

# Trouble in Kansas

## If YOU were there...

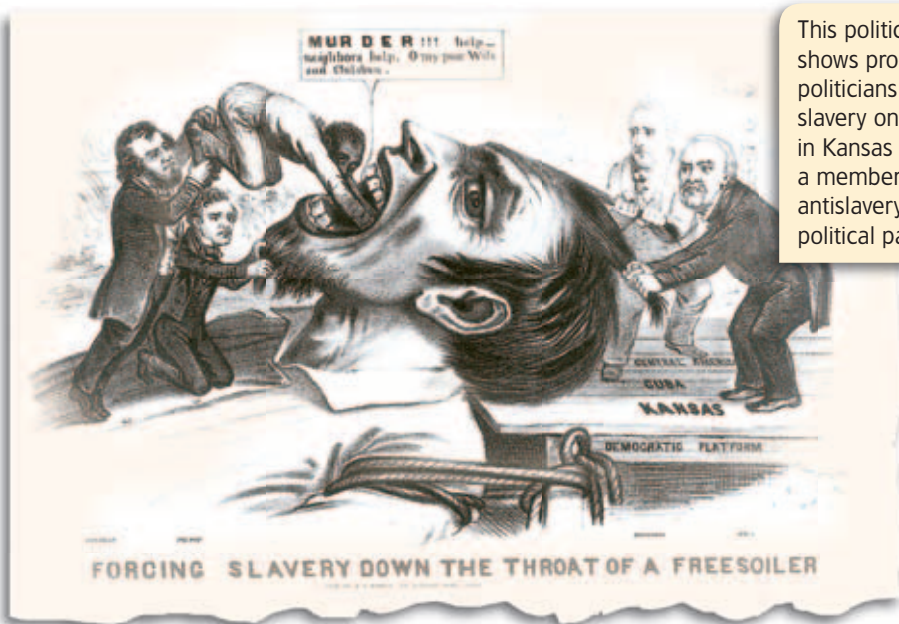
You live on a New England farm in 1855. You often think about moving West. But the last few harvests have been bad, and you can't afford it. Now the Emigrant Aid Society offers to help you get to Kansas. To bring in antislavery voters like you, they'll give you a wagon, livestock, and farm machines. Still, you know that Kansas might be dangerous.

### Would you decide to risk settling in Kansas?

**BUILDING BACKGROUND** The argument over the extension of slavery grew stronger and more bitter. It dominated American politics in the mid-1800s. Laws that tried to find compromises ended by causing more violence. The bloodiest battleground of this period was in Kansas.

## Election of 1852

Four leading candidates for the Democratic presidential nomination emerged in 1852. It became clear that none of them would win a majority of votes. Frustrated delegates at the Democratic National Convention turned to **Franklin Pierce**, a little-known politician from New Hampshire. Pierce promised to honor the Compromise



This political cartoon shows pro-slavery politicians forcing slavery on a settler in Kansas who is a member of the antislavery Free-Soil political party.

## What You Will Learn...

### Main Ideas

1. The debate over the expansion of slavery influenced the election of 1852.
2. The Kansas-Nebraska Act allowed voters to allow or prohibit slavery.
3. Pro-slavery and antislavery groups clashed violently in what became known as "Bleeding Kansas."

### The Big Idea

The Kansas-Nebraska Act heightened tensions in the conflict over slavery.

## Key Terms and People

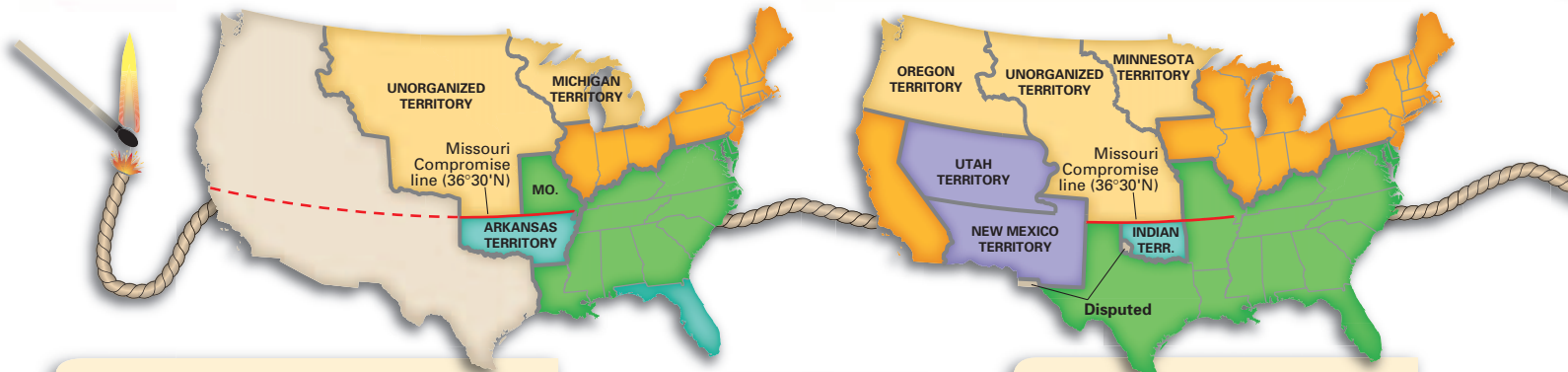
- Franklin Pierce, p. 483
- Stephen Douglas, p. 484
- Kansas-Nebraska Act, p. 485
- Pottawatomie Massacre, p. 487
- Charles Sumner, p. 487
- Preston Brooks, p. 487

## TAKING NOTES

As you read, take notes on Stephen Douglas's plan for a railroad to the Pacific Ocean, southern congressmembers' views of his plan, and the resulting Kansas-Nebraska Act. Write details about each in a graphic organizer like the one shown below.

Douglas's plan		Kansas-Nebraska Act
Southern Congress members' reaction		

## From Compromise to Conflict



### The Missouri Compromise, 1820

Under the Missouri Compromise of 1820, there are an equal number of free states (orange) and slave states (green).



### The Compromise of 1850

The Compromise of 1850 allowed for one more free state than slave state, but also passed a strict fugitive slave law.

### FOCUS ON READING

What facts and what opinions are mentioned in this paragraph?

of 1850 and the Fugitive Slave Act. Therefore, southerners trusted Pierce on the issue of slavery.

The opposing Whigs also held their convention in 1852. In other presidential elections, they had nominated well-known former generals such as William Henry Harrison and Zachary Taylor. This had been a good strategy, as both men had won. The Whigs decided to choose another war hero. They passed over the current president, Millard Fillmore, because they believed that his strict enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Act would cost votes. Instead, they chose Winfield Scott, a Mexican War hero. Southerners did not trust Scott, however, because he had not fully supported the Compromise of 1850.

Pierce won the election of 1852 by a large margin. Many Whigs viewed the election as a painful defeat, not just for their candidate, but for their party.

### READING CHECK Drawing Conclusions

What issues determined the outcome of the presidential election of 1852?

## The Kansas-Nebraska Act

In his inaugural address, President Pierce expressed his hope that the slavery issue had been put to rest “and that no sectional . . . excitement may again threaten the durability [stability] of our institutions.” Less than a year later, however, a proposal to build a railroad to the West coast helped revive the slavery controversy and opened a new period of sectional conflict.

### Douglas and the Railroad

Ever since entering Congress in the mid-1840s, **Stephen Douglas** had supported the idea of building a railroad to the Pacific Ocean. Douglas favored a line running from Chicago. The first step toward building such a railroad would be organizing what remained of the Louisiana Purchase into a federal territory. The Missouri Compromise required that this land be free territory and eventually free states.

Southerners in Congress did not support Douglas’s plan, recommending a southern route for the railroad. Their preferred line



### The Kansas-Nebraska Act

As a result of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the question of slavery is to be decided by popular sovereignty—by the people who vote in the elections there—in the newly organized territories of Kansas and Nebraska. The act sparked violent conflict between pro-slavery and antislavery groups.

### GEOGRAPHY SKILLS

### INTERPRETING MAPS

- 1. Region** In what part of the United States were the slave states located?
- 2. Place** What free state was added with the Compromise of 1850?

ran from New Orleans, across Texas and New Mexico Territory, to southern California. Determined to have the railroad start in Chicago, Douglas asked a few key southern senators to support his plan. They agreed to do so if the new territory west of Missouri was opened to slavery.

### Two New Territories

In January 1854, Douglas introduced what became the **Kansas-Nebraska Act**, a plan that would divide the remainder of the Louisiana Purchase into two territories—Kansas and Nebraska—and allow the people in each territory to decide on the question of slavery. The act would eliminate the Missouri Compromise’s restriction on slavery north of the 36° 30’ line.

Antislavery northerners were outraged by the **implications**. Some believed the proposal was part of a terrible plot to turn free territory into a “dreary region . . . inhabited by masters and slaves.” All across the North, citizens attended protest meetings and sent anti-Nebraska petitions to Congress.

Even so, with strong southern support—and with Douglas and President Pierce pressuring their fellow Democrats to vote for it—the measure passed both houses of Congress and was signed into law on May 30, 1854. Lost amid all the controversy over the territorial bill was Douglas’s proposed railroad to the Pacific Ocean. Congress would not approve the construction of such a railroad until 1862.

### Kansas Divided

Antislavery and pro-slavery groups rushed their supporters to Kansas. One of the people who spoke out strongly against slavery in Kansas was Senator Seward.

“Gentlemen of the Slave States . . . I accept [your challenge] in . . . the cause of freedom. We will engage in competition for . . . Kansas, and God give the victory to the side which is stronger in numbers as it is in right.”

—William Henry Seward, quoted in *The Impending Crisis, 1848–1861* by David M. Potter

Elections for the Kansas territorial legislature were held in March 1855. Almost 5,000

### ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

**implications**  
things that are inferred or deduced



pro-slavery voters crossed the border from Missouri, voted in Kansas, and then returned home. As a result, the new legislature had a huge pro-slavery majority. The members of the legislature passed strict laws that made it a crime to question slaveholders' rights and said that those who helped fugitive slaves could be put to death. In protest, anti-slavery Kansans formed their own legislature 25 miles away in Topeka. President Pierce, however, only recognized the pro-slavery legislature.

**READING CHECK** Analyzing Why did northerners dislike the Kansas-Nebraska Act?

## Bleeding Kansas

By early 1856 Kansas had two opposing governments, and the population was angry. Settlers had moved to Kansas to homestead in peace, but the controversy over slavery began to affect everyone.

### "Bleeding Kansas"

Abolitionists and pro-slavery forces clashed in Kansas, killing many people. Shown here is a group of abolitionists who took the law into their own hands to free one of their group from prison.

*Why might these men have fought against slavery?*



John Doy was imprisoned for his abolitionist activities but was freed by other abolitionists.

In April 1856, a congressional committee arrived in Kansas to decide which government was legitimate. Although committee members declared the election of the pro-slavery legislature to be unfair, the federal government did not agree.

### Attack on Lawrence

The new pro-slavery settlers owned guns, and antislavery settlers received weapons shipments from friends in the East. Then, violence broke out. In May 1856 a pro-slavery grand jury in Kansas charged leaders of the antislavery government with treason. About 800 men rode to the city of Lawrence to arrest the antislavery leaders, but they had fled. The posse took its anger out on Lawrence by setting fires, looting buildings, and destroying presses used to print antislavery newspapers. One man was killed in the pro-slavery attack that became known as the Sack of Lawrence.

### John Brown's Response

Abolitionist John Brown was from New England, but he and some of his sons had moved to Kansas in 1855. The Sack of Lawrence made him determined to "fight fire with fire" and to "strike terror in the hearts of the pro-slavery people." On the night of May 24, 1856, along Pottawatomie Creek,

Brown and his men killed five pro-slavery men in Kansas in what became known as the **Pottawatomie Massacre**. Brown and his men dragged the pro-slavery men out of their cabins and killed them with swords. The abolitionist band managed to escape capture. Brown declared that his actions had been ordered by God.

Kansas collapsed into civil war, and about 200 people were killed. The events in “Bleeding Kansas” became national front-page stories. In September 1856, a new territorial governor arrived and began to restore order.

### Brooks Attacks Sumner

Congress also reacted to the violence of the Sack of Lawrence. Senator **Charles Sumner** of Massachusetts criticized pro-slavery people in Kansas and personally insulted Andrew Pickens Butler, a pro-slavery senator from South Carolina. Representative **Preston Brooks**, a relative of Butler’s, responded strongly.

On May 22, 1856, Brooks used a walking cane to beat Sumner unconscious in the Senate chambers. Dozens of southerners sent Brooks new canes, but northerners were out-



raged and called the attacker “Bully Brooks.” Brooks only had to pay a \$300 fine to the federal court. It took Sumner three years before he was well enough to return to the Senate.

**READING CHECK** Summarizing What were some of the results of the intense division in Kansas?

The cartoon above shows Preston Brooks beating Charles Sumner with his cane. Sumner’s only protection is a quill pen symbolically representing the law.

**SUMMARY AND PREVIEW** The Kansas-Nebraska Act produced a national uproar. In the next section you will read about divisions in political parties.

## Section 2 Assessment

### Reviewing Ideas, Terms, and People

- a. Identify** What issues influenced the outcome of the election of 1852?

**b. Draw Conclusions** Why did northern and southern Democrats support **Franklin Pierce**?
- a. Recall** What did the **Kansas-Nebraska Act** do?

**b. Explain** Why did antislavery and pro-slavery groups encourage people to move to Kansas?

**c. Evaluate** Would you have supported or opposed the Kansas-Nebraska Act? Why?
- a. Describe** What was the **Pottawatomie Massacre**?

**b. Analyze** How did **Charles Sumner**’s views on “Bleeding Kansas” create conflict?

**c. Elaborate** Do you think **Preston Brooks**’s punishment was reasonable? Why or why not?