CHAPTER 19

Drifting Toward Disunion, 1854–1861

PART I: REVIEWING THE CHAPTER

A. Checklist of Learning Objectives

After mastering this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Enumerate the sequence of major crises, beginning with the Kansas-Nebraska Act, that led up to secession, and explain the significance of each event.

2. Explain how and why the territory of bleeding Kansas became the scene of a dress rehearsal for the Civil War.

3. Trace the growing power of the Republican party in the 1850s and the increasing domination of the Democratic party by its militantly proslavery wing.

4. Explain how the Dred Scott decision and John Brown’s Harpers Ferry raid deepened sectional antagonism.

5. Trace the rise of Lincoln as a Republican spokesman, and explain why his senatorial campaign debates with Stephen Douglas made him a major national figure despite losing the election.

6. Analyze the election of 1860, including the split in the Democratic party, the four-way campaign, the sharp sectional divisions, and Lincoln’s northern-based minority victory.

7. Describe the secession of seven southern states following Lincoln’s victory, the formation of the Confederacy, and the failure of the last compromise effort.

B. Glossary

To build your social science vocabulary, familiarize yourself with the following terms.

1. puppet government  A weak government created or controlled by more powerful outside forces. “The slavery supporters triumphed and then set up their own puppet government at Shawnee Mission.”

2. bigoted  Blindly or narrowly intolerant. “... the allegation ... alienated many bigoted Know-Nothings. . . .”

3. public domain  Land or other property belonging to the whole nation, controlled by the federal government. “Financial distress ... gave a new vigor to the demand for free farms of 160 acres from the public domain.”

4. bandwagon  In politics, a movement or candidacy that gains rapid momentum because of people’s purported desire to join a successful cause. “After mounting the Republican bandwagon, he emerged as one of the foremost politicians and orators of the Northwest.”

5. apportionment  The allotment or distribution of legislative representatives in districts according to population. (Reapportionment occurs after each census according to growth or loss of population.) “Yet thanks to inequitable apportionment, the districts carried by Douglas supporters represented a smaller population. . . .”
6. **splintering** Concerning the small political groups that result when a larger organization has divided or broken apart. “But Douglas . . . hurt his own chances . . . while further splitting his splintering party.”

7. **affidavit** A sworn, written testimony, usually attested to by a notary public or legal officer, that may be admitted as evidence in court. “His presumed insanity was supported by affidavits from seventeen friends and relatives. . . .”

8. **martyr** One who is tortured or killed for adherence to a belief. “. . . Ralph Waldo Emerson compared the new martyr-hero with Jesus.”

9. **border state** The northernmost slave states contested by North and South; during the Civil War the four border states (Maryland, Delaware, Kentucky, and Missouri) remained within the Union, though they contained many Confederate sympathizers and volunteers. “. . . a man of moderate views from the border state of Kentucky.”

10. **vassalage** The service and homage given by a feudal subordinate to an overlord; by extension, any similar arrangement between political figures or entities. “. . . secession [w]as a golden opportunity to cast aside their generations of ‘vassalage’ to the North.”

**PART II: CHECKING YOUR PROGRESS**

**A. True-False**

Where the statement is true, circle T; where it is false, circle F.

1. T F Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* proved to be the most influential publication in arousing the northern and European publics against the evils of slavery.

2. T F Hinton Helper’s *The Impending Crisis of the South* stirred slaveholders’ wrath by predicting that the slaves would eventually rise up in violent revolt.

3. T F Prosouthern Kansas pioneers brought numerous slaves with them in order to guarantee that Kansas would not become a free state.

4. T F The violence in Kansas was provoked by both radical abolitionists and militant proslavery forces who sought to control the territory.

5. T F Senator Stephen Douglas’s support for the proslavery Lecompton Constitution demonstrated that the Democratic party was completely beholden to its southern wing.

6. T F After Congressman Preston Brooks nearly beat Senator Charles Sumner to death on the Senate floor, South Carolina reelected Brooks and Massachusetts reelected Sumner.

7. T F Although Republican John C. Frément lost the presidency to Democrat James Buchanan, the election of 1856 demonstrated the growing power of the new antislavery party.

8. T F The *Dred Scott* decision upheld the doctrine of popular sovereignty that the people of each territory should determine whether or not to permit slavery.

9. T F In the Lincoln-Douglas debates, Lincoln’s criticisms forced Douglas to back away from his support for popular sovereignty as the solution to the slavery question in the West.

10. T F The South was enraged by many northerners’ celebration of John Brown as a martyr.

11. T F Northern Democrats walked out of the Democratic party convention in 1860 when southerners nominated Vice President John Breckenridge for president.
12. T F The election of 1860 was really two campaigns, Lincoln versus Douglas in the North and Bell versus Breckinridge in the South.

13. T F The overwhelming support for Lincoln in the North gave him a majority of the total popular vote despite winning almost no votes in the South.

14. T F Seven states seceded and formed the Confederate States of America during the “lame-duck” period between Lincoln’s election and his inauguration.

15. T F Lincoln made a strong effort to get the South to accept the Crittenden Compromise in order to avoid a civil war.

B. Multiple Choice

Select the best answer and circle the corresponding letter.

1. Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*
   a. was strongly rooted in religiously based antislavery sentiments.
   b. argued that nonslaveholding whites suffered the most from slavery.
   c. helped northerners understand that southerners disliked the cruelty of slavery.
   d. was based on Stowe’s extensive personal experience with slavery in the Deep South.
   e. portrayed black slaves as seething with anger and potential violence.

2. Hinton R. Helper’s *The Impending Crisis of the South* contended that
   a. the Founders had intended that slavery should eventually be eliminated.
   b. slavery was contrary to the religious values held by most Americans.
   c. slavery did great harm to the poor whites of the South.
   d. slavery violated the human rights of African Americans.
   e. wealthy plantation owners would eventually seek to enslave poor whites as well.

3. Southerners were especially enraged by abolitionists’ funding of antislavery settlers in Kansas because
   a. proslavery settlers from Missouri could not receive the same kind of funding.
   b. such sponsored settlement would make a mockery of Douglas’s popular sovereignty doctrine.
   c. the settlers included fanatical and violent abolitionists like John Brown.
   d. most ordinary westward-moving pioneers would be sympathetic to slavery.
   e. Douglas’s Kansas-Nebraska had seemed to imply that Kansas would become a slave state.

4. As submitted to Congress, the Lecompton Constitution was designed to
   a. bring Kansas into the Union as a free state.
   b. bring Kansas into the Union as a slave state and Nebraska as a free state.
   c. prohibit both antislavery New Englanders or proslavery Missourians from interference in Kansas politics.
   d. insure that the future of slavery would be determined according to Douglas’s principle of popular sovereignty.
   e. bring Kansas into the Union, while making it impossible to prohibit slavery there.

5. The fanatical abolitionist John Brown made his first entry into violent antislavery politics by
   a. killing five proslavery settlers at Pottawatomie Creek, Kansas.
   b. organizing a slave rebellion in Missouri.
   c. leading an armed raid on the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia.
   d. organizing an armed militia of blacks and whites to conduct escaped slaves to Canada.
   e. soliciting funds from abolitionists intellectuals in Massachusetts to finance a slave revolt.
6. Congressman Preston Brooks beat Senator Charles Sumner nearly to death on the Senate floor because
   a. Sumner had helped to fund John Brown’s violent activities in Kansas.
   b. Sumner had used abusive language to describe the South and a South Carolina senator.
   c. Sumner had personally blocked the admission of Kansas to the Union as a slave state.
   d. Sumner had threatened to kill Brooks if he had the opportunity.
   e. Democrats believed that Sumner would be a dangerous Republican candidate for president.

7. The election of 1856 was most noteworthy for
   a. Democrat James Buchanan’s surprisingly easy victory over John Frémont.
   b. the support immigrants and Catholics gave to the American party.
   c. the dramatic rise of the Republican party.
   d. the absence of the slavery issue from the campaign.
   e. the strong showing of former president Millard Fillmore as the American party candidate.

8. In the *Dred Scott* decision, the Supreme Court
   a. avoided controversy by ruling that the slave Dred Scott had no right to sue in federal court.
   b. ruled that the Kansas-Nebraska Act was unconstitutional.
   c. ruled that Congress could not prohibit slavery in any of the territories because slaves were private property of which owners could not be deprived.
   d. ruled that Dred Scott was still a slave because he had not filed suit until he had been returned to the slave state of Missouri.
   e. ruled that Dred Scott had to be freed because his owner had taken him into the free state of Illinois.

9. The financial and economic collapse of 1857 increased northern anger at the South’s refusal to support
   a. banking regulation and development of a sound paper currency.
   b. a transcontinental railroad and transatlantic telegraph.
   c. publicly supported state universities.
   d. the admission of any more free states into the Union.
   e. higher tariffs and free western homesteads for farmers.

10. The crucial Freeport Question that Lincoln demanded that Douglas answer during their debates was whether
    a. secession from the Union was legal.
    b. the people of a territory could prohibit slavery in light of the *Dred Scott* decision.
    c. Illinois should continue to prohibit slavery.
    d. Kansas should be admitted to the Union as a slave or a free state.
    e. Douglas still supported the brutal Fugitive Slave Law as part of the Compromise of 1850.

11. Southerners were particularly enraged by the John Brown affair because
    a. so many slaves had joined the insurrection.
    b. northerners’ celebration of Brown as a martyr seemed to indicate their support for slave insurrection.
    c. Brown had used vicious language to describe southerners and their way of life.
    d. Brown escaped punishment by pleading insanity.
    e. prominent Republican leaders like William Seward and Abraham Lincoln expressed admiration for Brown.
12. In the campaign of 1860, the Democratic party
   a. tried to unite around the compromise popular sovereignty views of Stephen A. Douglas.
   b. campaigned on a platform of restoring the compromises of 1820 and 1850.
   c. split in two, with each faction nominating its own presidential candidate.
   d. threatened to support secession if the sectionally-based Republicans won the election.
   e. attempted to keep its militant fire-eating southern wing out of sight.

13. During the campaign of 1860, Abraham Lincoln and the Republican party
   a. opposed the expansion of slavery but did not threaten to attack slavery in the South.
   b. waged a national campaign to win votes in the South as well as the Midwest and the Northeast.
   c. promised, if elected, to seek peaceful, compensated abolition of slavery in the South.
   d. were forced to be cautious about limiting the expansion of slavery because of Stephen A. Douglas’s threats to support secession.
   e. focused entirely on the slavery question.

14. Within two months after the election of Lincoln
   a. Northerners were mobilizing for a civil war.
   b. seven southern states had seceded and formed the Confederate States of America.
   c. all the slaveholding states had held conventions and passed secessionist resolutions.
   d. President Buchanan appealed for troops to put down the secessionist rebellion.
   e. the southern states had demanded a new constitutional convention to guarantee the future of slavery.

15. Lincoln rejected the proposed Crittenden Compromise primarily because
   a. it left open the possibility that slavery could expand south into Mexico, Central America, or the Caribbean.
   b. it permitted the further extension of slavery north of the line of 36° 30′.
   c. it represented essentially the continuation of Douglas’s popular sovereignty doctrine.
   d. the Supreme Court would probably have ruled it unconstitutional.
   e. it would have restored a permanent equal balance of slave and free states within the Union.

C. Identification

Supply the correct identification for each numbered description.

1. ________ A powerful, evangelical antislavery novel that altered the course of American politics
2. ________ A book by a southern writer that argued that slavery was most oppressive for poor whites
3. ________ Nickname for rifles paid for by New England abolitionists and brought to Kansas by antislavery pioneers
4. ________ Term that described the prairie territory where a small-scale civil war between abolitionists and proslavery border ruffians erupted in 1856
5. ________ Tricky proslavery document designed to bring Kansas into the Union; blocked by Stephen A. Douglas
6. ________ Anti-immigrant party headed by former president Millard Fillmore that competed with Republicans and Democrats in the election of 1856 (either official name or informal nickname)
7. ________ Controversial Supreme Court ruling that blacks had no civil or human rights and that Congress could not prohibit slavery in the territories
8. ________ Sharp economic decline that increased northern demands for a high tariff and convinced southerners that the North was economically vulnerable

9. ________ Stephen Douglas’s assertion in the Lincoln-Douglas debates that, despite the *Dred Scott* decision, the people of a territory could block slavery by refusing to pass legislation enforcing it

10. ________ Newly formed, middle-of-the-road party of elderly politicians that sought compromise in 1860, but carried only three border states

11. ________ Western Virginia town where a violent abolitionist seized a federal arsenal in hopes of sparking a widespread slave rebellion

12. ________ A new nation that proclaimed its independence in Montgomery, Alabama, in February 1861

13. ________ A last-ditch plan to save the Union by guaranteeing that slavery would be protected in territories lying south of the line of 36° 30’

14. ________ Four-way race for the presidency that resulted in the election of a sectional minority president

15. ________ Period between Lincoln’s election and his inauguration, during which the ineffectual President Buchanan passively stood by as seven states seceded

**D. Matching People, Places, and Events**

Match the person, place, or event in the left column with the proper description in the right column by inserting the correct letter on the blank line.

1. ___ Harriet Beecher Stowe  a. Southern congressman whose bloody attack on a northern senator fueled sectional hatred

2. ___ Hinton R. Helper  b. Leading northern Democrat whose presidential hopes fell victim to the conflict over slavery

3. ___ Henry Ward Beecher  c. Black slave whose unsuccessful attempt to win his freedom deepened the sectional controversy

4. ___ John Brown  d. Former United States senator who, in 1861, became the president of what called itself a new nation

5. ___ James Buchanan  e. “The little woman who wrote the book that made this great war” (the Civil War)

6. ___ Charles Sumner  f. Fanatical and bloody-minded abolitionist martyr admired in the North and hated in the South

7. ___ Preston Brooks  g. Southern-born author whose book attacking slavery’s effects on whites aroused northern opinion

8. ___ John C. Frémont

9. ___ Dred Scott

10. ___ Harpers Ferry, Virginia

11. ___ Stephen A. Douglas

12. ___ Pottawatomie Creek, Kansas

13. ___ John C. Breckenridge

14. ___ Montgomery, Alabama

15. ___ Jefferson Davis
h. Scene of militant abolitionist John Brown’s massacre of proslavery men in 1856
i. Site where seven seceding states united to declare their independence from the United States
j. Romantic western hero and the first Republican candidate for president
k. Abolitionist senator whose verbal attack on the South provoked a physical assault that severely injured him
l. Site of a federal arsenal where a militant abolitionist attempted to start a slave rebellion
m. Buchanan’s vice president, nominated for president by breakaway southern Democrats in 1860
n. Weak Democratic president whose manipulation by proslavery forces divided his own party
o. Preacher-abolitionist who funded weapons for antislavery pioneers in Kansas

E. Putting Things in Order
Put the following events in correct order by numbering them from 1 to 6.

1. ___ A black slave’s attempt to win freedom produces a controversial Supreme Court decision.
2. ___ A newly organized territory becomes a bloody battleground between proslavery and antislavery forces.
3. ___ The hanging of a fanatically violent abolitionist makes him a martyr in the North and a hated symbol in the South.
4. ___ A black Republican whose minority sectional victory in a presidential election provokes southern secession.
5. ___ The fictional tale of a black slave’s vicious treatment by the cruel Simon Legree touches millions of northern hearts and creates stronger opposition to slavery.
6. ___ A group of states calling itself a new southern nation declares its independence and chooses its first president.
F. Matching Cause and Effect

Match the historical cause in the left column with the proper effect in the right column by writing the correct letter on the blank line.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause</th>
<th>Effect</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. ___ H. B. Stowe’s <em>Uncle Tom’s Cabin</em></td>
<td>a. Moved South Carolina to declare immediate secession from the Union</td>
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<td>2. ___ The exercise of popular sovereignty in Kansas</td>
<td>b. Shattered one of the last links between the sections and almost guaranteed Lincoln’s victory in 1860</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. ___ Buchanan’s support for the proslavery Lecompton Constitution</td>
<td>c. Convinced southerners that the North generally supported murder and slave rebellion</td>
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<td>4. ___ The <em>Dred Scott</em> case</td>
<td>d. Made Lincoln a leading national Republican figure and hurt Douglas’s presidential chances</td>
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<td>5. ___ The 1858 Illinois senate race</td>
<td>e. Ended the last hopes of a peaceable sectional settlement and an end to secession</td>
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<td>6. ___ John Brown’s raid on Harpers Ferry</td>
<td>f. Paralyzed the North while the southern secessionist movement gained momentum</td>
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<td>7. ___ The splitting of the Democratic party in 1860</td>
<td>g. Infuriated Republicans and made them determined to defy the Supreme Court</td>
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<td>8. ___ The election of Lincoln as president</td>
<td>h. Offended Senator Douglas and divided the Democratic party</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. ___ The “lame-duck” period and Buchanan’s indecisiveness</td>
<td>i. Persuaded millions of northerners and Europeans that slavery was evil and should be eliminated</td>
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<td>10. ___ Lincoln’s rejection of the Crittenden Compromise</td>
<td>j. Led to a mini prairie civil war between proslavery and antislavery factions</td>
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</table>
G. Developing Historical Skills

Interpreting Primary-Source Documents

In order properly to interpret primary-source documents in history, two skills are essential: first, the ability to read closely and carefully for the intended meaning; and second, the ability to understand the historical context and possible implications of a text or statement.

The small, boxed samples of primary documents in this chapter demonstrate these principles. The questions below will help you practice the skills of textual interpretation by asking you to read the documents very carefully for meaning and to consider some of their implications.

1. Lincoln’s statement from the Lincoln-Douglas debate (p. 450)
   a. In what ways does Lincoln claim that blacks are equal to whites, and in what ways does he claim that whites are superior?
   b. What do the first two sentences tell you about the reason Lincoln is making a distinction between equality of natural rights and complete equality of the races?

2. John Brown’s letter before his hanging (p. 451)
   a. What does Brown mean when he writes that “I am worth inconceivably more to hang than for any other purpose. . . .”?
   b. What does Brown’s statement imply about how abolitionists might make use of Brown’s impending death?

   a. What two arguments does Greeley use for letting the seceding states “go in peace”?
   b. The editorial was written three days after Lincoln’s election. What fear is motivating Greeley?
4. Letter of South Carolina Senator Hammond (p. 457)
   a. What does the letter suggest will be the federal government’s response to secession?
   b. Why did the attitude reflected in the letter make efforts like the Crittenden Compromise fail?

5. London Times editorial (p. 458)
   a. What is the editorial’s view of the relation between the southern states and the United States government?
   b. What position does it appear the London Times would advocate the British government take regarding the American Civil War?

6. Harriet Beecher Stowe’s Uncle Tom’s Cabin (pp. 438–439).
   a. What details in Stowe’s account of Tom’s last morning in the cabin before the sale of his family might especially appeal to female readers?
   b. How does Stowe characterize the black slave Tom and his wife Chloe?
   c. What details in the excerpts in Examining the Evidence (p. 439) and on p. 438 show Stowe’s explicit appeal to the religious sentiments of her readers?

H. Map Mastery

Map Discrimination
Using the maps and charts in Chapter 19, answer the following questions.

1. Presidential Election of 1856: In the presidential election of 1856, how many electoral votes did Buchanan get from the free states? (See map of The Legal Status of Slavery, Chapter 17, for free and slave states.)
2. *Presidential Election of 1856; Presidential Election of 1860 (electoral vote by state)*: Which four states carried by Democrat Buchanan in 1856 were also carried completely by Republican Lincoln in 1860?

3. *Presidential Election of 1860 (showing popular vote by county)*: Using this map of the presidential voting by counties in 1860, indicate which five states gave Douglas his strongest support.

4. *Presidential Election of 1860 (showing popular vote by county)*: In which five states did Bell receive his strongest support?

5. *Presidential Election of 1860 (showing popular vote by county)*: Which Border State was the most closely divided among Douglas, Bell, and Breckenridge?

6. *Presidential Election of 1860 (showing popular vote by county)*: Which state was the only one divided among Lincoln, Douglas, and Breckenridge?

7. *Presidential Election of 1860 (showing vote by county)*: In which six northern states did Lincoln carry every single county?

8. *Southern Opposition to Secession, 1860–1861*: In which four future Confederate states was the opposition to secession strongest?

9. *Southern Opposition to Secession, 1860–1861*: In which three states did every single county for which returns are available support secession?

10. *Southern Opposition to Secession, 1860–1861*: In which two states were many county conventions divided about secession?
Map Challenge

Using the electoral maps of *The Presidential Election of 1856* and *The Presidential Election of 1860*, write a brief essay in which you describe what political changes enabled the Republicans to turn defeat in 1856 into victory in 1860.

**PART III: APPLYING WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED**

1. How did the development of a violent mini civil war in the territory of Kansas demonstrate a fatal flaw in Stephen Douglas’s popular sovereignty doctrine that the people of each territory should settle the slavery question for themselves?

2. Argue for or against: John Brown was actually a terrorist who successfully used violence to polarize North and South and help bring on the Civil War.

3. Why was the Democratic party, as the only remaining national party, unable to avoid the growing sectional polarization of the 1850s.

4. Explain the crucial role of Stephen A. Douglas in the political events of the 1850s. Why did Douglas’s attempts to keep the conflict over slavery out of national politics fail? Might he have succeeded if proslavery extremists had not tried to bring Kansas in as a slave state under the Lecompton Constitution?

5. Some historians argue that American political parties have been strictly practical coalitions, not ideological movements. Yet the Republican Party came into existence primarily to oppose the extension of slavery. What explains the rise of such an ideological single-issue party in the 1850s? Why did the other single-issue party of the time—the anti-immigrant Know-Nothings—eventually fail, while the Republicans not only survived but took power in 1860?

6. If Congress had passed and the states ratified the Crittenden Compromise, could it have prevented or at least postponed the Civil War? Was Lincoln wrong to kill the Crittenden Compromise without trying it? Why was compromise successful in 1820 and 1850 but not 1860?

7. Why did so many northerners, including prominent intellectuals like Ralph Waldo Emerson, celebrate a violent fanatic like John Brown as a noble martyr comparable to Jesus. Why did southerners refuse to believe it when mainstream Republicans like Abraham Lincoln condemned Brown?

8. Abraham Lincoln and the Republicans frequently declared that they sought only to prevent the expansion of slavery and not to overturn slavery where it existed. Yet immediately after Lincoln’s election seven southern states marched out of the Union, without waiting to see what Lincoln’s policies would be. Why? Were southern fears of Lincoln rational or irrational?