

# Lesson 6: The Endurance of Slavery and the American Republic

**Estimated lesson time: 90 minutes**

## Guiding Question:

- How did the endurance of slavery challenge the American republic?

## Objectives:

- Students will explain the significance of major events in the debate over slavery from 1820 to 1858.
- Students will explain the cause and effect of events leading up to the Civil War.
- Students will summarize the main ideas of historic texts.
- Students will create an argument supported by evidence from primary sources.

## Facilitation Notes:

- Glossary terms for this lesson are provided on a separate handout. The terms are also defined when they appear in the sources provided.
- Some components of this lesson contain terminology that is no longer used because the terms are recognized to be offensive or derogatory. These terms are retained in their original usage in order to present them accurately in their historical context for student learning, including understanding why those are not acceptable today.

## Student Resources:

- Glossary
- Timeline Slides
- Student Organizer
  - Version 1: Timeline with scaffolding
  - Version 2: Timeline with no scaffolding
- Primary Source: First Debate for the Illinois Senate between Stephen Douglas and Abraham Lincoln, Ottawa, Illinois, August 21, 1858
- Primary Source Analysis: Lincoln-Douglas Debate

## Teacher Resources:

- Answer Key

## Anticipate

- Have students review timeline slides and fill in the image/memory aid for timeline events 2-8.
- **Scaffolding note:** Students can also fill in the “What happened?” section by summarizing the information from each slide in their own words, or this information can be provided for them. Use Version 1 of the organizer for the additional scaffolding and Version 2 for students to fill in all of the information on their own. The timeline slides can also be set up around the room as stations for a gallery walk or for a jigsaw in small groups for in-person learning during class time, rather than as prework. QR codes and shortened links are provided on the slides for each event.

## Engage

- Have students discuss the following prompt with a partner or in small groups.

**Moderation**, or the avoidance of extremes, compromise, and **prudence**, or using wisdom to choose how to best act in each situation, characterized the delegates’ approach to slavery at the Constitutional Convention. Yet, the issue of slavery increasingly divided the nation from the Founding to the 1850s. Could a compromise have been reached at any point from 1820 to 1858? Justify your reasoning with evidence from your organizer.
- Ask students to share their responses. Ensure students are making their thinking visible by prompting them to explain their reasoning (“What makes you say that?”).
- **Scaffolding note:** Supporting questions to help students unpack this prompt could include:
  - *Moderation refers to avoiding an extreme. What would the two extreme positions on slavery be at the time of the Founding (full abolition vs. protecting slavery everywhere in the nation and the slave trade forever)?*
  - *What considerations did the Founders need to account for when discussing slavery (preserving the Union, compromising to ensure all delegates would support a Union, pursuing the ideals of the revolution)?*
  - *What challenges did the Founders’ moderation and prudence create for future generations?*
  - Scholars recognize two major compromises during this time: the Missouri Compromise and the Compromise of 1850. Those required both sides of the conflict to give concessions, and both only kept a tenuous peace. Students may point to these events, or they may offer their own reasonings.

## Explore

- **Transition:** *We’ve seen that the issue of slavery intensified sectional divisions in the United States leading up to the Civil War. In 1858, an election for a Senate seat in*

*Illinois gathered national attention as both candidates spoke about slavery and the principles of the American Founding.*

- Distribute the primary source for the Lincoln-Douglass debates and the primary source organizer. Have students read the source and fill in their organizer.
- **Scaffolding note:** Read the source with students or have students complete alone or with a partner or group, whichever best fits your classroom. Optional comprehension and analysis questions are provided for additional support in understanding the sources beyond the graphic organizer
- Discuss student responses. Clarifying any key points using the teacher answer key.
- **Transition:** *Let's go forward in time from 1858 and the Lincoln-Douglass debates to look at three additional events to better understand the story of slavery and the Founding.*
- Instruct students to finish the last three timeline events (Emancipation Proclamation, Creation of U.S. Colored Troops, and the Thirteenth Amendment) and fill in the handout.
- **Scaffolding note:** Students can complete the last three events individually or in small groups, or as a gallery walk.

## Assess and Reflect

- Have students respond to the analysis and reflection questions at the bottom of their organizer.
  - **Part II: Final Analysis and Reflection**
  - Based on the events in your organizer and your reading of the excerpts from the first Lincoln-Douglas debate, answer the following questions:
    - Think back to the first discussion in this activity:
      - **Moderation**, the avoidance of extremes, compromise, and **prudence**, using wisdom to choose how to best act in each situation, characterized the delegates' approach to slavery at the Constitutional Convention. Yet, the issue of slavery increasingly divided the nation from the Founding to the 1850s. Could a compromise have been reached at any point from 1820 to 1858?
      - What events best typified the concepts of moderation, compromise or prudence? What events most challenged these ideas?
    - How did differing constitutional visions lead to growing sectionalism over the question of slavery and its expansion?
    - How did the endurance of slavery challenge the American republic?
    - How did the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment complete the story of slavery and the Founding? Explain.
    - What challenges might remain for African Americans after the adoption of the Thirteenth Amendment?

- **Scaffolding Note:** Depending on time, students should discuss their responses with a partner or in a small group before you ask for volunteers to share their response.

## Extend

The [Plainest Demands of Justice curriculum](#) explores the challenges and triumphs of African Americans during Reconstruction, the twentieth century, and into the present day through primary source analysis. Abbreviated and full primary source lists can be found for the following time periods:

- [Lesson 3: The Lost Promise of Reconstruction and Rise of Jim Crow, 1860-1896](#)
- [Lesson 4: The Struggle Continues: Stony the Road \(1896-1941\)](#)
- [Lesson 5: Continuing the Heroic Struggle for Equality – The Civil Rights Movement](#)
- [Lesson 6: Where Do We Go From Here? 1967-Present Day](#)