

Study Guide



Chapter 15, Section 2

For use with textbook pages 441–444

A NATION DIVIDING

KEY TERMS

popular sovereignty	The idea that allows the people to make their own decisions about the area in which they live (page 442)
border ruffians	Armed groups from another state that cross a border solely to vote (page 443)
civil war	A conflict between citizens of the same country (page 444)

DRAWING FROM EXPERIENCE

Have you ever been part of one group that split into two smaller groups because of a disagreement? Did you or anyone try to bring the group back together? Could the disagreement be resolved?

In the last section, you read how Western states were added to the Union with compromises from the North and the South. This section focuses on how the issue of slavery further divided the North and South.

ORGANIZING YOUR THOUGHTS

Use the chart below to help you take notes as you read the summaries that follow. Think about the different reactions of the North and the South as a result of the Fugitive Slave Act.

The Fugitive Slave Act	
The Northern Reaction	The Southern Reaction

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READ TO LEARN

- **The Fugitive Slave Act** (pages 441–442)

In 1850 Congress passed the Fugitive Slave Act. This law required that every citizen help return runaway enslaved African Americans. Anyone that helped a runaway would either pay a fine or go to jail. Southerners thought this law would force Northerners to help them. They tried to capture African Americans living in the North, whether they were runaways or not.

Many Northerners refused to obey this law. The Underground Railroad was developed. It was a system where groups of people, white and African American, helped runaways escape to freedom. Other antislavery groups collected money to help buy the freedom of enslaved African Americans. Northern juries would not convict anyone accused of breaking the Fugitive Slave Act.

1. What was the Fugitive Slave Act?

- **The Kansas-Nebraska Act** (pages 442–443)

Stephen A. Douglas wanted to expand the nation to include Kansas and Nebraska. According to the Missouri Compromise, the two territories were destined to become free states. The Southerners in Congress would not accept two more free states. That would upset the balance of free states and slaves states. In order to promote expansion, Douglas suggested that the Missouri Compromise be abandoned. He wanted to let the settlers in the territory decide if they would allow slavery. This was called **popular sovereignty**.

Northerners were strongly against this plan. It would allow slavery on lands that had been free for a long time. Southerners, however, were strongly in favor of the plan. Many slaveholders from Missouri would settle in Kansas and vote to bring slavery to the state. Northern Democrats and President Franklin Pierce also supported this proposal. The Kansas-Nebraska Act passed in 1854. The division within the country grew stronger.

2. Why did Douglas want to abandon the Missouri Compromise?

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- **Conflict in Kansas** (pages 443–444)

When the Kansas-Nebraska Act passed, both sides sent people to vote. About 1,500 voters lived in the Kansas territory, yet more than 6,000 people voted in the elections. Many of the voters came from Missouri. Armed groups traveled into Kansas solely to vote in support of slavery. They became known as **border ruffians**. The elections resulted in a proslavery legislature. The Kansas legislature began passing laws in support of slavery. Antislavery groups opposed these laws. They held their own elections and started a new constitution that outlawed slavery. The state was split. Both sides wanted a voice in Congress.

The disagreement over slavery turned violent. Supporters of slavery attacked the town of Lawrence. Lawrence was the antislavery capital. John Brown was committed to ending slavery. He and others grabbed and killed five supporters of slavery for revenge. More violence continued. Kansas became known as “Bleeding Kansas.” People also called it “the **Civil War** in Kansas.” A civil war happens when citizens within the same country fight. Not until October of 1856 did John Geary, the newly appointed territorial governor, stop the bloodshed in Kansas.

The violence from the state of Kansas spilled into Congress. Charles Sumner, from Massachusetts, gave a speech called “The Crime Against Kansas.” He spoke strongly against the slavery in Kansas. He also spoke against the senators who supported slavery. He especially criticized the senator from South Carolina, Andrew C. Butler. A relative of Butler’s attacked Sumner in the Senate chamber a few days later. Sumner was bleeding and knocked unconscious. His injuries were so bad that he could not return to the Senate for years.

3. Why were there two constitutions in Kansas?
