

Slavery, the Civil War, and Reconstruction

Slavery in the Territories

Before the Civil War, the nation was already divided. The country was divided over the issue of slavery. In the North, there were fewer slaves than in the South. There were mostly shops and **industries**¹ that did not need slave labor. In the South, large **plantation**² owners kept many slaves to work the fields and even serve in the houses. So why couldn't the North and the South just agree to be different?

Slavery became a moral issue. More and more Northerners were against the idea of owning people as if they were property. At first they let slavery continue in the South. But in 1860 America was growing. People were moving west to new territories. As the territories gained more and more people, they could ask to be an official state of the United States of America. Would these new states allow slavery? In answer to this question, Northerners yelled “NO!” But Southerners yelled, “YES!”

There were many fights in Congress about slavery in the territories. At first, Congress made a **compromise**³ (the Missouri Compromise of 1820). They decided to keep a balance. All territories below the line of latitude 36°30' would be slave states, like the southern states that were their neighbors. All states above 36°30' would be free. No slavery would be allowed. The latitude line 36°30' is also known as the Mason-Dixon line — the dividing line between the North and South.

But the compromise did not work for long. Senators needed another idea to keep the balance of slave states and free states. They decided to let people in the territories vote to decide for themselves whether or not they would be free. The voting idea was a disaster. On the night before the vote that would determine whether Kansas would be a free state or a slave state, thousands of men from Missouri spent the night in Kansas. These men wanted Kansas to have slavery, so they sneaked in to vote. Northerners called these men “border ruffians.” The next day, they voted. They did not really live there, so their votes should not have counted. When the results came back, Kansas was voted a slave state. But the United States government did nothing to stop the madness.

¹ **industries** – factories or business that produce goods

² **plantation** – a large farm on which crops, especially cotton, are grown and harvested by workers who live there

³ **compromise** – a settlement of an argument in which each side gives up some of its demands

The fight over slavery was everywhere – even in the United States Senate! One day a Senator from Massachusetts, Charles Sumner, stood on the Senate floor and gave a long, heated speech about the morality of the North and the evil **injustice**⁴ of the South. He said that Southerners were all horrible and devilish. He was especially mad at southern Senators, including Andrew Butler from South Carolina. Two days later Senator Butler’s cousin showed up in the Senate. His name was Preston Brooks. Brooks took his cane and started beating Charles Sumner over the head! A fight had broken out on the Senate floor! Sumner was badly hurt. Northerners called him a hero. But Southerners were proud of the way Brooks defended their ideas. The division had already begun. It was only a matter of time before the southern Senators would leave Washington, D.C. and make their own country in the South.

⁴ **injustice** – unfairness

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Where did many slaves work in the South?

- A on large plantations
- B in the Senate
- C in clothing factories
- D in shipyards

2. What problem did the Missouri Compromise try to solve?

- A whether Missouri would join the Confederacy
- B whether the North would begin having slavery
- C whether Missouri would become a state
- D whether new states would have slavery or not

3. Allowing territories to vote on whether they would be free or slave states was a disaster. What evidence from the passage supports this conclusion?

- A Charles Sumner was physically attacked on the Senate floor.
- B "Border ruffians" sneaked into states to influence the vote.
- C States below the Mason-Dixon line became slave states.
- D There were many fights in Congress over slavery in the territories.

4. How might some northern Senators have felt after Charles Sumner was physically attacked in the Senate?

- A pleased and proud
- B tired and defeated
- C upset and concerned
- D amused and victorious

5. What is this passage mostly about?

- A slavery outside of what is now the United States
- B how much land people had to own in order to own slaves
- C fights in Congress throughout United States history
- D the issue of slavery in new territories before the Civil War

6. Read the following sentences: "Slavery became a **moral** issue. More and more Northerners were against the idea of owning people as if they were property."

What does the word "**moral**" mean?

- A related to war and fighting
- B mathematical in nature
- C related to money and business
- D concerning right and wrong

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

Slavery became something people fought about everywhere, _____ the Senate floor.

- A although
- B after
- C including
- D while

8. What did the Missouri Compromise state?

9. When the Missouri Compromise failed to maintain balance between slave states and free states, what did U.S. senators decide to do?

10. Explain whether voting was a successful solution to the problem of maintaining balance between slave and free states. Support your answer using information from the passage.
