

The Fugitive Slave Act

Part of the Compromise of 1850 was the Fugitive Slave Act. Anyone who helped a fugitive could be fined or imprisoned. Some Northerners refused to obey the new law. In his 1849 essay "Civil Disobedience," Henry David Thoreau wrote that if the law "requires you to be the agent [cause] of injustice to another, then I say, break the law." Northern juries refused to convict people accused of breaking the new law. People gave money to buy freedom for enslaved people. Free African Americans and whites formed a **network**, or interconnected system, called the Underground Railroad to help runaways find their way to freedom. Democrat Franklin Pierce became president in 1853. He intended to enforce the Fugitive Slave Act.

PROGRESS CHECK

Explaining Who formed the Free-Soil Party and why?

The Kansas-Nebraska Act

GUIDING QUESTION *What is the Kansas-Nebraska Act?*

In 1854 Senator Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois introduced a bill to settle the issue of slavery in the territories. It organized the region west of Missouri and Iowa as the territories of Kansas and Nebraska. Both were north of 36°30' N latitude, the line that limited slavery. Before the law they would have been free, giving the free states more votes in the Senate and angering the South.

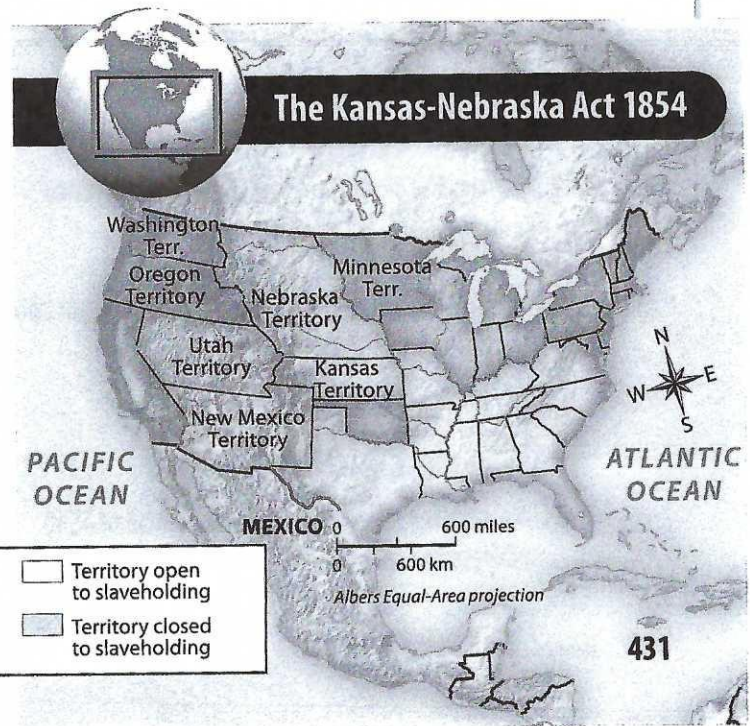
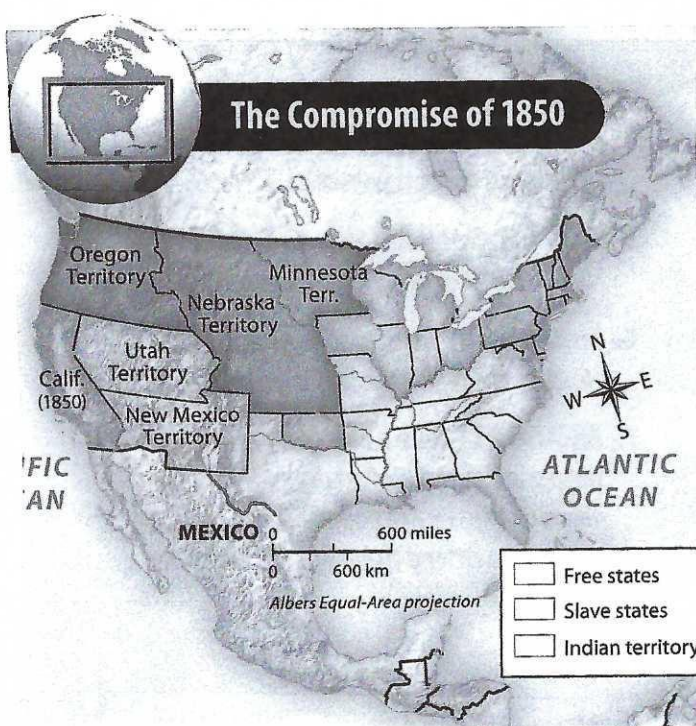
Douglas hoped to make his plan acceptable to both the North and South. He proposed repealing the Missouri Compromise and letting the voters in each territory vote on whether to allow slavery. He called his proposal "popular sovereignty."

GEOGRAPHY CONNECTION

As the United States grew, so did the debate over slaveholding.

1 PLACE Which territories did not allow slavery in 1854?

2 CRITICAL THINKING
Analyzing Which side in the slavery debate lost territory because of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854?



This idea, which is central to the American system of government, means that the people are the source of all government power. Douglas's *popular sovereignty* came to mean a particular method for deciding the question of slavery in a place.

Northerners protested. The plan allowed slavery in areas that had been free for years. Southerners supported the bill. They expected Kansas to be settled mostly by slaveholders from Missouri. They would, of course, vote to keep slavery legal. With some support from Northern Democrats and the backing of President Pierce, the Kansas-Nebraska Act passed in 1854.

Conflict in Kansas

Supporters of both sides rushed to Kansas. Armed pro-slavery supporters known as **border ruffians** (BOHR•duhr RUH•fee•uhns) crossed the border from Missouri just to vote. When elections took place, only about 1,500 voters lived in Kansas, but more than 6,000 people voted. The pro-slavery group won.

Kansas established laws supporting slavery. Slavery opponents refused to accept the laws. They armed themselves, held their own elections, and adopted a constitution banning slavery. By January 1856, Kansas had two rival governments.

In May 1856, slavery supporters attacked the town of Lawrence, an antislavery stronghold. Antislavery forces retaliated. John Brown led an attack that killed five supporters of slavery. Newspapers wrote about "Bleeding Kansas" and "the Civil War in Kansas." A **civil war** is war between citizens of the same country. In October 1856, federal troops arrived to stop the bloodshed.

border ruffian armed pro-slavery supporter who crossed the border from Missouri to vote in Kansas

civil war conflict between citizens of the same country

PROGRESS CHECK

Identifying Cause and Effect What events led to "Bleeding Kansas"?

LESSON 1 REVIEW



Review Vocabulary

1. Explain the significance of the following terms.
 - a. fugitive
 - b. secede
2. Use the following terms in a short paragraph about Kansas in the 1850s.
 - a. border ruffians
 - b. civil war

Answer the Guiding Questions

3. **Describing** How did the Compromise of 1850 address the question of slavery?

4. **Analyzing** What was the Wilmot Proviso? Why was it so controversial?

5. **Explaining** How did Stephen Douglas help win approval of the Compromise of 1850?

6. **Listing** What were some ways that Northerners defied the Fugitive Slave Act?

7. **ARGUMENT** Write a dialogue between two people in Nebraska who are expressing their views on the issue of popular sovereignty. Have one person defend the policy and the other oppose it.