



Bleeding Kansas

The migration of proslavery and antislavery settlers into Kansas led to the outbreak of violence known as Bleeding Kansas. **Critical Thinking:** *Interpret Maps* Why did some proslavery settlers take a more southerly route than did antislavery settlers?

After months of debate, southern support enabled the Kansas-Nebraska Act to pass in both houses of Congress. President Franklin Pierce, a Democrat elected in 1852, then signed the bill into law. Douglas predicted that, as a result of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the slavery question would be “forever banished from the halls of Congress.” But events would soon prove how wrong he was.

Checkpoint How did Stephen Douglas’s plan undo the Missouri Compromise?

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The Kansas-Nebraska Act left it to the white citizens of the territory to decide whether Kansas would be free or slave territory. Both proslavery and antislavery settlers flooded into Kansas within weeks after Douglas’s bill became law. Each side was determined to hold the majority in the territory when it came time for the vote.

Thousands of Missourians entered Kansas in March 1855 to illegally vote in the election to select a territorial legislature. Although Kansas had only 3,000 voters, nearly 8,000 votes were cast on election day! Of 39 legislators elected, all but 3 supported slavery. The antislavery settlers refused to accept these results and held a second election.

Vocabulary Builder

impose (ihm POHZ) *v.* to place a burden on someone or something

Growing Violence Kansas now had two governments, each claiming the right to impose their government on the territory. Not surprisingly, violence soon broke out. In April, a proslavery sheriff was shot when he tried to arrest some antislavery settlers in the town of Lawrence. The next month, he returned with 800 men and attacked the town.



Three days later, **John Brown**, an antislavery settler from Connecticut, led seven men to a proslavery settlement near Pottawatomie (paht uh wah TOH mee) Creek. There, they murdered five proslavery men and boys.

These incidents set off widespread fighting in Kansas. Bands of proslavery and antislavery fighters roamed the countryside, terrorizing those who did not support their views. The violence was so bad that it earned Kansas the name Bleeding Kansas.

Bloodshed in the Senate Even before Brown's raid at Pottawatomie Creek, the violence in Kansas spilled over into the United States Senate. Charles Sumner of Massachusetts was the leading abolitionist senator. In a fiery speech, Sumner denounced the proslavery legislature in Kansas. He then attacked his southern foes, singling out Andrew Butler, an elderly senator from South Carolina.

Butler was not present the day Sumner made his speech. A few days later, however, Butler's nephew, Congressman Preston Brooks, marched into the Senate chamber. Using a heavy cane, Brooks beat Sumner until he fell to the floor, bloody and unconscious. Sumner never completely recovered from his injuries.

Many southerners felt that Sumner got what he deserved. Hundreds of people sent canes to Brooks to show their support. To northerners, however, Brooks's violent act was just more evidence that slavery was brutal and inhuman.

Checkpoint What was the outcome of the election to select a legislature in the Kansas Territory?

Looking Back and Ahead By 1856, all attempts at compromise had failed. The bitterness between the North and the South was about to alter the political landscape of the United States.

Describe the effect of the Kansas-Nebraska Act on Kansas.

Section 2 | **Check Your Progress**

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Comprehension and Critical Thinking

- (a) Recall** What parts of the Compromise of 1850 were included to please the North?
- (b) Draw Conclusions** Why do you think northerners were still not satisfied?

Reading Skill

3. Analyze Effects

Describe the effect of Harriet Beecher Stowe's book *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

Key Terms

Complete the following sentence so that the second part further explains the first part and clearly shows your understanding.

Writing

- Imagine that you are a writer. Describe the effects of Harriet Beecher Stowe's book *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Write down five questions that would help you find more information. Your questions should point to where you need to go for more information.