

## 8: THE CIVIL WAR

### ESSENTIAL TERMS



#### PEOPLE AND GROUPS

**Abolitionist:** A person who worked to end slavery.

**Eli Whitney:** Inventor of the cotton gin. He hoped it would help end slavery by replacing slaves. Instead, planters used more slaves to grow more cotton because the machine could remove the seeds more quickly at less cost.

**Frederick Douglass:** An escaped slave and prolific orator. His autobiography was widely read.

**Harriet Beecher Stowe:** Abolitionist author of "Uncle Tom's Cabin."

**Harriet Tubman:** A slave who escaped to the North but returned thirteen times to guide other slaves to freedom. Tubman was nicknamed "Moses" and was the most famous conductor on the Underground Railroad. She also worked for women's rights and was a spy for the North during the Civil War.

**Henry Ward Beecher:** An American Congregationalist minister social reformer, and speaker, known for his support of the abolition of slavery, and his emphasis on God's love.

**Nat Turner:** An American slave who led a slave rebellion in Virginia on August 21, 1831, that resulted in 60 white deaths and at least 100 black deaths, the largest number of fatalities to occur in one uprising prior to the American Civil War in the Southern United States.

**Sojourner Truth:** An African-American abolitionist and women's rights activist. Truth was born into slavery in Swartekill, Ulster County, New York, but escaped with her infant daughter to freedom in 1826. Her best-known speech became widely known during the Civil War by the title "Ain't I a Woman?"

**William Lloyd Garrison:** White abolitionist who published "The Liberator."

**Border Ruffians:** A nickname given to a group of pro-slavery men who went to Kansas to try to terrorize the people there who were opposed to slavery.

**Daniel Webster:** Senator from Massachusetts. He was opposed to slavery but more than anything worked to preserve the Union and prevent Southern secession. Along with Henry Clay and John C. Calhoun he helped broker the Compromise of 1850.

**Free Soil Party:** A political party that existed during the 1850s. They believed that slavery should not be permitted in the territories of the West saying, "Free Men on Free Soil." Most Free Soilers eventually joined the Republican Party.

**Henry Clay:** Congressman from Kentucky who ran many times but never won the presidency. He is remembered as one of the three great dealmakers of the early 1800s who helped prevent civil war over slavery by negotiating the Missouri Compromise and the Compromise of 1850.

**John Brown:** A fierce abolitionist who moved to Kansas with his family. He led the Pottawatomie Creek Massacre and later led an attack on the federal arsenal at Harper's Ferry in the hope of leading a slave rebellion that would bring about the end of slavery. He was hated by Southerners but became a martyr for the abolitionist cause.

**John C. Calhoun:** Senator from South Carolina. In the decades before the Civil War he was the strongest voice for states' rights and defender of slavery. Along with Henry Clay and Daniel Webster he helped broker the Compromise of 1850.

**Republican Party:** A political party founded in the 1850s which initially opposed the expansion of slavery into the territories of the West. Abraham Lincoln was the first Republican president. Eventually the party worked to end slavery altogether.

**Stephen Douglas:** Senator from Illinois. He was opposed to slavery but wanted to preserve the Union. He believed that the best way was to let the people of each new state decide for themselves if slavery would be permitted. This idea, popular sovereignty is most strongly associated with Douglas.

**Charles Sumner:** Senator from Massachusetts, abolitionist, and leader of the Radical Republicans who advocated for immediate abolition.

**Jefferson Davis:** President of the Confederacy. Usually regarded as an ineffective wartime leader.

**Robert E. Lee:** Brilliant general from Virginia who led the assault on John Brown at Harper's Ferry and later led the Confederate armies during the Civil War. His surrender to Ulysses S. Grant ended the war.

**Roger Taney:** The Supreme Court Chief Justice who wrote the Dred Scott decision

**George McClellan:** General who led the Union army at the start of the war. He infuriated Lincoln with his unwillingness to lead his troops into battle. Eventually Lincoln fired him.

**Clara Barton:** Nurse and founder of the American Red Cross.

**Ulysses S. Grant:** General who led the Union armies at the end of the war. He won the Battle of Vicksburg and Lincoln promoted him to commander of all of the Union Armies. He accepted Lee's surrender at the end of the war and later was elected president.

**William Tecumseh Sherman:** Northern general who led his army through the South destroying everything he could – farms, railroads, etc. – in an effort to prevent the South from having the means of waging war.

**Copperhead Democrats:** Sometimes called the Peace Democrats, they were Northerners who wanted to end the war and make a peace treaty that allowed the South to secede.

**Freedmen:** Former slaves

**Radical Republicans:** Members of the Republican Party who were strong abolitionists.

**Andrew Johnson:** Vice President who became President when Lincoln was assassinated. He was from Tennessee and tried to carry out Lincoln's vision for a forgiving Reconstruction. He was opposed by the Radical Republicans in Congress, impeached but no convicted, and was ineffective.

**Carpetbaggers:** A nickname for people from the North who came to the South after the war to help with Reconstruction. The name comes from the thick fabric suitcases they carried. In the South, "carpetbagger" is an insult since it refers to an outsider who shows up and tries to tell you how you should live.

**Freedmen's Bureau:** The government organization created to help former slaves transition to free life after the war. They are especially remembered for setting up and running schools.

**Ku Klux Klan:** A White terrorist organization that was formed immediately after the Civil War to counter Northern reconstruction efforts. They attacked African Americans and Republicans. They began to die out as Reconstruction ended, but later became popular again in the 1920s and were an important political force through the 1960s.

**Redeemers:** White Democrats in the South who made it was their mission to restore as much of the antebellum social order as possible, including eliminating voting and civil rights for African Americans and establishing the Jim Crow system of segregation.

**Tenant Farmer:** When farmers pay to live and grow food on someone else's land.



#### TEXTS

**North Star:** Frederick Douglass's abolitionist newspaper.

**The Liberator:** William Lloyd Garrison's abolitionist newspaper.

**Uncle Tom's Cabin:** Harriet Beecher Stowe's abolitionist novel that became a best seller in the North, and was banned in the South. The sympathetic characters helped convince many Northerners to support abolition.

**Emancipation Proclamation:** President Lincoln's official order freeing all slaves in the rebelling territories (but not in the Border States that had remained in the Union).



#### SPEECHES

**Gettysburg Address:** Lincoln's famous speech in 1863 in which he outlined the purpose of the war.

**Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address:** Lincoln's speech in 1865 in which he outlined his beliefs about the war and his view of Reconstruction.



#### COURT CASES

**Dred Scott v. Sanford:** A landmark Supreme Court case in 1857 in which Chief Justice Roger Taney wrote that the federal government did not have the power to regulate slavery, effectively allowing slavery in all states, North and South, as well as the territories. The outcome of the case infuriated abolitionists who saw it as a major expansion of the power of slave owners over the federal government.



## KEY CONCEPTS

**Chattel Slavery:** The system of slavery that developed in the United States in which slaves were considered property.

**Emancipation:** When the government sets slaves free.

**King Cotton:** The idea that the cotton industry was the key to the Southern, and more generally American economy.

**Peculiar Institution:** Slavery. This was the euphemism used by the South.

**The Underground Railroad:** The antebellum volunteer resistance movement that assisted slaves in escaping to freedom. Although it was not a railroad, the participants of the system used railroad terminology. Safe places for escaped slaves to stay were called stations and the people who guided the slaves were conductors.

**Popular Sovereignty:** The idea that the residents of each territory should decide for themselves if they would join the Union as a free or slave state. Stephen Douglas supported this idea and it was the heart of the Kansas-Nebraska Act.

**Secession:** When a state or group of states leaves separates themselves from the country to form a new nation.

**Slave Power:** A phrase Northerners used to describe the political power Southern states had in Congress.

**A House Divided:** This was a metaphor that Abraham Lincoln articulated during the Lincoln-Douglas Debates. He said that the nation was like a house that could not stand if it was divided. He predicted that the country would either become all slave, or all free, but could not continue with slavery allowed in only the South.

**Anaconda Plan:** The North's strategy to blockade Southern ports to prevent trade and resupply.

**Writ of Habeas Corpus:** A legal term that means "Show me the Body." It means that the government cannot accuse you of a crime and then hold you in jail indefinitely before giving you a trial.

**Lost Cause:** Idea that the South was right to secede and should have maintained slavery and that the fight for Southern independence should go on.

**Forty Acres and a Mule:** This is what General Sherman promised all freed slaves. Since he had no power to seize property to give to the slaves, he wasn't able to fulfill his promise.

**Impeachment:** A legal process for removing a president or other elected official because of a crime they have committed.

**Lynch:** To hang a person without a trial. Lynching was used by the KKK and other White terrorist groups to intimidate African Americans.

**Share Cropping:** When farm workers use land that belongs to someone else and pay by sharing some of what they grow.



## LOCATIONS

**36th Parallel:** The line of latitude that was the dividing line between the free and slave states of the west. The Missouri Compromise had banned slavery north of the line, but the Compromise of 1850 ended that ban by allowing Missouri to become a slave state. The line is the southern border of Missouri.

**Confederacy:** The Confederate States of America – the slave-holding states from the South that seceded.

**Union:** The United States of America. The North including the four Border States which had slaves but did not secede.



## EVENTS

**Antebellum Period:** The years in the 1800s before the start of the Civil War in 1860.

**Bleeding Kansas:** The name given to the time period of fighting between pro and anti-slavery forces in Kansas before it was admitted as a state.

**Lincoln-Douglas Debates:** A series of famous debates between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas during their campaign for the open Illinois senate seat in 1858. Lincoln, a Republican, and Douglas a Democrat drew national attention as they debated the future of slavery. Despite losing the election, the debates catapulted Lincoln to widespread fame and respect.

**Battle of Gettysburg:** The turning point battle of the war. Lee led his army into Pennsylvania hoping to force the North to give up, but lost the battle.

**Sherman's March to the Sea:** In 1864 General Sherman led his Union army through Georgia destroying everything he could. He started in Atlanta and his destination was the city of Savannah on the coast. He became a hero of the North and villain across the South.

**Reconstruction:** The period of time from the end of the Civil War in 1865 until 1877 when the victorious North tried to rebuild the South and deal with the problems the war created, including passing legislation related to former slaves.

**Presidential Reconstruction:** The period immediately after the Civil War ended when reconstruction was based on Lincoln and especially President Andrew Johnson's lenient and forgiving policies.

**Radical Reconstruction:** The later period of reconstruction which was led by the Radical Republicans in Congress rather than by President Andrew Johnson.



## LAWS

**Fugitive Slave Act:** A law passed in 1850, as part of the Compromise of 1850. It declared that all runaway slaves be brought back to their masters. Abolitionists nicknamed it the "Bloodhound Law."

**Slave Codes:** Laws in each U.S. state defining the status of slaves and the rights of their owners and giving slave owners absolute power over their slaves. Over time, the slave codes became more and more restrictive.

**Kansas-Nebraska Act:** A law that said that when the new states of Kansas and Nebraska joined the Union, the people of those states vote to decide if they would be slave states or free states. The law proposed by Stephen Douglass and embraced his idea of popular sovereignty as a way to avoid a political fight in Congress.

**Missouri Compromise:** An agreement brokered by Henry Clay in 1820 to maintain the balance of slave and free states in the Senate. Missouri entered the Union as a slave state and Maine as a free state.

**Wilmot Proviso:** An addition to the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo that ended the Mexican American War proposed by David Wilmot. It stated that slavery would not be permitted in the new territories taken from Mexico, but was not adopted.

**Compromise of 1877:** A deal struck between Republicans and Democrats after the close and contested presidential election between Rutherford B. Hayes and Samuel Tilden. Democrats allowed Hayes to become president in return for the end of Reconstruction and the removal of federal troops from the South.

**Thirteenth Amendment:** The amendment to the Constitution ratified in 1864 that ended slavery.

**Fourteenth Amendment:** The amendment to the Constitution ratified in 1865 that gave citizenship to anyone born in the United States, effectively making former slaves citizens.

**Fifteenth Amendment:** The amendment to the Constitution ratified in 1869 that guaranteed the right all men regardless of race.

**Jim Crow:** The nickname for a system of laws that enforced segregation. For example, African Americans had separate schools, rode in the backs of busses, could not drink from White drinking fountains, and could not eat in restaurants or stay in hotels, etc.