

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE IMPENDING CRISIS

Objectives

A thorough study of Chapter 13 should enable the student to understand

1. Manifest Destiny and its influence on the nation in the 1840s.
2. The origin of the Republic of Texas and the controversy concerning its annexation by the United States.
3. The reasons the United States declared war on Mexico and how the Mexican War was fought to a successful conclusion.
4. The impact of the Wilmot Proviso on the sectional controversy.
5. The methods used to enact the Compromise of 1850 and its reception by the American people.
6. The role of the major political parties in the widening sectional split.
7. The part played by Stephen A. Douglas in the enactment of the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the effect of this act on his career and on the attitudes of Americans in all sections of the nation.
8. The impact of the *Dred Scott* decision on sectional attitudes and on the prestige of the Supreme Court.
9. The reasons for Abraham Lincoln's victory in 1860 and the effect of his election on the sectional crisis.

Main Themes

1. How the idea of Manifest Destiny influenced America and Americans during this period.
2. How the question of the expansion of slavery deepened divisions between the North and the South.
3. How the issue of slavery reshaped the American political-party system.

Pertinent Questions

LOOKING WESTWARD (340-346)

1. What was Manifest Destiny? What forces created it?
2. What was the "empire of liberty"? How was it to be achieved, and what doubts were raised about its desirability?
3. How did Texas become available for annexation? What prevented its immediate annexation?
4. What was the history of American interest in Oregon?
5. What were the characteristics of western migrants? What problems did they face? How were these overcome?

EXPANSION AND WAR (346-351)

6. Why did Clay and Van Buren wish to avoid taking a stand on the question of the annexation of Texas? What effect did this have on their efforts to be nominated by their party?

7. How did Van Buren's position on Texas help the candidacy of James K. Polk? How did Polk's campaign catch the spirit of the time? What effect did Clay's position on Texas have on his campaign in the presidential election?
8. What were the goals of President Polk? How did he resolve the Oregon question?
9. What tensions emerged in the Southwest that threatened to lead the United States into war with Mexico?
10. How did American interest in California develop?
11. What were the origins of the Slidell mission? What was its goal, what did it accomplish, and what was Polk's reaction to it?
12. On what grounds did Polk ask Congress to declare war on Mexico?
13. On what grounds was Polk's call for war criticized?
14. What was Polk's plan for the conduct of the war? How was it set in motion and what was accomplished in the first offensive of the Mexican War?
15. What were the objectives of the next two offensives in the war? What did they accomplish? What were the terms of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo?

THE SECTIONAL DEBATE (351-355)

16. What was the Wilmot Proviso? What brought about its introduction and what arguments were advanced in its favor?
17. What were the South's arguments against the Wilmot Proviso? On what points did they differ from the arguments of the North?
18. What compromises were proposed to settle the issues raised by the Wilmot Proviso?
19. What part did the issue of slavery in the territories play in the election of 1848?
20. What problems faced President Zachary Taylor when he took office? How did he propose to solve them and what action did Congress initially take?
21. How did the South react to President Taylor's program?
22. What was the Compromise of 1850? How was it passed?
23. Who were the "younger" politicians who emerged after 1850? How did they differ from the leaders they replaced?
24. How did the Compromise of 1850 differ from the Missouri Compromise? Why did both compromises fail to contain the growing conflict between the North and the South?

THE CRISES OF THE 1850s (355-365)

25. How did the political parties react to the Compromise of 1850?
26. How did the sections of the country react to the Compromise of 1850?
27. What was the "Young America" movement? What national sentiment did it reflect? Who were its spokespersons? What did it accomplish?
28. How did American foreign policy objectives in the 1850s begin to reflect the growing sectional divisions in the country?
29. How did the issue of a transcontinental railroad help to reopen the sectional controversy? Explain.
30. How did the North react to the Kansas-Nebraska Act? the South? What effect did it have on the Whigs? the Democrats?
31. Who were the Republicans? What caused their formation? Which groups comprised this party and what was the party's platform?

32. What problems were faced in the attempt to organize a legitimate government in Kansas? Why did these problems arise? How was it that Kansas became a battleground for the sectional controversy?
33. Explain the maneuvering by proslavery and antislavery forces to gain control of the Kansas government. What did both sides come to believe that Kansas symbolized for the nation?
34. What were the "immediate, sweeping, and ominous consequences" of the Kansas-Nebraska Act?
35. What type of society did northerners wish to create? How did "free soil" and "free labor" fit into their plans? Why did they feel that the South was holding them back?
36. How did the "free-soil" ideology manifest itself in the Republican Party? What diverse views did it unite?
37. What were the elements of the South's proslavery response? Who were its major spokespersons?
38. What effect did the depression of 1857 have on political divisions in America? How did it increase the tension between the North and South? What did both sides see as the significance of this economic decline?
39. What were the origins of the Dred Scott case? What issues were involved and what decision was handed down by the Court? How did the reaction to this case add to sectional tensions?
40. How did President James Buchanan respond to the Kansas question? What were his reasons and what was the outcome? What does this tell you about the possibility of compromise on the issue of slavery in the territories?
41. Why did the Lincoln-Douglas debates take place and why did they draw so much attention? How did Lincoln and Douglas differ on their solution to the question of slavery in the territories?
42. What were the goals of John Brown's raid and why did it have such an impact on the South?
43. What caused the split between northern and southern Democrats in 1860 and what was the result of this division?
44. What was the Republican platform in 1860? To what specific political groups were the Republicans trying to appeal and how did this platform propose to appeal to them?

PATTERNS OF POPULAR CULTURE (360-361)

45. What role did the Lyceum play in educating the American public, especially with regard to public controversies of the period?
46. What sort of people took part in the Lyceum movement?

Identification

Identify each of the following and explain why it is important within the context of the chapter.

1. John L. O'Sullivan
2. "penny press"
3. Antonio de Santa Anna
4. San Jacinto
5. Oregon Trail
6. "re-occupation" and "re-annexation"
7. "Fifty-four forty or fight"
8. John C. Frémont
9. Zachary Taylor
10. Stephen W. Kearny

3. As your text states, Kansas became a symbol for both the North and the South—but a symbol of what? What did both sides find in the controversy over Kansas to support their charges against their adversaries? What did Kansas come to mean to the nation? Assess Kansas as a symbol of the positions and problems that characterized the divisions in the United States.
4. One historian has claimed that a lack of leadership contributed to the inability of the nation to overcome its divisions. This argument contends that a "blundering generation" of politicians who failed to understand the nature of the divisions offered solutions that resolved issues but did not deal with the real problems. Look at the concerns expressed by both the North and the South and look at the proposals advanced to ease these concerns. From this assessment, do you feel that the "blundering generation" theory has merit or were these deeper, fundamental questions that even the most capable leaders could not have resolved? In short, had the conflict between North and South become "irrepressible"?

Chapter Self Test

After you have read the chapter in the text and done the exercises in the Study Guide, take the following self test to see if you understand the material you have covered. Answers appear at the end of the Study Guide.

MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS

Circle the letter of the response that best answers the question or completes the statement.

1. The idea that God and history had selected America to expand its boundaries over the continent of North America was known as:
 - a. Manifest Destiny.
 - b. divine right.
 - c. white supremacy.
 - d. nativism.
2. When the new republic of Texas requested annexation by the United States:
 - a. the American government quickly agreed.
 - b. Americans in the North opposed acquiring a large new slave territory.
 - c. southerners, led by President Jackson, pushed for annexation.
 - d. Mexico gave up all claims to Texas.
3. American immigrants into Oregon:
 - a. did not outnumber the British until after the Civil War.
 - b. had little impact on the few Native Americans there.
 - c. outnumbered the British by 1850.
 - d. were mostly fur trappers.
4. Immigrants going west on the great overland trails faced the least danger from:
 - a. hostile Indians.
 - b. diseases.
 - c. mountain and desert terrain.
 - d. hunger.

5. Which of the following was not part of President Polk's policy regarding New Mexico and California?
- Sending troops to the Nueces River in Texas.
 - Informing Americans in California that the United States would respond sympathetically to a revolt against Mexico.
 - Instructing the Pacific naval commander to seize California ports if Mexico declared war.
 - Ceasing all diplomatic contact with Mexico.
6. By combining the Oregon and the Texas issue in 1844, Democrats hoped to:
- start a war with Mexico and Great Britain.
 - attract John Tyler to the Democratic Party.
 - divert attention from the slavery issue.
 - appeal to both northern and southern expansionists.
7. The war with Mexico was criticized:
- by southerners who believed Polk deliberately maneuvered the country into the conflict on behalf of northern interests.
 - by northerners who believed it was part of a slaveholders' plot to bring in more slave states.
 - by businessmen who believed it would hurt commerce with England and Mexico.
 - by Democrats from all sections of the nation.
8. The Wilmot Proviso:
- went into law without the president's signature.
 - passed the House but not the Senate.
 - was a compromise acceptable to the South and the North but not the West.
 - drew very little attention outside of Congress.
9. The man on whose land the gold that led to the California gold rush was discovered was:
- John C. Frémont.
 - John A. Sutter.
 - Nicholas Trist.
 - Lewis Cass.
10. The Compromise of 1850 included all of the following except:
- California would come in as a free state.
 - in the rest of the lands acquired from Mexico, territorial governments would be formed without restrictions on slavery.
 - the national government would not pay the Texas debt.
 - the slave trade, but not slavery, would be abolished in the District of Columbia.
11. Which of the following did not support the Compromise of 1850?
- Henry Clay.
 - Zachary Taylor.
 - John C. Calhoun.
 - Daniel Webster.

12. The new leaders emerging in Congress after the Compromise of 1850 were:
- less able politicians.
 - more concerned with narrow interest of self-promotion.
 - as skilled at compromise as the older leaders.
 - interested in broad national issues.
13. The question of statehood for Kansas and Nebraska became a critical issue because:
- of the question of whether they would be slave or free states.
 - of southern fear that a transcontinental railroad would be built through them.
 - of northern concern over new wheat states and depressed grain prices.
 - many believed that they could never support a population sufficient to justify statehood.
14. Northerners who accepted the concepts of "free soil" and "free labor" believed:
- slavery was dangerous not because of what it did to blacks but because of what it did to whites.
 - slavery opened the door to economic opportunity for whites.
 - slavery was what made the South a glorious civilization and one that should be admired.
 - slave labor would work in northern factories and should be allowed to expand.
15. Through personal liberty laws northern states attempted to:
- use state authority to interfere with the deportation of fugitive slaves.
 - force industries to recognize labor unions.
 - allow women to own property.
 - extend the right to vote to all tax-paying adults.
16. Southerners who believed in the "positive-good" theory argued:
- slavery was good for blacks.
 - slavery was maintained, even though it was not profitable for whites.
 - northern factory workers were better off than slaves, but they deserved to be because they were white.
 - blacks were not biologically inferior, they just needed time to catch up culturally.
17. American efforts to buy or seize Cuba failed because:
- international pressure was put on President Pierce.
 - there was little nationalism in the nation by the 1850s.
 - antislavery forces in the North opposed it.
 - it was believed we had more territory than we could use.
18. The Dred Scott decision:
- affirmed the South's argument that the Constitution guaranteed the existence of slavery.
 - was a victory for the antislavery movement.
 - declared Scott a free man.
 - outlawed the interstate slave trade.

19. Abraham Lincoln:
- believed slavery was morally wrong but was not an abolitionist.
 - had been a Democrat before he became a Republican.
 - believed the expansion of slavery would hurt the spread of free labor.
 - tried to avoid the slavery issue in his debates with Douglas.
 - a. and c.
 - a. and d.
20. The single event that did the most to convince white southerners they could not live safely in the Union was:
- the election of Lincoln.
 - the Pottawatomie Massacre.
 - John Brown's raid.
 - the Dred Scott decision.

TRUE-FALSE QUESTIONS

Read each statement carefully. Mark true statements "T" and false statements "F."

- The "penny press" was important because it exposed a significant proportion of the population to the rhetoric of nationalistic politicians.
- Texas was not able to get any European nation to recognize it as an independent nation.
- Missionary efforts in Oregon converted large numbers of Indians to Christianity.
- Most travelers on the Oregon Trail went as individuals, even if they joined a wagon train.
- Though a "dark horse" candidate, James K. Polk was not an obscure politician.
- The Oregon question was finally settled by Britain surrendering claims below the 54th parallel.
- President Polk told Californians that the United States would not respond sympathetically if they revolted against Mexico.
- The United States did not take all of Mexico because its invasion of that country was not successful.
- The Wilmot Proviso prohibited slavery in the territory taken from Mexico.
- The Free-Soil Party had the abolition of slavery as part of its platform.
- The South supported Taylor because he was a southerner and a slaveholder.
- The Compromise of 1850 passed, despite the opposition of Webster and Calhoun.
- After 1850 the Whig Party emerged as the one party without sectional divisions.
- The Kansas-Nebraska Act repealed the antislavery provision of the Missouri Compromise.
- Northerners saw Preston Brook's attack on Charles Sumner as an example of the barbarism of the South while southerners believed Sumner had insulted Brook's uncle and got what he deserved.
- Northerners believed that the South was involved in a "slave power conspiracy" to take away their liberties.
- President Buchanan proved a firm and decisive president at the very time the nation needed one.
- The Republican Party became the party of the "free-soil-free-labor" ideology.
- The South thought the Dred Scott decision would hurt efforts to expand slavery.
- With Lincoln's election, the Republicans controlled both the legislative and the executive branches of the government.