

II. Growth and Decline of the Union

A. Abolitionism

1. As it gradually became obvious that slavery could not be eliminated by the Federal government because of the limits placed on changes to the Constitution, 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.*”
5. Another abolitionist was Frederick Douglass, one of the greatest examples of the noble potential of every black slave—a slave who had taught himself to read, and who as an adult had escaped to the North.
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.

B. 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. In 1836, the Mexican government, led by a military leader named General Santa Anna, decided to force Texas to give up its state government, and the Texans rebelled.
3. During this rebellion, the famous Battle of the Alamo occurred, where the Texans were defeated, but after a victory in the Battle of San Jacinto, the Texans won their independence.
4. From 1836-45, Texas was an independent country, often called the “Lone Star Republic.”
5. In 1845, Texas became the last *slave* state to join the Union.

C. The Mexican-American War (1846-47)

1. A clear border between Texas and Mexico had never been agreed upon.
2. This resulted in border skirmishes between America and Mexico, that eventually led to a full-blown war.
3. The American army easily defeated Mexico, and 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.”

D. 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.”
 - 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. A slave named Dred Scott was taken by his master from the south to 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.
2. Scott sued his master for his freedom, claiming that he had been made free by being a resident of a territory.
3. 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.
4. As a result of the decision, the Compromise of 1850 replaced the Missouri Compromise. Slavery was now possible in all territories.

C. The 1860 Presidential Election

1. In 1860, Abraham Lincoln of Illinois was elected president. He was to begin his term as president in early 1861.
2. 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 because he was an abolitionist.
3. In late 1860, South Carolina decided to leave the Union, and was soon followed by other states in a “secession” from the Union. This started the crisis that would lead to the Civil War.