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Slavery & the Founding



The Endurance of Slavery and the American Republic

How did the endurance of slavery challenge the American Republic?

Slavery & the Founding

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1820

Missouri Compromise

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What happened?

- Congress divided territory of the Louisiana Purchase divided at the 36° 30' parallel
 - North of this line (Missouri as an exception), Congress banned slavery
 - South of the line, slavery was allowed
- Maine enters the Union as a free state, Missouri as a slave state

So what?

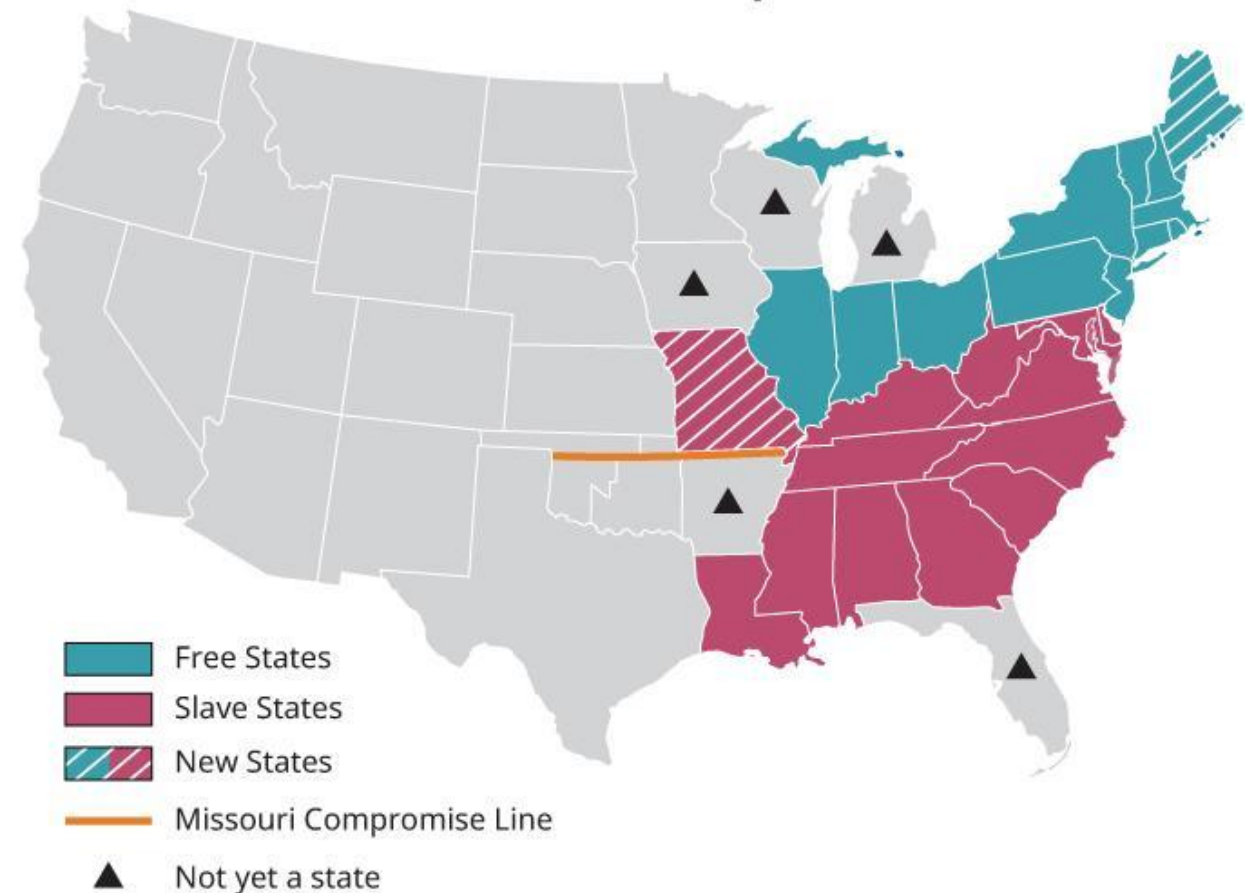
Expanding territory forced tough questions about slavery that divided the country along sectional lines: Does Congress have the constitutional authority to regulate slavery in the territories? Should it be allowed, and if so, where and how?

Read the primary source:

<http://bit.ly/3KsKjha>



The Missouri Compromise



1837

Senator John C. Calhoun defends slavery as a “positive good”

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What happened?

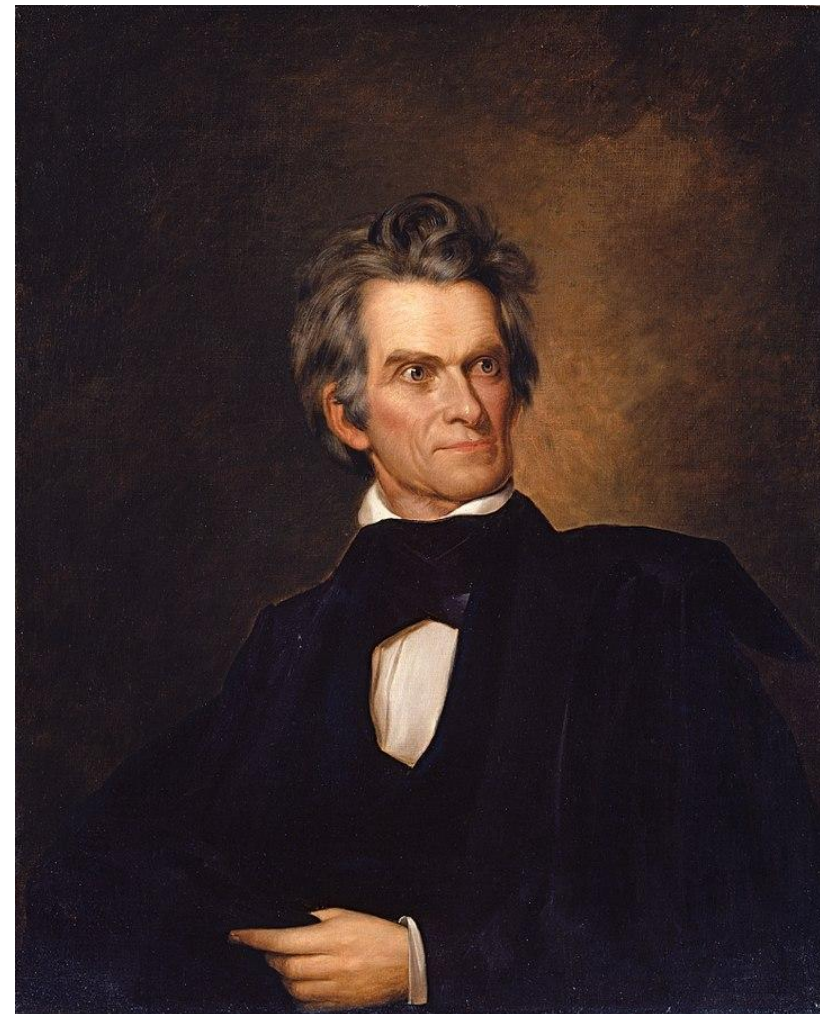
John C. Calhoun of South Carolina made a speech in the U.S. Senate responding to antislavery petitions. In it, he said:

- Slavery was not evil, but a “positive good” for the slave and the slaveholder
- Southerners should not apologize for slavery
- Slavery was “indispensable to the peace and happiness” of both slave and slaveholder
- Slavery should be preferred to the wage labor used in the North.

So what?

Calhoun articulated a new Southern view of slavery defending it on moral grounds that further polarized the issue.

Read the primary source:



1846-1848

Mexican-American War

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What happened?

- On May 11, 1846, President James K. Polk asked Congress for a declaration of war against Mexico.
- Many northerners and opponents of slavery saw the war as an excuse for the expansion of slavery.
- In 1846, David Wilmot, a Pennsylvanian Congressmen, introduced a proviso that proposed banning slavery in all territory the U.S. might gain in the war with Mexico
- Although it never passed, the Wilmot Proviso would have overruled the Missouri Compromise from 1820 that allowed slavery south of the 36° 30' parallel.

So what?

The debate continued over the expansion of slavery in the West, and the debate grew more contentious.

Read primary sources debating the war:

<http://bit.ly/3LIYLOI>



1845

William Lloyd Garrison denounces the U.S. Constitution as a “Covenant with death”

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What happened?

- William Lloyd Garrison, a social reformer and evangelical Christian, began the publication of an abolitionist newspaper to lay out his uncompromising antislavery views in 1831.
- Garrison called for immediate emancipation and supported disunion because he wanted the North to be free of connection with the slaveholding South.
- Garrison used scathing language to condemn the Constitution, calling it “a covenant with death”, an “agreement with hell” and a “refuge of lies.”

So what?

Garrison’s language indicates a rejection of compromise and a hardening moral zeal that led to immoderation and imprudence.

Read the primary source:



1850

Fugitive Slave Act is passed by Congress

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What happened?

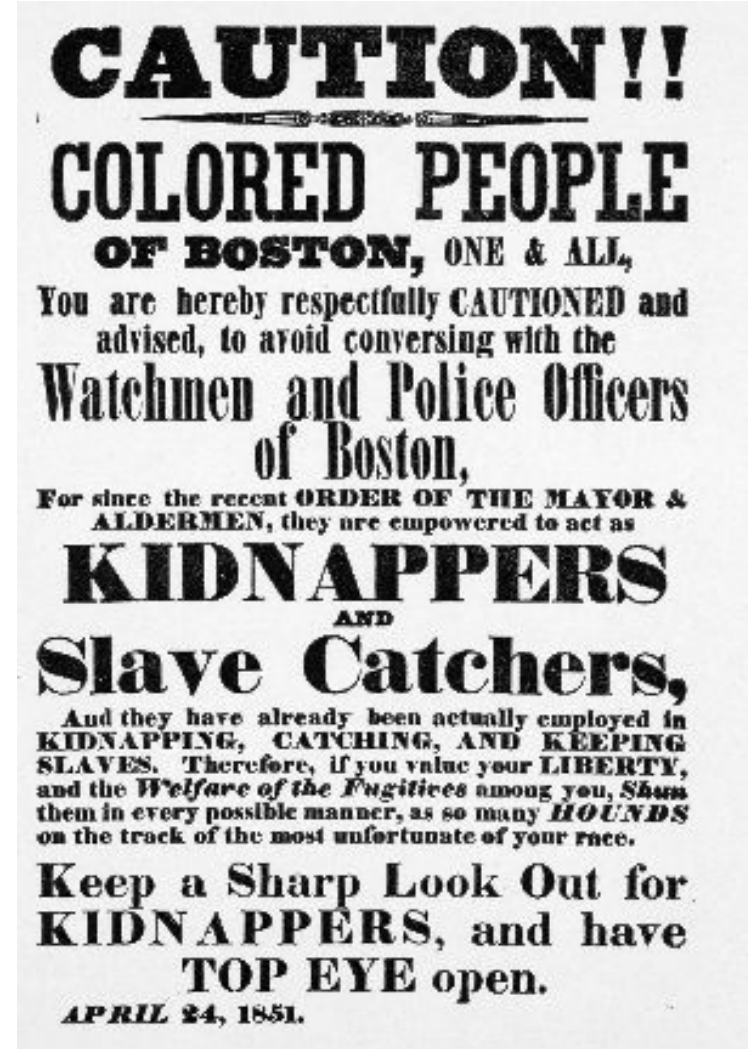
- In 1850, California was admitted to the Union as a free state, upsetting a fragile balance of 15 slave states and 15 free.
- Congress established territorial government for New Mexico and Utah under “popular sovereignty” that allowed a territory to decide on slavery.
- The 1850 Fugitive Slave Act required northern law enforcement and legal entities to assist slave hunters in the recapture, detention, and return of runaways.
- It also denied accused fugitives a jury trial and the right to testify in their own defense.
- The slave trade, but not slavery, was abolished in Washington, D.C.

So what?

The compromise temporarily settled contentious issues, but both sides of the conflict were becoming further entrenched and outraged at the other. Northerners resented being forced to cooperate in the return of runaways, and Southerners grew more desperate to protect slavery.

Read more:

<http://bit.ly/3mDK2Qz>



1852

Frederick Douglass makes a speech asking, “What to the slave in the fourth of July?”

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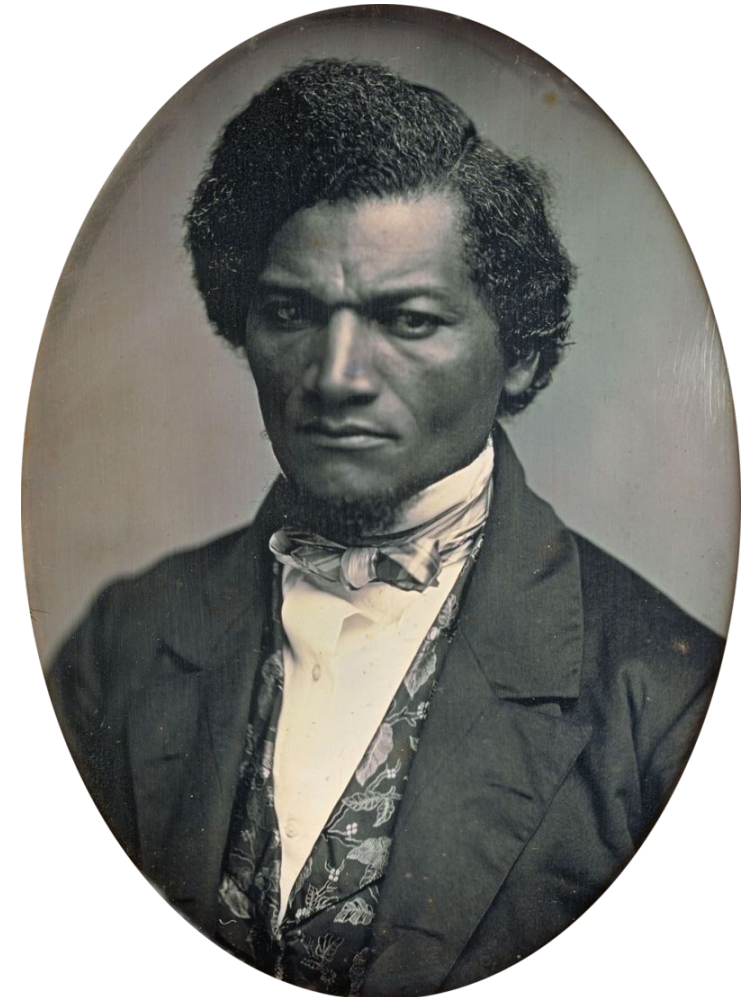
What happened?

- Frederick Douglass, a famous abolitionist who himself was formerly enslaved, spoke to the Rochester, New York, Ladies Anti-Slavery Society on July 5, 1852.
- In his speech, Douglass mourned the Fourth of July because slavery had made a mockery of the ideals of the Declaration of Independence.
- However, he still believed in the ideas of the Declaration as “saving principles” and called on America to live up to them.

So what?

Douglass made an argument that the ideals of the Declaration and Constitution were the basis on which to achieve freedom, equality, and justice.

Read the primary source:



1854

The Kansas-Nebraska Act is passed by Congress

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What happened?

- The bill empowered the inhabitants of the Kansas-Nebraska territory to decide the question of slavery for themselves, a concept known as “**popular sovereignty**.”
- The bill broke with the Missouri Compromise of 1820, which would have banned slavery in the territory.
- The bill led to violence in Kansas as both pro and anti-slavery advocates rushed to the state to control the outcome and committed violence.
- The bill and resulting chaos continued to harden the sectional positions on the issue.



1854

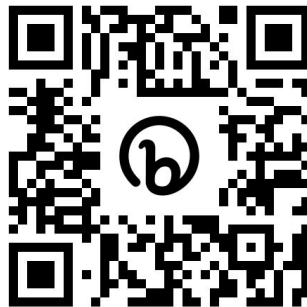
The Kansas-Nebraska Act is passed by Congress

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So what?

The fighting between pro- and anti-slavery forces in Kansas intensified the ongoing sectional debate over the expansion of slavery and was a key precursor to the Civil War.

Read the primary source:
bit.ly/3od3WT0



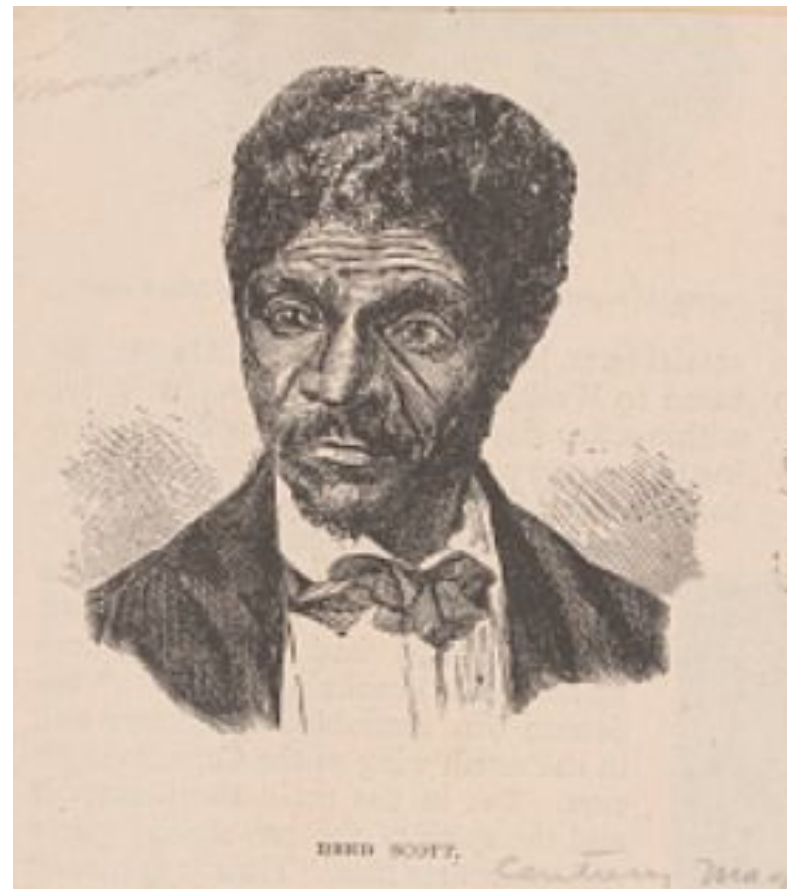
1857

Dred Scott v. Sandford ruling issued by the Supreme Court

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What happened?

- An enslaved man, Dred Scott, sued his slaveholder for his freedom on the basis that he had lived in free territory and was therefore granted his freedom under the law.
- The case was appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, and Chief Justice Robert Taney ultimately issued a decision with three major rulings.
 1. African Americans were not citizens and could not be citizens and therefore had no right to sue in court.
 2. Congress did not have the constitutional authority to ban slavery from the territories. Therefore, the Missouri Compromise was unconstitutional.
 3. Slaves were property under the Fifth Amendment, so no law could deprive slaveholders of their property.
- The verdict was widely denounced by abolitionists.



1857

Dred Scott v. Sandford ruling issued by the Supreme Court

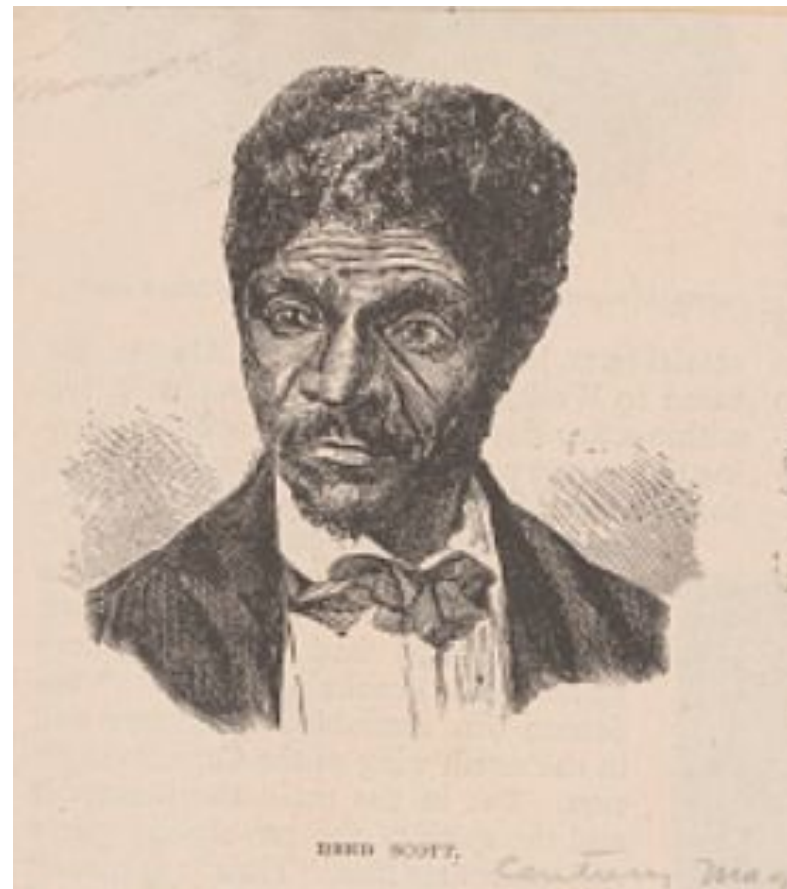
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So what?

The ruling in the Dred Scott case was a great injustice and intensified sectional differences over slavery since it endorsed a constitutional view that broke with the Founding and subsequent compromises.

Watch this video on the case:

<http://bit.ly/41yPC5H>



1858

First Debate for the Illinois Senate between Stephen Douglas and Abraham Lincoln

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What happened?

- Senator Stephen Douglas, the mastermind behind the Kansas-Nebraska Act and proponent of "popular sovereignty" doctrine, was challenged for his seat in the Senate by Abraham Lincoln, a Republican.
- The debates between the two candidates attracted a lot of publicity.
- They spoke about slavery and the principles that held together the Union.
- Lincoln ultimately lost the Senate seat to Douglas but impressed many with his performance in the debates and would run as the Republican candidate for president in 1860.
- Lincoln and Douglas had contrasting views on racial equality, the principles of the Declaration of Independence, and the doctrine of "popular sovereignty" versus a republic based upon natural rights.

1858

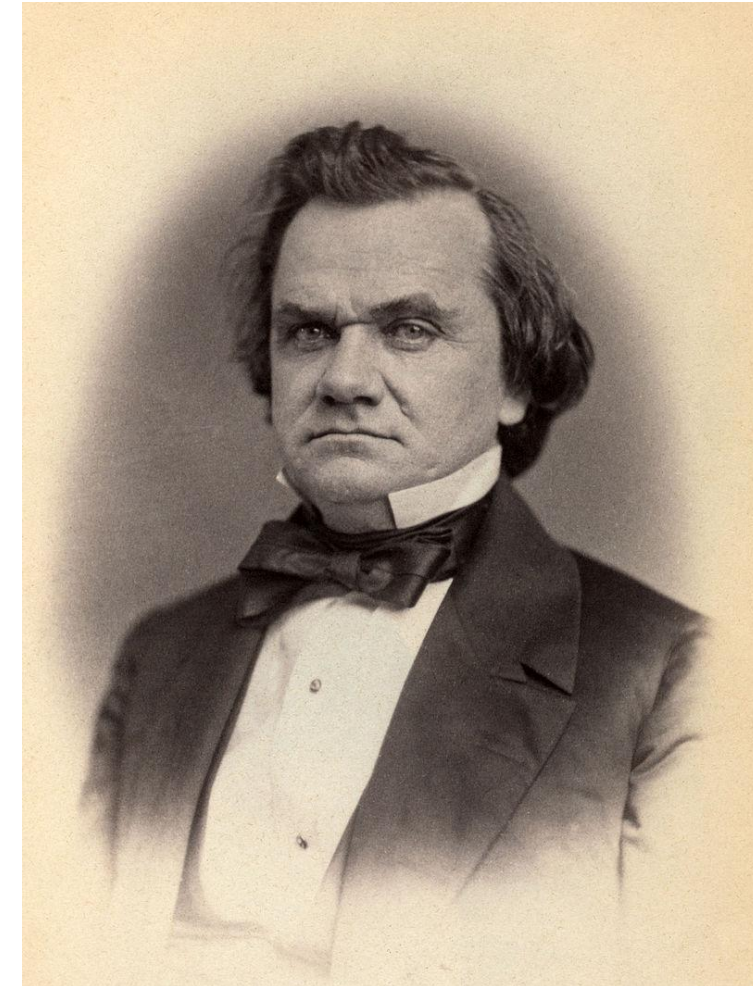
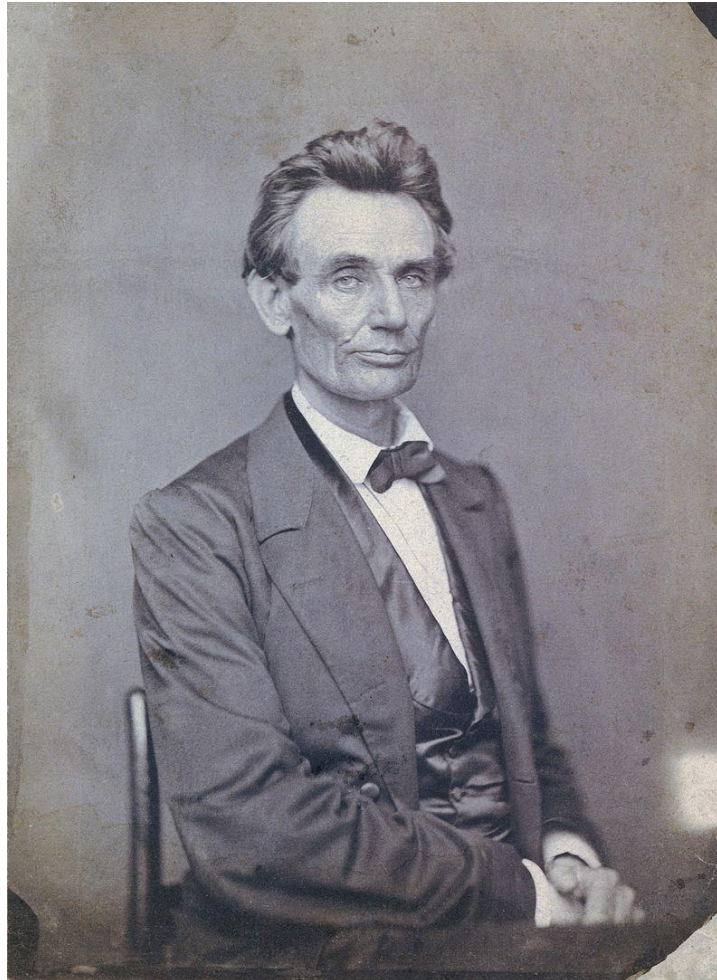
First Debate for the Illinois Senate between Stephen Douglas and Abraham Lincoln

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So what?

The Lincoln-Douglas debates exposed differing views of the Founding—one in which the promise of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness was meant for all people, and the other for just white men. This difference will be at the heart of the Civil War

Read the primary source:



1863

Emancipation Proclamation

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What happened?

- Using his war powers as Commander-in-Chief, President Lincoln issued a proclamation freeing the Confederacy's slaves (although not the border states' slaves because the president had no authority to do so) as a "military necessity".
- Lincoln therefore used his emergency presidential powers to eliminate slavery in a constitutional way.

So what?

The Proclamation was a key step on the path to freedom and sought the end of slavery through constitutional means with emergency presidential war powers.

Read the primary source:
<http://bit.ly/3mEI7v1>



1863

General Order 143 Creates U.S. Bureau of Colored Troops

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What happened?

- President Lincoln's administration wrestled with authorizing African American troops out of fear it would prompt the border states to secede, which would cause Washington, D.C. to be surrounded and affect control of the Mississippi River.
- Border states Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri, and West Virginia allowed slavery but did not secede from the Union and were integral to the Union war effort.
- General Order 143 on May 22, 1863, created the United States Colored Troops.
- Roughly 179,000 African Americans served as soldiers in the U.S. Army, and another 19,000 served in the Navy by the end of the Civil War.



1863

General Order 143 Creates U.S. Bureau of Colored Troops

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So what?

- African Americans patriotically served to win their freedom in a nation that had enslaved them, and some gave their lives to fight a war to end slavery.

Read more:

<http://bit.ly/3ok7Jxy>



1865

Thirteenth Amendment

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What happened?

- The Thirteenth Amendment ended slavery throughout the U.S. and banned it forever.
- After the Civil War, Congress required that the southern states approve the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments as a condition of their re-entry into the Union

So what?

Almost 100 years after the Founding, slavery was explicitly banned by constitutional amendment, which made it the law of the land.

Read more:

<http://bit.ly/3mB49Pf>



SCENE IN THE HOUSE ON THE PASSAGE OF THE PROPOSITION TO AMEND THE CONSTITUTION, JANUARY 31, 1865.