical Content & Context** |  |
| **Intended Audience** |  |
| **Point of View** |  |
| **Purpose** |  |

**Sen. Charles Sumner, “The Crime Against Kansas”**

**(1856)**

***HIPP/NOTES:***

MR. PRESIDENT (of the Senate):

You are now called to redress a great transgression. Seldom in the history of nations has such a question been presented…

Take down your map, sir, and you will find that the Territory of Kansas, more than any other region, occupies the middle spot of North America, equally distant from the Atlantic on the east, and the Pacific on the west… A few short months only have passed since this spacious… country was open only to the savage who ran wild in its woods and prairies; and now it has already drawn to its bosom a population of freemen larger than Athens crowded within her historic gates, when her sons, under Miltiades, won liberty for mankind on the field of Marathon; more than Sparta contained when she ruled Greece, and sent forth her devoted children, quickened by a mother's benediction, to return with their shields, or on them; more than Rome gathered on her seven hills…

Against this Territory, thus fortunate in position and population, a crime has been committed, which is without example in the records of the past. Not in plundered provinces or in the cruelties of selfish governors will you find its parallel….

Such is the crime, and such the criminal, which it is my duty in this debate to expose, and, by the blessing of God, this duty shall be done completely to the end.

But, before entering upon the argument, I must say something of a general character, particularly in response to what has fallen from Senators who have raised themselves to eminence on this floor in championship of human wrongs. I mean the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. Butler), and the Senator from Illinois (Mr. Douglas), who, though unlike as [Don Quixote](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Don_Quixote) and Sancho Panza, yet, like this couple, sally forth together in the same adventure. **I regret much to miss the elder Senator from his seat**; but the cause, against which he has run a tilt, with such activity of animosity, demands that the opportunity of exposing him should not be lost; and it is for the cause that I speak. The Senator from South Carolina has read many books of chivalry, and believes himself a chivalrous knight, with sentiments of honor and courage. Of course he has chosen a mistress to whom he has made his vows, and who, though ugly to others, is always lovely to him; though polluted in the sight of the world, is chaste in his sight I mean the harlot, Slavery. For her, his tongue is always profuse in words. Let her be impeached in character, or any proposition made to shut her out from the extension of her wantonness, and no extravagance of manner or hardihood of assertion is then too great for this Senator. The frenzy of Don Quixote, in behalf of his wench, Dulcinea del Toboso, is all surpassed. The asserted rights of Slavery, which shock equality of all kinds, are cloaked by a fantastic claim of equality. If the slave States cannot enjoy… the full power in the National Territories to compel fellowmen to unpaid toil, to separate husband and wife, and to sell little children at the auction block then, sir, the chivalric Senator will conduct the state of South Carolina out of the Union! Heroic knight! Exalted Senator! A second Moses come for a second Exodus!

But not content with this poor menace, which we have been twice told was "measured," the Senator in the unrestrained chivalry of his nature, has undertaken to apply opprobrious words to those who differ from him on this floor. He calls them "sectional and fanatical;" … The men who strive to bring back the Government to its original policy, when Freedom and not Slavery was sectional, he arraigns as sectional. This will not do. It involves too great a perversion of terms. I tell that Senator that it is to himself, and to the "organization" of which he is the "committed advocate," that this epithet belongs. I now fasten it upon them. For myself, I care little for names; but since the question has been raised here, I affirm that the Republican party of the Union is in no just sense sectional, but, more than any other party, national; and that it now goes forth to dislodge from the high places of the Government the tyrannical sectionalism of which the Senator from South Carolina is one of the maddest zealots.

***HIPP/NOTES:***

As the Senator from South Carolina, is the Don Quixote, the Senator from Illinois (Mr. Douglas) is the Squire of Slavery, its very Sancho Panza, ready to do all its humiliating offices….

The Senator dreams that he can subdue the North. He disclaims the open threat, but his conduct still implies it. How little that Senator knows himself or the strength of the cause which he persecutes! He is but a mortal man; against him is an immortal principle. With finite power he wrestles with the infinite, and he must fall. Against him are stronger battalions than any marshaled by mortal arm the inborn, ineradicable, invincible sentiments of the human heart against him is nature in all her subtle forces; against him is God. Let him try to subdue these.

With regret, I come again upon the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. Butler), who, omnipresent in this debate, overflowed with rage at the simple suggestion that Kansas had applied for admission as a State and, with incoherent phrases, discharged the loose expectoration of his speech, now upon her representative, and then upon her people. . There was no extravagance of the ancient parliamentary debate, which he did not repeat; nor was there any possible deviation from truth which he did not make, with so much of passion, I am glad to add, as to save him from the suspicion of intentional aberration. But the Senator touches nothing which he does not disfigure with error, sometimes of principle, sometimes of fact. He shows an incapacity of accuracy, whether in stating the Constitution, or in stating the law, whether in the details of statistics or the diversions of scholarship. He cannot open his mouth, but out there flies a blunder.

… Were the whole history of South Carolina blotted out of existence, from its very beginning down to the day of the last election of the Senator to his present seat on this floor, civilization might lose — I do not say how little; but surely less than it has already gained by the example of Kansas, in its valiant struggle against oppression, and in the development of a new science of emigration. Already, in Lawrence alone, there are newspapers and schools, including a High School, and throughout this infant Territory there is more mature scholarship far, in proportion to its inhabitants, than in all South Carolina. Ah, sir, I tell the Senator that Kansas, welcomed as a free State, will be a "ministering angel" to the Republic, when South Carolina, in the cloak of darkness which she hugs, "lies howling."

The Senator from Illinois (Mr. Douglas) naturally joins the Senator from South Carolina in this warfare, and gives to it the superior intensity of his nature….

Among these hostile Senators, there is yet another, with all the prejudices of the Senator from South Carolina, but without his generous impulses, who, on account of his character before the country, and the rancor of his opposition, deserves to be named. I mean the Senator from Virginia (Mr. Mason), who, as the author of the Fugitive Slave bill, has associated himself with a special act of inhumanity and tyranny. Of him I shall say little, for he has said little in this debate, though within that little was compressed the bitterness of a life absorbed in the support of Slavery. He holds the commission of Virginia; but he does not represent that early Virginia, so dear to our hearts, which gave to us the pen of Jefferson, by which the equality of men was declared, and the sword of Washington, by which Independence was secured; but he represents that other Virginia, from which Washington and Jefferson now avert their faces, where human beings are bred as cattle for the shambles, and where a dungeon rewards the pious matron who teaches little children to relieve their bondage by reading the Book of Life. It is proper that such a Senator, representing such a State, should rail against free Kansas.

***HIPP/NOTES:***

Senators such as these are the natural enemies of Kansas, and I introduce them with reluctance, simply that the country may understand the character of the hostility which must be overcome….

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| **Historical Content & Context** |  |
| **Intended Audience** |  |
| **Point of View** |  |
| **Purpose** |  |

**Rep. Preston Brooks, “On the Sumner Assault”**

**(1856)**

***HIPP/NOTES:***

MR. SPEAKER (of the House):

Some time since a Senator from Massachusetts allowed himself, in an elaborately prepared speech, to offer a gross insult to my State [South Carolina], and to a venerable friend [Andrew Butler], who is my State representative, and who was absent at the time.

Not content with that, he published to the world, and circulated extensively, this uncalled for [libel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slander_and_libel) on my State and my blood. Whatever insults my State insults me. Her history and character have commanded my pious veneration; and in her defense I hope I shall always be prepared, humbly and modestly, to perform the duty of a son. I should have forfeited my own self-respect, and perhaps the good opinion of my countrymen, if I had failed to resent such an injury by calling the offender in question to a personal account. It was a personal affair, and in taking redress into my own hands I meant no disrespect to the Senate of the United States or to this House. Nor, sir, did I design insult or disrespect to the State of Massachusetts. I was aware of the personal responsibilities I incurred, and was willing to meet them. I knew, too, that I was amenable to the laws of the country, which afford the same protection to all, whether they be members of Congress or private citizens. I did not, and do not now believe, that I could be properly punished, not only in a court of law, but here also, at the pleasure and discretion of the House. I did not then, and do not now, believe that the spirit of American freemen would tolerate slander in high places, and permit a member of Congress to publish and circulate a libel on another, and then call upon either House to protect him against the personal responsibilities which he had thus incurred. But if I had committed a breach of privilege, it was the privilege of the Senate, and not of this House, which was violated. I was answerable there, and not here. They had no right, as it seems to me, to prosecute me in these Halls, nor have you the right in law or under the Constitution, as I respectfully submit, to take jurisdiction over offences committed against them. The Constitution does not justify them in making such a request, nor this House in granting it. If, unhappily, the day should ever come when sectional or party feeling should run so high as to control all other considerations of public duty or justice, how easy it will be to use such precedents for the excuse of arbitrary power, in either House, to expel members of the minority who may have rendered themselves obnoxious to the prevailing spirit in the House to which they belong.

Matters may go smoothly enough when one House asks the other to punish a member who is offensive to a majority of its own body but how will it be when, upon a presence of insulted dignity, demands are made of this House to expel a member who happens to run counter to its party predilections, or other demands which it may not be so agreeable to grant? It could never have been designed by the Constitution of the United States to expose the two Houses to such temptations to collision, or to extend so far the discretionary power which was given to either House to punish its own members for the violation of its rules and orders. Discretion has been said to be the law of the tyrant, and when exercised under the color of the law, and under the influence of party dictation, it may and will become a terrible and insufferable despotism.

This House, however, it would seem, from the unmistakable tendency of its proceedings, takes a different view from that which I deliberately entertain in common with many others.

So far as public interests or constitutional rights are involved, I have now exhausted my means of defence. I may, then, be allowed to take a more personal view of the question at issue. The further prosecution of this subject, in the shape it has now assumed, may not only involve my friends, but the House itself, in agitations which might be unhappy in their consequences to the country. If these consequences could be confined to myself individually, I think I am prepared and ready to meet them, here or elsewhere; and when I use this language I mean what I say. But others must not suffer for me. I have felt more on account of my two friends who have been implicated, than for myself, for they have proven that "there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." I will not constrain gentlemen to assume a responsibility on my account, which possibly they would not run on their own.

***HIPP/NOTES:***

Sir, I cannot, on my own account, assume the responsibility, in the face of the American people, of commencing a line of conduct which in my heart of hearts I believe would result in subverting the foundations of this Government, and in drenching this Hall in blood. No act of mine, on my personal account, shall inaugurate revolution; but when you, Mr. Speaker, return to your own home, and hear the people of the great North and they are a great people speak of me as a bad man, you will do me the justice to say that a blow struck by me at this time would be followed by revolution and this I know.

(Applause and hisses in the gallery.)

If I desired to kill the Senator, why did not I do it? You all admit that I had him in my power. Let me tell the member from New Jersey that it was expressly to avoid taking life that I used an ordinary cane, presented to me by a friend in Baltimore, nearly three months before its application to the "bare head" of the Massachusetts Senator. I went to work very deliberately, as I am charged and this is admitted and speculated somewhat as to whether I should employ a horsewhip or a cowhide; but knowing that the Senator was my superior in strength, it occurred to me that he might wrest it from my hand, and then for I never attempt anything I do not perform I might have been compelled to do that which I would have regretted the balance of my natural life.

The question has been asked in certain newspapers, why I did not invite the Senator to [personal combat in the mode usually adopted](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Duel). Well, sir, as I desire the whole truth to be known about the matter, I will for once notice a newspaper article on the floor of the House, and answer here.

My answer is, that the Senator would not accept a message; and having formed the unalterable determination to punish him, I believed that the offence of "sending a hostile message," superadded to the indictment for assault and battery, would subject me to legal penalties more severe than would be imposed for a simple assault and battery. That is my answer.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have nearly finished what I intended to say. If my opponents, who have pursued me with unparalleled bitterness, are satisfied with the present condition of this affair, I am. I return my thanks to my friends, and especially to those who are from non- slave-owning States, who have magnanimously sustained me, and felt that it was a higher honor to themselves to be just in their judgment of a gentleman than to be a member of Congress for life. In taking my leave, I feel that it is proper that I should say that I believe that some of the votes that have been cast against me have been extorted by an outside pressure at home, and that their votes do not express the feelings or opinions of the members who gave them.

To such of these as have given their votes and made their speeches on the constitutional principles involved, and without indulging in personal vilification, I owe my respect. But, sir, they have written me down upon the history of the country as worthy of expulsion, and in no unkindness I must tell them that for all future time my self-respect requires that I shall pass them as strangers.

***HIPP/NOTES:***

**And now, Mr. Speaker, I announce to you and to this House, that I am no longer a member of the Thirty-Fourth Congress.** [*Mr. Brooks then walked out of the House of Representatives.*]

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| **Historical Content & Context** |  |
| **Intended Audience** |  |
| **Point of View** |  |
| **Purpose** |  |

# Abraham Lincoln’s “House Divided” Speech June 16, 1858

***HIPP/NOTES:***

**BACKGROUND:**

**MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN OF THE CONVENTION:**

If we could first know where we are, and whither we are tending, we could better judge what to do, and how to do it. 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.

Have we no tendency to the latter condition?

Let anyone who doubts, carefully contemplate that now almost complete legal combination -- piece of machinery, so to speak -- compounded of the Nebraska doctrine, and the Dred Scott decision. Let him consider not only what work the machinery is adapted to do, and how well adapted; but also, let him study the history of its construction, and trace, if he can, or rather fail, if he can, to trace the evidences of design, and concert of action, among its chief architects, from the beginning.

The new year of 1854 found slavery excluded from more than half the States by State Constitutions, and from most of the national territory by Congressional prohibition. Four days later, commenced the struggle which ended in repealing that Congressional prohibition. This opened all the national territory to slavery, and was the first point gained….

**[Lincoln sums up the doctrine of** [**squatter [or popular] sovereignty**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Popular_sovereignty_in_the_United_States#Emergence_of_the_term_.E2.80.9Cpopular_sovereignty.E2.80.9D_and_its_pejorative_connotation)**:  
That if any one man choose to enslave another, no third man shall be allowed to object.]**

While the Nebraska bill was passing through Congress, [a law case](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dred_Scott_v._Sandford) involving the question of a negro's freedom, by reason of his owner having voluntarily taken him first into a free State and then into a Territory covered by the Congressional prohibition, and held him as a slave for a long time in each, was passing through the U. S. Circuit Court for the District of Missouri; and both Nebraska bill and law suit were brought to a decision in the same month of May, 1854. The negro's name was "Dred Scott," which name now designates the decision finally made in the case. Before the then next Presidential election, the law case came to, and was argued in, the Supreme Court of the United States; but the decision of it was deferred until after the election…

The [election](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election,_1856) came. Mr. Buchanan was elected, and the endorsement, such as it was, secured. That was the second point gained. The endorsement, however, fell short of a clear popular majority by nearly four hundred thousand votes, and so, perhaps, was not overwhelmingly reliable and satisfactory… The Presidential inauguration came, and still no decision of the court; but the incoming President in his [inaugural address](http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=25817), fervently exhorted the people to abide by the forthcoming decision, whatever it might be. Then, in a few days, came the decision.

The reputed author of the Nebraska bill [Senator Douglas] finds an early occasion to make a speech at this capital endorsing the Dred Scott decision, and vehemently denouncing all opposition to it. The new President, too, seizes the early occasion of the Silliman letter to endorse and strongly construe that decision, and to express his astonishment that any different view had ever been entertained!

***HIPP/NOTES:***

At length a squabble springs up between the President and the author of the Nebraska bill, on the mere question of fact, whether the [Lecompton Constitution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lecompton_Constitution) was or was not, in any just sense, made by the people of Kansas; and in that quarrel the latter declares that all he wants is a fair vote for the people, and that he cares not whether slavery be voted down or voted up. I do not understand his declaration that he cares not whether slavery be voted down or voted up…

The several points of the Dred Scott decision, in connection, with Senator Douglas's "care not" policy, constitute the piece of machinery, in its present state of advancement. This was the third point gained. The working points of that machinery are:

**First**, That no negro slave, imported as such from Africa, and no descendant of such slave, can ever be a citizen of any State, in the sense of that term as used in the Constitution of the United States…

**Secondly**, That "subject to the Constitution of the United States," neither Congress nor a Territorial Legislature can exclude slavery from any United States territory…

**Thirdly**, That whether the holding a negro in actual slavery in a free State, makes him free, as against the holder, the United States courts will not decide, but will leave to be decided by the courts of any slave State the negro may be forced into by the master…

Auxiliary to all this… is to educate and mould public opinion, at least Northern public opinion, not to care whether slavery is voted down or voted up. This shows exactly where we now are; and partially, also, whither we are tending.

…. Put this and that together, and we have another nice little niche, which we may, ere long, see filled with another Supreme Court decision, declaring that the Constitution of the United States does not permit a State to exclude slavery from its limits…

Such a decision is all that slavery now lacks of being alike lawful in all the States. Welcome, or unwelcome, such decision is probably coming, and will soon be upon us, unless the power of the present political dynasty shall be met and overthrown. We shall lie down pleasantly dreaming that the people of Missouri are on the verge of making their State free, and we shall awake to the reality instead, that the Supreme Court has made Illinois a slave State. To meet and overthrow the power of that dynasty, is the work now before all those who would prevent that consummation. That is what we have to do. How can we best do it?

....Our cause, then, must be entrusted to, and conducted by, its own undoubted friends -- those whose hands are free, whose hearts are in the work -- who do care for the result… The result is not doubtful. We shall not fail -- if we stand firm, we shall not fail. Wise counsels may accelerate, or mistakes delay it, but, sooner or later, the victory is sure to come.

**Identify Lincoln’s Main Points…**

John Brown: *Villain or Hero?*

[](http://www.gilderlehrman.org/collections/4bbd4afd-308b-45c9-97ad-995386153772)*by Steven Mintz*

*In 1856, three years before his celebrated raid on Harpers Ferry, John Brown, with four of his sons and three others, dragged five unarmed men and boys from their homes along Kansas’s Pottawatomie Creek and hacked and dismembered their bodies as if they were cattle being butchered in a stockyard. Two years later, Brown led a raid into Missouri, where he and his followers killed a planter and freed eleven slaves. Brown’s party also absconded with wagons, mules, harnesses, and horses—a pattern of plunder that Brown followed in other forays. During his 1859 raid on Harpers Ferry, seventeen people died. The first was a black railroad baggage handler; others shot and killed by Brown’s men included the town’s popular mayor and two townsfolk.*

In the wake of Timothy McVeigh’s attack on the federal office building in Oklahoma City in 1995 and al Qaeda’s strikes on the World Trade Center and Pentagon in 2001, Americans might ask how they should remember John Brown. Was he a bloodthirsty zealot, a vigilante, a terrorist, or a madman? Or was he one of the great heroes of American history, a freedom fighter and martyr to the cause of human liberty? Was his resort to violence any different from, for example, those by Paul Hill and John Salvi, who, in the mid-1990s, murdered abortion-clinic workers in God’s name?

Nearly a century and a half after his execution, John Brown remains one of the most fiercely debated and enigmatic figures in American history. Brown’s earliest biographers—especially James Redpath, Franklin Sanborn, and Oswald Garrison Villard—were hero-worshippers who considered Brown a warrior-saint whose assaults on slavery represented the first crucial steps toward emancipation. During the 1930s and early 1940s, a more critical view arose. At a time when revisionists regarded the Civil War as a needless conflict fomented by fanatics and blundering politicians, many scholars followed the lead of James C. Malin, who argued that Brown was little more than an indiscriminate murderer, swindler, and petty horse thief, who had little genuine interest in anti-slavery or in the rights of African Americans. Following World War II, many leading historians dismissed Brown as clinically delusional—Bruce Catton called him “unbalanced to the verge of outright madness”—and denounced his attack on Harpers Ferry as an act of treason. A notable dissenter was the Marxist historian Herbert Aptheker, who argued that Brown’s rage against slavery grew out of his fury over market capitalism, which had reduced his family to poverty. In the 1960s a new generation of scholars viewed Brown as an uncompromising idealist, a principled agitator, and a genuine revolutionary who envisioned an America free of racial prejudice.

Since 1970, Brown has been the subject of at least forty-three biographies, scholarly studies, and works of fiction (as well as eighteen children’s books), including a best-selling novel (Russell Banks’s *Cloudsplitter*), a brilliant collection of annotated primary sources (Zoe Trodd and John Stauffer’s *Meteor of War*), an extended analysis of his religious beliefs (Louis A. DeCaro Jr.’s *Fire from the Midst of You*), and two studies of his legacy and place in American memory (Merrill Peterson’s *John Brown: The Legend Revisited* and Peggy A. Russo and Paul Finkelman’s *Terrible Swift Sword: The Legacy of John Brown*). Far more objective and much freer of the venom and over-romanticizing that marred earlier scholarship, these works do an impressive job of separating the man from the myth and locating Brown in the context of his times.

David S. Reynolds’s *John Brown, Abolitionist*, the first full-length biography in a generation, provides essential background for the critical issues raised by John Brown’s life. A “cultural biography,” which seeks to show how Brown’s life reflected, shaped, and ultimately transcended his age, the book is aimed at a popular as well as a scholarly audience and advances two overarching arguments: First, at a time when white supremacy was the norm, Brown was one of a handful of white Americans who could interact with black Americans on a level of true intimacy and equality. Second, although some of Brown’s acts strike present-day observers as barbaric, these acts of violence were “ultimately noble,” because they were necessary to promote the cause of human liberty. The strengths of Reynolds’s book include its wealth of detail, its skillful synthesis of recent scholarship, and its fascinating digressions into such subjects as the Transcendentalists’ attitude toward violence and New Englanders’ shifting views of Oliver Cromwell. The book is less successful in explicating Brown’s religious beliefs, his personal psychology, the ambiguities of his relations with African Americans, and the links between his raid and the coming of the Civil War.

Born in rural Connecticut in 1800 to a deeply religious family, Brown grew up in northeastern Ohio’s staunchly anti-slavery Western Reserve. He had little formal education and his personal life was filled with misfortune. He lost his mother when he was eight and his first wife died in childbirth. Of his twenty offspring, only eleven survived childhood. His business life was marked by failure. He experienced many of the vicissitudes of America’s emerging market economy, working as a surveyor, tanner, farmer, shepherd, cattle merchant, horse trader, land speculator, and wool broker. He experienced at least fifteen business failures, and was the target of at least twenty-one lawsuits—losing ten—and in at least one instance, he misappropriated funds. It was not until 1855, when he was in his mid-fifties, that Brown became a central figure in the anti-slavery cause.

Among the key issues raised by Brown’s life is why he alone among leading northern abolitionists chose violence as the way to end slavery. The answer lies in Brown’s intense religiosity, which was rooted in the “New Divinity” of rural New England, a religion harshly critical of materialism, commercialism, and the relentless pursuit of profit. To many proponents of the New Divinity, slavery epitomized society’s obsession with untrammeled self-interest. Brown’s religious upbringing not only taught him to hate slavery, it also contributed to his moral absolutism, his messianic self-image, and his embrace of the example of the Old Testament prophets and of an earlier warrior for the Lord, Oliver Cromwell, who led the overthrow of the English monarchy during the English Civil War. The biblical passage that best summed up Brown’s religious ideas is “without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin” (Hebrews 9:22).

Another fundamental issue that Brown’s life presents is his commitment to racial equality. Brown hated slavery from an early age and by his twenties had helped at least one fugitive along the Underground Railroad. During the 1830s, he considered various ways of helping African Americans, including establishing a school, and in the 1840s, he came into close contact with Frederick Douglass and moved to the Adirondacks to assist a colony of free black farmers who had received land from the wealthy abolitionist Gerrit Smith. In 1851, he responded to the Fugitive Slave Law by organizing, in Springfield, Massachusetts, “The League of Gileadites,” a group formed to resist slave catchers and assist runaways to escape to Canada.

There is no doubt that Brown achieved a degree of intimacy with African Americans that was extraordinarily rare for his era. Douglass later described Brown as the only white person he knew without racial prejudice. Yet it remains unclear if Brown was the true racial egalitarian that Reynolds claims he was. A “self-appointed savior” (in David Potter’s sardonic phrase), Brown took virtually no advice from African Americans (with the notable exception of Douglass) and named no blacks to serve as lieutenants when he launched his raid on Harpers Ferry. In fact, the paternalism of his age runs through Brown’s relations with blacks.

It was not until the mid-1850s that Brown committed himself to overthrowing slavery by force. What were the factors that transformed Brown, already in his fifties, into an uncompromising agitator for slavery’s abolition? The answer lies in the convergence of personal and political factors, including a series of personal misfortunes, frustrations, and tragedies that culminated in the early 1850s. In the early 1840s, Brown was declared bankrupt, evicted from his farm, and lost four children to dysentery in a single month. Later in the 1840s and the early 1850s, his troubles continued. Brown was separated from his family for prolonged periods of time, he lost another child (the result of scalding), several sons abandoned their religious faith, and bitter litigation swirled around his business ventures. Meanwhile, the political crisis over slavery intensified as a result of the Mexican-American War, enactment of the Fugitive Slave Law, and passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act. After a prolonged period of vacillation, Brown decided to forsake the material world, largely abandoning his farm, his business ventures, and even his wife. He joined several of his sons in Kansas and dedicated his remaining years to slavery’s overthrow.

How in today’s age of terrorist violence committed in the name of God should we evaluate Brown’s actions? The massacre at Pottawatomie Creek presents the greatest challenge for Brown’s sympathizers. Arguing that Brown’s actions were explicable, if not defensible, Reynolds contends that the murders were designed to terrify the pro-slavery forces and make it clear that anti-slavery Kansas would not remain passive in the face of insults and threats. By placing the killings in the context of their times—which witnessed the murders of five anti-slavery Kansans; the burning and pillaging of Lawrence, Kansas, by “border ruffians” from Missouri; and the caning of Senator Charles Sumner in the US Capitol—Reynolds seeks to diminish Brown’s guilt.

There can be no doubt that mob violence was common in the mid-1850s, and not only in Kansas. Reynolds might well have situated the violence in Kansas in an even broader context. Election-day riots in 1854 left eight dead in Baltimore and ten dead in St. Louis; twenty reportedly died in an 1855 riot in Louisville; and the 1857 Mountain Meadows massacre in southern Utah resulted in the killing of approximately 120 members of a wagon train by a Mormon militia and Paiute Indians. Yet while it is helpful to contextualize the Pottawatomie Creek killings, Reynolds should have made it clear that the massacre and the mutilation of the corpses certainly worsened the situation in “Bleeding Kansas,” igniting the conflict’s most violent phase, which ultimately left about fifty-five settlers dead. Perhaps the most significant question raised by Brown’s life involves the impact of his Harpers Ferry raid on the coming of the Civil War. Here it is essential to distinguish between the raid itself and the way it was interpreted. The raid itself was poorly planned and executed. Brown succeeded in attracting only twenty-one followers, far fewer than the fifty or one hundred he had hoped for. He made no effort to communicate with slaves in the Harpers Ferry area before the raid. He and his men carried no provisions when they attacked the federal arsenal. Brown failed to destroy a stash of documents incriminating his supporters. In the end, his indecisiveness and procrastination during the raid resulted in the deaths of ten of his supporters and the capture and hanging of six others. Had Brown died in the attack, he might well have been dismissed as an incompetent fanatic.

At first, Brown was widely denounced in the North as a murderer, criminal, and madman, leading conservative unionists to feel confident that his actions would unite the nation against extremists, South and North. But during the forty-five days between his capture and execution, he was transformed, in the eyes of thousands of northerners, from a brutal terrorist into a prophet and avenging angel. The deification of Brown as a heroic martyr outraged many white southerners, who felt that Brown expressed the North’s secret will: to foment race war in the South.

Brown himself played a crucial role in reshaping his public image. His calm demeanor and fierce commitment to the anti-slavery cause persuaded many that he was a Christ-like martyr, not a murderer or traitor. He was helped by abolitionists (who believed that his execution would do more for the anti-slavery cause than his acquittal or rescue), editorialists, eulogists, and speechmakers, as well as members of the clergy like the Reverend Henry Ward Beecher, and poets and writers like Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. Even Abraham Lincoln, who condemned Brown for committing “violence, bloodshed, and treason,” also applauded the old man’s motives and lauded his “great courage” and “rare unselfishness.” Meanwhile, southern fire-eaters insisted that Brown’s raid was rooted in the Republican Party’s rhetoric about a “higher law” and an “irrepressible conflict.” This argument was so successful that the Republican Party wrote off the South during the 1860 election.

Was Brown mentally ill? In a bid to spare their client from the gallows, Brown’s attorneys gathered nineteen affidavits testifying to insanity in Brown’s immediate family. Certainly not, says Reynolds. In fact, the real-life Brown was considered enigmatic by many who knew him personally. He could be stubborn, selfish, cold, arbitrary, intolerant, and vindictive. Yet he could also be loving, compassionate, and tender-hearted. There is also no doubt that he exhibited certain signs of mental abnormality, including sudden mood swings, an inflated notion of his military skills, and, above all, an obsessive fury over the institution of slavery. Of course, at a time when many Americans accepted slavery as an inevitable part of the social order, a degree of mental abnormality may have been necessary to recognize slavery’s evil.

John Brown’s prophetic truth was that slavery could not be purged from America except with blood. In a 1949 essay, Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. rejected the notion that the Civil War was a “repressible conflict” caused by fanatics and blundering politicians. Writing in the wake of World War II, he argued that there are times when a society works itself “into a logjam; and that logjam must be burst by violence.” By the mid-1850s, it was apparent that moral suasion and political institutions had failed to place slavery on the road to extinction. The nation had reached an increasingly violent impasse. Anti-slavery crowds sought to prevent slave catchers from transporting fugitives back to the South. “Bleeding Kansas” had revealed that popular sovereignty offered an illusory solution to the problem of slavery in the western territories. The Supreme Court’s *Dred Scott* decision eliminated possible compromise solutions to the westward expansion of slavery. Ultimately, slavery could only be ended by force of arms.

***Steven Mintz****, a historian at Columbia University and director of the Columbia Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Teaching Center, would like to express his profound debt to John Stauffer of Harvard University for sharing his many insights into the novel. Mintz is author of*Huck’s Raft: A History of American Childhood, Domestic Revolutions: A Social History of American Family Life*(2004); and*Moralists & Modernizers: America’s Pre-Civil War Reformers*(1995).*

***SUMMARIZE THE MAIN POINTS OF THE ARTICLE…***

Manifest Destiny: *Graphic Organizer*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **EVENT** | **KEY FIGURES** | **WHAT HAPPENED?** | **SIGNIFICANCE**  **(How did it promote expansion)** |
| Texan  Independence |  |  |  |
| 54-40 or Fight |  |  |  |
| Mexican-American  War |  |  |  |
| Gadsden Purchase |  |  |  |
| CA Gold Rush |  |  |  |



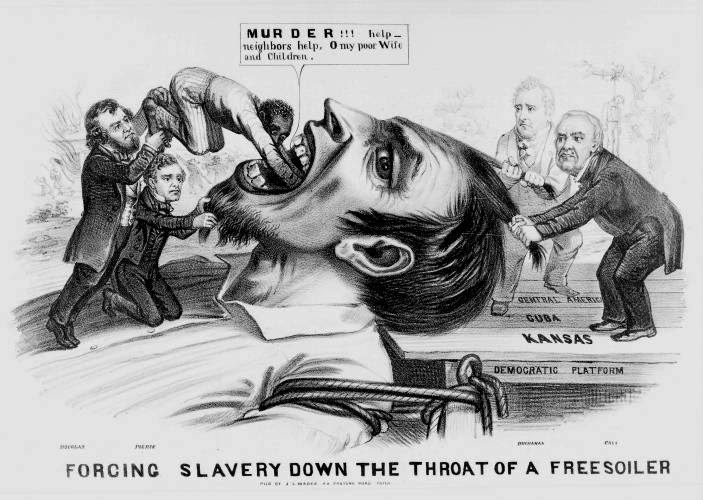


CONFLICTS OF THE 1850's

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **CAUSE** | **DESCRIPTION** |
| **Fugitive Slave Law**  **(\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)** | **Requirements (details):** |
| **Uncle Tom’s Cabin**  **(\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)** | **Who:**  **What:**  **Why Important:** |
| **Ostend Manifesto**  **(\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)** | **Who/ what:**  **Why important:** |
| **Kansas-Nebraska Act**  **(\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)** | **Who:**  **What:**  **Why Important:** |
| **Bleeding Kansas**  **(\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)** | **What?**  **Who were “Border Ruffians”?**  **Bloodshed:**  **Pottawatomie:**  **Why Important:**  failure of popular sovereignty =  Republican Party = |
| **Sumner-Brooks Affair**  **(\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)** | **Sumner:**  **Brooks:**  **Preston:**  **Result:** |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Dred Scott Decision**  **(\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)** | **Who was Dred Scott?**  **What did he do? Why?**  **Supreme Court’s Decision:**  **What was declared unconstitutional?**  **Who was happy with this?** |
| **John Brown’s Raid**  **(Harper’s Ferry)**  **(\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)** | **What was the plan?**  **What happened?**  **Result/Importance:** |
| **Election of 1860** | **Candidates: popular vote % electoral vote**   * Northern Democrat = * Southern Democrat = * Republican = * Constitutional Union=   **Who Won:**  **Why Important:** |
| **Secession of South**  **When:** | **What / Why:**  **States:**  **They create:**  **President:** |
| **Border States**  **Union or Confederate??** | **What / Why don’t secede:**  **States:**  **Why Important:** |

POLITICAL CARTOONS



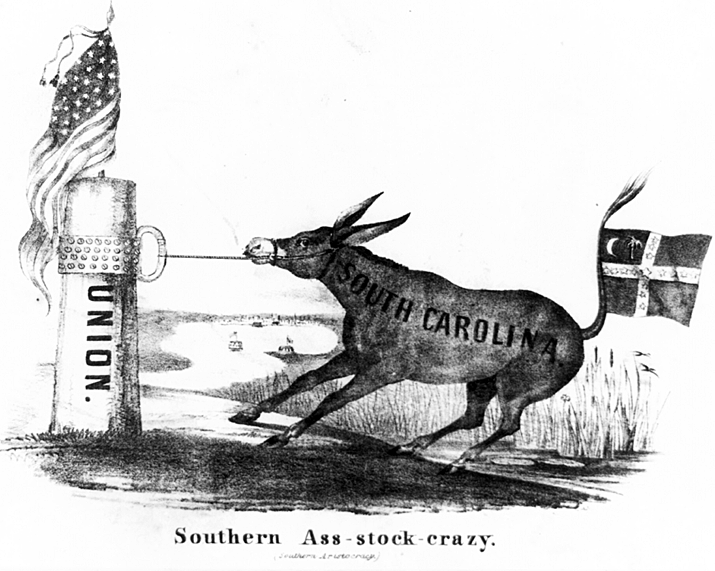
***Analyze the cartoon and answer the corresponding questions.***

1. What are the characters and symbols in the cartoon, and what does each one represent?

2. How do the words help you identify the cartoonist’s intention?

3. What action is taking place in the cartoon?

4. What opinion is the cartoonist expressing?



***Analyze the cartoon and answer the corresponding questions.***

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**REVIEW QUESTIONS:**

1. Explain the justifications for the doctrine of manifest destiny, including material and idealistic motivations.

2. What economic forces promoted continental expansion in the 1830s and 1840s?

3. Why did many Americans criticize theMexicanWar? How did they see expansion as a threat to American liberties?

4. How did the concept of “race” develop by the mid-nineteenth century, and how did it enter into the manifest destiny debate?

5. Explain the factors behind the creation of the Republican Party.

6. What three questions did the Supreme Court address in the Dred Scott case? Assess the Court’s arguments.

7. Based on the Lincoln-Douglas debates, how did the views of both men differ on the expansion of slavery, equal rights, and the role of the national government?

8. What were the international implications of southern nationalism?

9. Explain how sectional voting patterns in the 1860 presidential election allowed southern “fire-eaters” to justify secession.

**FREEDOM QUESTIONS:**

1. How did Americans argue that conquering Texas and other parts of Mexico was “extending the area of freedom”?

2. Explain how both northerners and southerners believed winning the struggle over the expansion of slavery was the key to preserving their freedoms and to preventing their domination by the other section of the nation.

3. According to the Republican Party, how was “free labor” the key to preserving American freedoms, and the free society threatened by the Slave Power?

4. How did southern nationalists justify independence as “freedom” from northern “bondage”?