

## **II. Growth and Decline of the Union**

### A. William Lloyd Garrison and Abolitionism

1. As it gradually became obvious that slavery could not be eliminated by the federal government because of the Constitution and the separation of powers, opponents of slavery began to work harder to convince people that slavery is wrong.
2. These people wanted to abolish slavery, and thus they are known as “abolitionists.”
3. One of the most famous abolitionists was William Lloyd Garrison of Massachusetts. Garrison published a newspaper called the Liberator and created the New England Anti-slavery Society.
4. In a famous speech that he gave, Garrison explained that the Declaration of Independence was more important than the Constitution. It was because of his agreement with the Declaration of Independence that he was an abolitionist: “I am a believer in that portion of the Declaration of American Independence in which it is set forth, as among self-evident truths, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Hence, I am an abolitionist.”

### B. Frederick Douglass: Hero Against Racism

1. A slave revolt in Virginia in 1831 resulted in the death of 60 white slave holders.
2. Southerners believed that the barbaric nature of black slaves was due to the fact that they were of an inferior race, and that this violence showed how abolitionism was a threat to civilization.
3. What Southerners refused to see was that freed black slaves, many of whom escaped from their owners into the North, did learn to become educated, civilized men, despite having been oppressed as slaves in their early life.
4. Among the greatest examples of the noble potential of every black slave was Frederick Douglass, a slave who had taught himself to read, and who as an adult had escaped to the North.
5. Douglass became a famous abolitionist. He was a great writer and orator. No one who read or heard his words could think of him as inferior just because he had dark skin.
6. Southerners may have preferred to ignore that the greatness of freedmen like Douglass proved that slavery was a terrible evil, but they became a symbol that inspired Northerners to continue to fight to bring an end to slavery in the United States.

### C. Texas Joins the Union (1845)

1. Although the Louisiana Purchase did not include Texas, Americans led by Stephen Austin and Sam Houston had colonized part of that area with the permission of the Mexican government.
2. These settlers carried the American culture of self-government with them, along with their slaves.
3. In 1836, the Mexican government, led by a military leader named General Santa Anna had grown tired of the Texans' belligerent independence, and decided to force Texas to give up its state government. The Texans rebelled.
4. During this rebellion, the famous Battle of the Alamo occurred, where the Texans were defeated. In the next, and decisive battle, the Battle of San Jacinto, the rallying

cry of the Texans was “Remember the Alamo!” and after the victory the Texans won their independence.

5. From 1836-45, Texas was an independent country, often called the “Lone Star Republic.”
6. In 1845, Texas applied to become a part of the United States.
7. Northerners were upset that this would mean the further expansion of slavery, but another compromise was fashioned whereby the United States took over the Oregon Territory, which would be free of slavery.
8. As it turned out, Texas was the last slave state to join the Union.

#### D. The Mexican-American War (1846-47)

1. A clear border between Texas and Mexico had never been agreed upon.
2. American troops were sent to defend the Rio Grande as the proper border, however Mexican forces attacked these troops and President James Polk declared war on Mexico.
3. The American army was much stronger than the Mexican army. It easily conquered California and even Mexico City itself.
4. This caused Mexico to cede a huge territory (from Texas to the Pacific Coast) to the United States in 1848. This territory was referred to as the “Mexican Cession.”

#### E. California Enters the Union: the Compromise of 1850

1. In 1848, gold was discovered in California, causing a “gold rush”. Within a year, over 100,000 people had moved to that territory.
2. The addition of Missouri and Texas to the Union as slave states had required compromises to appease opponents of slavery. Now the entry of California into the Union as a *free* state had to involve a compromise on behalf of the slave South.
3. The first element of the compromise involved the status of territories.
  - a) To insure that slavery could continue to expand, the Utah and New Mexico territories were created.
  - b) It was decided that the people who settled in those territories would get to choose whether or not slavery was allowed. This was called “popular sovereignty”—a complicated sounding expression, which simply means “democracy.” *(The fact that people could vote to impose slavery on their fellow human beings in this chapter of American history is another key historical indictment of the form of government known as “democracy,” along side the ancient example of the Death of Socrates. It is commonplace today to speak of democracy as a favorable form of government, and to say that America is a democracy. This is false, and destructive. Democracy means the rule of the majority, where, as Thomas Jefferson said “fifty-one percent of the people may take away the rights of the other forty-nine.” America was founded as a “republic”—a government dedicated to the protection of individual rights.)*
  - c) Since previously slavery had been limited in territories by the federal government, this was a positive development for supporters of slavery.

### **III. The End of Union in Men's Minds**

#### A. The Kansas Nebraska Act of 1854

1. In 1854, the Federal government created the territories of Kansas and Nebraska.
2. It was decided that slavery would be handled in these territories, as it had been handled in Utah and New Mexico, by “popular sovereignty” or “democracy.”
3. Because Kansas was in the very center of the country geographically, both Southerners and Northerners rushed to the state to try to settle it first and democratically create a state government.
4. This contest for Kansas almost erupted into a civil war, as both sides were willing to resort to violence to win the contest for land.

#### B. The Dred Scott Case

1. In 1857, the new Fugitive Slave Law came into conflict with the Missouri Compromise.
2. A slave named Dred Scott was taken by his master from the south Illinois (a state where slavery was illegal) and into the Minnesota Territory (where slavery was also illegal) and then returned to the south as a slave.
3. Scott sued his master for his freedom, claiming that he had been made free by being a resident of a territory.
4. The case eventually was brought before the Supreme Court, which judged that the Federal government had no authority to prevent slavery in the territories, because this power was not granted to it by the Constitution.
5. As a result of the decision, the terms of the Compromise of 1850 replaced the Missouri Compromise for all territories. (Popular sovereignty now applied in all territories.)

#### C. The 1860 Presidential Election

1. In 1858, Abraham Lincoln (a Republican) and Stephen Douglas (a Democrat) contested the Illinois elections for Senator. Although Lincoln lost that election, his debates against Douglas made him famous as an opponent of slavery.
2. Perhaps Lincoln's most impressive denunciation of slavery from these debates is the following quote, reminiscent of the language of William Lloyd Garrison: *“This declared indifference...for the spread of slavery, I cannot but hate. I hate it because of the monstrous injustice of slavery itself. I hate it because it deprives our republican example of its just influence in the world—enables the enemies of free institutions, with plausibility, to taunt us as hypocrites—causes the real friends of freedom to doubt our sincerity, and especially because it forces so many really good men amongst ourselves into an open war with the very fundamental principles of civil liberty—criticizing the Declaration of Independence.”*
3. In 1860, Lincoln was elected president, and would begin his term in early 1861.
4. Although Lincoln had explained his views that he did not think there was anything the Federal government could do to stop slavery, Southerners were still alarmed by his election.
5. In late 1860, South Carolina decided to leave the Union, and other states followed in a *secession* from the United States. This started the crisis that would lead to the Civil War.