



What You Will Learn...

Main Ideas

1. Political parties in the United States underwent change due to the movement to expand slavery.
2. The *Dred Scott* decision created further division over the issue of slavery.
3. The Lincoln-Douglas debates brought much attention to the conflict over slavery.

The Big Idea

The split over the issue of slavery intensified due to political division and judicial decisions.

Key Terms and People

Republican Party, p. 488

James Buchanan, p. 488

John C. Frémont, p. 489

Dred Scott, p. 489

Roger B. Taney, p. 490

Abraham Lincoln, p. 490

Lincoln-Douglas debates, p. 491

Freeport Doctrine, p. 492



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TAKING NOTES

Use the graphic organizer online to take notes on the effects of political divisions and the *Dred Scott* case on the debate over slavery.

Political Divisions

If YOU were there...

You are traveling through Michigan in July 1854. As you pass through the town of Jackson, you see a crowd of several hundred people gathered under the trees. You join them and find that it is a political rally. Antislavery supporters from different parties are meeting to form a new political party. Speakers promise to fight slavery “until the contest be terminated.”

How do you think this new party will affect American politics?

BUILDING BACKGROUND The slavery question continued to divide the country and lead to violence. The issue not only dominated American politics in the mid-1800s but also brought changes in the makeup of American political parties.

Political Parties Undergo Change

Democrat Stephen Douglas had predicted that the Kansas-Nebraska Act would “raise a . . . storm.” He was right. The Kansas-Nebraska Act brought the slavery issue back into the national spotlight. Some Whigs, Democrats, Free-Soilers, and abolitionists joined in 1854 to form the **Republican Party**, a political party united against the spread of slavery in the West.

Democrats were in trouble. Those who supported the Kansas-Nebraska Act were not re-elected. The Whig Party also fell apart when northern and southern Whigs refused to work together. A senator from Connecticut complained, “The Whig Party has been killed off . . . by that miserable Nebraska business.” Some Whigs and Democrats joined the American Party, also known as the Know-Nothing Party. At the party’s convention, delegates argued over slavery, then chose former president Millard Fillmore as their candidate for the election of 1856.

The Democrats knew they could not choose a strong supporter of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, such as President Pierce or Senator Douglas. They nominated **James Buchanan** of Pennsylvania. Buchanan had a great deal of political experience as Polk’s secretary of state. Most

important, he had been in Great Britain as ambassador during the Kansas-Nebraska Act dispute and had not been involved in the debate.

At their first nominating convention, the Republicans chose explorer **John C. Frémont** as their candidate. He had little political experience, but he stood against the spread of slavery. The public saw Republicans as a single-issue party. They had almost no supporters outside of the free states.

On election day, Buchanan won 14 of the 15 slave states and became the new president. Frémont won 11 of the 16 free states. Fillmore won only one state—Maryland. Buchanan had won the election.

READING CHECK **Summarizing** What were the major political parties in the election of 1856, and who was the candidate for each party?

Dred Scott Decision

Just two days after Buchanan became president, the Supreme Court issued a historic ruling about slavery. News of the decision threw the country back into crisis. The Court reviewed and decided the **complex** case involving an enslaved man named **Dred Scott**.

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

complex
difficult, not simple

Dred Scott Sues for Freedom

Dred Scott was the slave of Dr. John Emerson, an army surgeon who lived in St. Louis, Missouri. In the 1830s, Emerson had taken Scott on tours of duty in Illinois and the Wisconsin Territory. After they returned to Missouri, the doctor died, and Scott became the slave of Emerson's widow. In 1846 Scott sued for his freedom in the Missouri state courts, arguing that he had become free when he lived in free territory. Though a lower court ruled in



Dred Scott v. Sandford (1857)

Background of the

Case Born a slave in Virginia, Dred Scott moved with his slaveholder to the free state of Illinois and then to the Wisconsin Territory. After returning to the South, Scott sued for his freedom. He claimed that because he had lived in a state that banned slavery, he was no longer a slave.

The Court's Ruling

The Court ruled that African Americans, whether free or slave, were not considered citizens of the United States, and therefore had no right to sue in federal court. It also decided that the Missouri Compromise was unconstitutional.

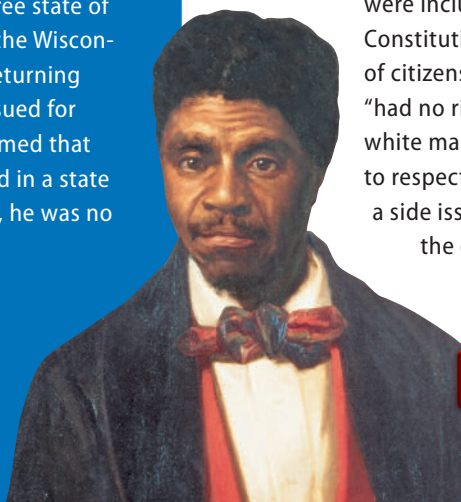
The Court's Reasoning

Chief Justice Roger B. Taney wrote in the majority opinion that the Court did not believe that African Americans were included in the Constitution's definition of citizens and that they "had no rights which the white man was bound to respect." Addressing a side issue in the case, the opinion also stated that

Congress could not outlaw slavery in the territories. This struck down the Missouri Compromise, which had made slavery illegal in territories north of the 36°30' dividing line.

Why It Matters

The *Dred Scott* case was seen as a setback to abolitionist ideas against slavery. It reduced the status of free African Americans and upheld the view of slaves as property without rights or protection under the Constitution. It also took from Congress the power to ban slavery in its territories, which would aid the spread of slavery in new states. Because of its pro-slavery decision, the reputation of the Court suffered greatly in parts of the North.



ANALYSIS SKILL

ANALYZING INFORMATION

1. Why do you think the Court ruled that African Americans had no access to federal courts?
2. How did this case affect abolitionist efforts?

A Growing Conflict

QUICK
FACTS

Causes of Conflict

- Failure of Missouri Compromise
- Failure of Compromise of 1850
- Kansas-Nebraska Act
- *Dred Scott* decision

Short-Term Effects

- Political battles
- Sectional differences
- “Bleeding Kansas”
- Lincoln-Douglas debates

Long-Term Effect

- Civil War

his favor, the Missouri Supreme Court overturned this ruling.

Scott’s case reached the U.S. Supreme Court 11 years later, in 1857. The justices—a majority of whom were from the South—had three key issues before them. First, the Court had to rule on whether Scott was a citizen. Only citizens could sue in federal court. Second, the Court had to decide if his time living on free soil made him free. Third, the Court had to determine the constitutionality of prohibiting slavery in parts of the Louisiana Purchase.

The Supreme Court’s Ruling

Chief Justice **Roger B. Taney** (TAW-nee), himself from a slaveholding family in Maryland, wrote the majority opinion in the *Dred Scott* decision in March 1857. First, he addressed the issue of Dred Scott’s citizenship. Taney

said the nation’s founders believed that African Americans “had no rights which a white man was bound to respect.” He therefore concluded that all African Americans, whether slave or free, were not citizens under the U.S. Constitution. Thus, Dred Scott did not have the right to file suit in federal court.

Taney also ruled on the other issues before the Court. As to whether Scott’s residence on free soil made him free, Taney flatly said it did not. Because Scott had returned to the slave state of Missouri, the chief justice said, “his *status*, as free or slave, depended on the laws of Missouri.”

Finally, Taney declared the Missouri Compromise restriction on slavery north of 36°30’ to be unconstitutional. He pointed out that the Fifth Amendment said no one could “be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law.” Because slaves were considered property, Congress could not prohibit someone from taking slaves into a federal territory. Under this ruling, Congress had no right to ban slavery in any federal territory.

Most white southerners cheered this decision. It “covers every question regarding slavery and settles it in favor of the South,” reported a Georgia newspaper. Another newspaper, the New Orleans *Picayune*, assured its readers that the ruling put “the whole basis of the . . . Republican organization under the ban of law.”

The ruling stunned many northerners. The Republicans were particularly upset because their platform in 1856 had argued that Congress held the right to ban slavery in the federal territories. Now the nation’s highest court had ruled that Congress did not have this right.

Indeed, some northerners feared that the spread of slavery would not stop with the federal territories. Illinois lawyer **Abraham Lincoln** warned that a future Court ruling, or what he called “the next *Dred Scott* decision,” would prohibit states from banning slavery.

Primary Source

SPEECH

A House Divided

In 1858 Abraham Lincoln gave a passionate speech to Illinois Republicans about the dangers of the disagreement over slavery. Some considered it a call for war.

“In my opinion, it [disagreement over slavery] will not cease [stop], until a crisis shall have been reached and passed. “A house divided against itself cannot stand.” I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved—I do not expect the house to fall—but I do expect it will cease to be divided.”

Lincoln expresses confidence that the Union will survive.

This line is a paraphrase of a line in the Bible.

—Abraham Lincoln,

quoted in *Abraham Lincoln: Speeches and Writings 1832–1858*
edited by Don E. Fehrenbacher

ANALYSIS SKILL

ANALYZING PRIMARY SOURCES

What do you think Lincoln meant by “crisis”?

“We shall lie down pleasantly dreaming that the people of Missouri are on the verge of [close to] making their state free; and we shall awake to the reality, instead, that the Supreme Court has made Illinois a slave state.”

—Abraham Lincoln, quoted in *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, edited by Roy P. Basler

READING CHECK Summarizing What were the major rulings of the *Dred Scott* decision?

Lincoln-Douglas Debates

In 1858 Illinois Republicans nominated Abraham Lincoln for the U.S. Senate. His opponent was Democrat Stephen Douglas, who had represented Illinois in the Senate since 1847.

Lincoln challenged Douglas in what became the historic Lincoln-Douglas debates.

In each debate, Lincoln stressed that the central issue of the campaign was the spread of slavery in the West. He said that the Democrats were trying to spread slavery across the nation.

Lincoln talked about the *Dred Scott* decision. He said that African Americans were “entitled to all the natural rights” listed in the Declaration of Independence, specifically mentioning “the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” However, Lincoln believed that African Americans were not necessarily the social or political equals of whites. Hoping to cost Lincoln votes, Douglas charged that Lincoln “thinks that the Negro is his brother . . .”

Douglas also criticized Lincoln for saying that the nation could not remain “half slave and half free.” Douglas said that the statement revealed a Republican desire to make every state a free state. This, he warned, would only lead to “a dissolution [destruction] of the Union” and “warfare between the North and the South.”

At the second debate, in the northern Illinois town of Freeport, Illinois, Lincoln pressed Douglas on the apparent contradiction between the Democrats’ belief in popu-



H
HISTORY

VIDEO

House Divided Speech

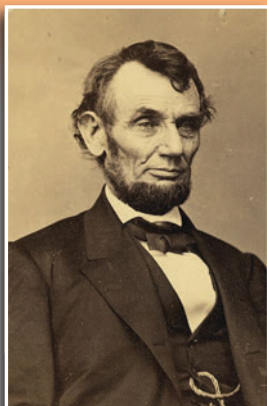
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THE IMPACT TODAY

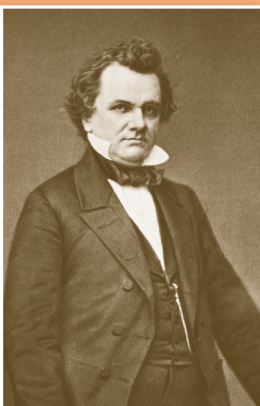
Today political debates are televised and can be seen around the world.

Lincoln-Douglas Debates

Lincoln ran for the U.S. Senate in Illinois against Douglas in 1858. The two men debated seven times at various locations around the state. Lincoln lost the election but gained national recognition.



Abraham Lincoln



Stephen Douglas

lar sovereignty and the *Dred Scott* decision. Lincoln asked Douglas to explain how, if Congress could not ban slavery from a federal territory, Congress could allow the citizens of that territory to ban it.

Douglas responded that it did not matter what the Supreme Court decided about slavery. He argued that “the people have the lawful means to introduce it or exclude it as

they please, for the reason that slavery cannot exist a day or an hour anywhere, unless it is supported by local police regulations.”

This notion that the police would enforce the voters’ decision if it contradicted the Supreme Court’s decision in the *Dred Scott* case became known as the **Freeport Doctrine**.

The Freeport Doctrine put the slavery question back in the hands of American citizens. It helped Douglas win the Senate seat. Lincoln, while not victorious, became a strong, important leader of the Republican Party.

READING CHECK **Drawing Inferences** Why did Abraham Lincoln make slavery’s expansion the central issue of the Lincoln-Douglas debates?

SUMMARY AND PREVIEW The *Dred Scott* decision and the Lincoln-Douglas debates dealt with the conflict over slavery in the western territories. In the next section you will read about how the conflict broke apart the Union.

Section 3 Assessment



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ONLINE QUIZ

Reviewing Ideas, Terms, and People

- a. Identify** What was the major issue of the newly formed **Republican Party**?
b. Draw Conclusions How did the Kansas-Nebraska Act affect political parties?
c. Elaborate Why do you think **James Buchanan** won the election of 1856?
- a. Identify** Who was **Roger B. Taney**, and why was he important?
b. Draw Conclusions How did the *Dred Scott* decision affect the Missouri Compromise and the expansion of slavery?
c. Predict What problems might result from the Supreme Court’s ruling in the *Dred Scott* case?
- a. Recall** What was the major issue of the **Lincoln-Douglas debates**?
b. Make Inferences Despite his loss in the election, how did Lincoln become the leader of the Republican Party?

Critical Thinking

- Identifying Points of View** Review your notes on political divisions and the *Dred Scott* decision. Then copy the graphic organizer below and use it to identify the views of Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas on slavery.

Lincoln	vs.	Douglas
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FOCUS ON WRITING

myWriteSmart

- Taking Notes on the Political Divisions** Make some notes on the Republican Party, the *Dred Scott* decision, and the Lincoln-Douglas debates. Decide how your character feels about each of these. How do these events affect your character?