

Analyzing Political Speeches

Political speeches are as old as government itself. Their goal has always been to persuade listeners to take a particular view. Such speeches can be about almost anything—whom citizens should vote for, what new law they should support, what action the government should take, or what policy it should adopt. Political speeches can also serve as valuable evidence about people and events in history.

Political speakers use a variety of techniques to win over their listeners. Sometimes they appeal to the self-interest of their audience: “See how doing what I propose will make your life better.” Sometimes they appeal to their listeners’ social conscience: “See how doing what I propose will benefit the community or the nation as a whole.” Often they appeal to patriotism.

Use the following steps to analyze the excerpts from a speech made by Henry Clay during the debate over the Compromise of 1850.

1. Identify the main topic of the speech and the speaker’s stand on it. Recall what you already know about the speaker and his political ideas. Skim through the speech to get a general idea of the speaker’s topic and aims in making the speech. (a) What is the main topic of the speech? (b) Cite evidence in the speech that Clay believes the compromise will work. (c) What is Clay’s stand on the measure?

2. Analyze the techniques the speaker uses to persuade listeners. Political speakers appeal to both the minds and the hearts of their listeners. Evaluate the speaker’s persuasiveness

and how he or she achieves it. (a) What does Clay tell his listeners to disregard and forget? (b) Give evidence that Clay appeals to reason in his speech. (c) Give evidence that Clay appeals to his listeners’ feelings of patriotism. (d) How would you evaluate Clay’s persuasiveness in this speech?

3. Study the speech for clues to what the historical period was like. (a) What does the speech tell you about how serious the tensions between North and South seemed to people at that time? (b) What does it tell you about the style of speeches during that period?

TEST FOR SUCCESS

Compare and contrast this speech with any modern speeches you have heard or read.

To the Senate, July 22, 1850

I believe from the bottom of my soul that this measure is the reunion of the Union. And now let us disregard all resentments, all passions, all petty jealousies, all personal desires, all love of place, all hungering after the gilded crumbs which fall from the table of power. Let us forget popular fears, from whatever quarter they may spring. Let us . . . think alone of our God, our country, our conscience, and our glorious Union; that Union without which we shall be torn into hostile fragments, and sooner or later become the victims of military despotism, or foreign domination. . . .

What is an individual man? An atom, almost invisible without a magnifying glass—a mere speck upon the surface of the immense universe—not a second in

time, compared to immeasurable, never-beginning, and never-ending eternity; a drop of water in the great deep, which evaporates and is borne off by the winds; a grain of sand, which is soon gathered to the dust from which it sprung. Shall a being so small, so petty, so fleeting, so evanescent [quick to disappear], oppose itself to the onward march of a great nation? . . . Let us look at our country and our cause; elevate ourselves to the dignity of pure and disinterested patriots, wise and enlightened statesmen, and save our country from all impending dangers. . . . What are we—what is any man worth who is not ready and willing to sacrifice himself for the benefit of his country when it is necessary?

—Henry Clay, United States senator from Kentucky

1856
*Violence erupts
in Kansas*

1856
*Buchanan elected
President*

1857
*Scott v.
Sandford*

1858
*Lincoln-Douglas
debates*

1859
*John Brown's raid
on Harpers Ferry*

1855

1856

1857

1858

1859

1860

3 The System Fails

SECTION PREVIEW

Objectives

- 1 Summarize the causes of violence in Kansas and in Congress in 1856.
- 2 Explain how slavery dominated national politics from 1856 to 1858.
- 3 Describe how the Lecompton constitution, Lincoln-Douglas debates, and John Brown's raid reflected national divisions over slavery.
- 4 **Key Terms** Define: free soiler; *Scott v. Sandford*; arsenal.

Main Idea

A series of violent clashes between antislavery and proslavery forces took place between 1856 and 1860. Americans on each side of the slavery issue became convinced that the other side was acting against law and morality.

Reading Strategy

Arranging Events in Order As you read this section, create a time line of events. Write a statement for each event summarizing its impact on the North and/or South.

After passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854, national attention turned to the Kansas Territory. According to this law, voters in the territory would decide whether to become a free or slave state. Both proslavery and antislavery groups organized to make sure that they would have a majority of voters in the region.

Violence Begins

Antislavery groups in the Northeast set up so-called Emigrant Aid societies in 1854–1855 to send some 1,200 New Englanders to Kansas to fight against slavery. The new settlers were known as **free soilers**. Like the Free Soil party founded in 1848, free soilers worked to end slavery in the territories. Meanwhile, proslavery settlers in Missouri organized secret societies to oppose the free soilers. Many proslavery settlers crossed into Kansas to vote illegally in territorial elections. By 1855, Kansas had an antislavery capital at Topeka and a proslavery capital at Lecompton.

In 1856 tensions in Kansas escalated into open violence. The clashes began on May 21, when a group of Southerners, with the support of a proslavery federal marshal, looted newspaper offices and homes in Lawrence, Kansas, a center of free-soiler activity.

"Bleeding Kansas" The action of the proslavery looters stirred a swift response from Connecticut-born and Ohio-raised John Brown, a stern evangelical who believed that he was God's chosen instrument to end slavery. On the night of May 24–25, Brown led several New Englanders to a proslavery settlement near Pottawatomie Creek. There, Brown and his men roused five men from their beds, dragged them from their homes, and killed them with swords in front of their families.

The looting in Lawrence and Brown's brutal reaction to it sparked a summer of murderous raids and counterraids throughout Kansas, shown on the map on the next page. The violence won the territory the grim nickname: "Bleeding Kansas."

“Bleeding Summer” Violence was not confined to Kansas. On May 22 it appeared in the United States capital. On May 19 and 20, Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts had given a fiery speech later titled “The Crime Against Kansas.” Sumner, a leading Republican and one of the most powerful antislavery voices in Congress, bitterly attacked Southerners for forcing slavery on the territory. In particular, he made bold insults against Senator Andrew Butler of South Carolina.

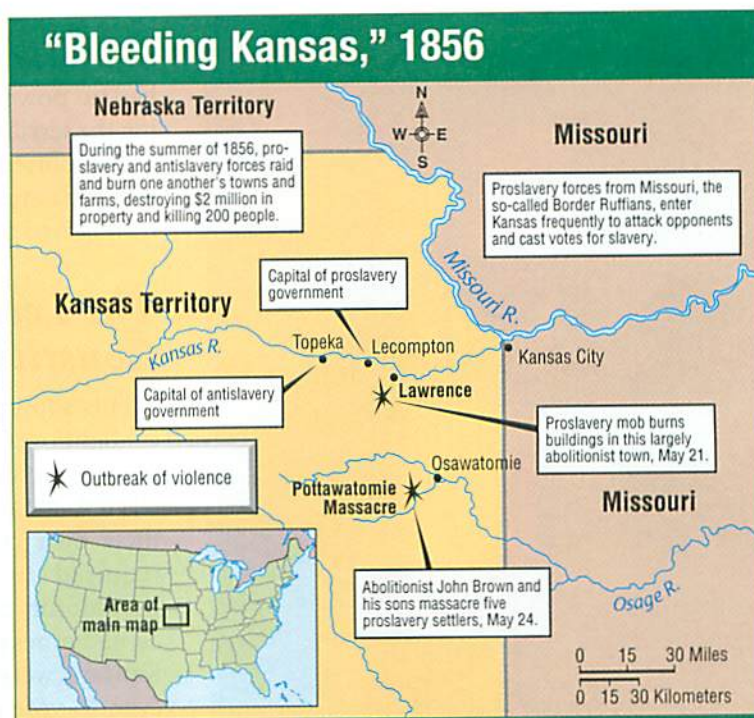
Preston Brooks, who was both a member of the House of Representatives and Butler’s nephew, was angered by Sumner’s remarks and determined to defend the honor of the South. Two days after Sumner’s speech, Brooks approached Sumner at his Senate desk and began beating him with his cane.

Sumner survived the caning, but was never completely healthy again. Brooks resigned his House seat, but was immediately reelected. People across the South voiced their support for Brooks. One Southerner sent him a cane inscribed with the words “Hit him again.” Northerners were outraged by Brooks’s action and the support he received. Sumner’s empty Senate seat served as a reminder of that hatred.

Slavery and National Politics

The violence of 1856 did not last. Still, slavery continued to dominate national politics, from presidential contests to Supreme Court cases to proposed state constitutions.

The Election of 1856 At their convention in Cincinnati, Democrats nominated for President, James Buchanan, who had been out of the country and had no connection with the violence in Kansas. Similarly, the Republicans chose John C. Frémont, a dynamic Mexican War hero with no experience in politics. The American party, or Know-Nothings, nominated former President Millard Fillmore.



Outsiders from both slave and free states meddled aggressively in Kansas politics. In one election, 5,000 proslavery men from Missouri crossed the border to vote. The final tally totaled four times as many votes as there were registered voters. **Location** How far is the abolitionist stronghold Lawrence from the Missouri border?

During the campaign, the Democrats supported the Compromise of 1850 and the Kansas-Nebraska Act. In direct opposition, the Republicans declared the federal government’s right to restrict slavery in the territories and called for the admission of Kansas as a free state.

While the Republicans received strong northern support, Buchanan won the election. He pledged to his supporters in the South that as President he would stop “the agitation of the slavery issue” in the North.

In fact Buchanan stated that the slavery issue was now “approaching its end.” Buchanan expressed his hope that the Supreme Court would use its power to resolve the slavery issue for good. Two days after Buchanan’s inauguration, however, the Supreme Court did just the opposite. It handed down a decision that would outrage Northerners even more and further divide the country over the issue of slavery.

The Dred Scott Decision In March 1857 the Supreme Court handed down one of the most controversial decisions in its history, *Scott v. Sandford*. The case had started when Dred Scott, an enslaved man living in Missouri, had



Dred Scott lost his suit for freedom because the Supreme Court viewed slaves as property and not as people.

Government
Why was the Dred Scott decision a blow not just for Scott, but for antislavery forces in general?



filed suit against his owner. Scott argued that because he and his wife, Harriet, had once lived in states and territories where slavery was illegal, the couple was in fact free.

The Supreme Court ruled 7 to 2 against Scott. The justices held that Scott, and therefore all slaves, were not citizens and therefore had no right to sue in court. The Court also ruled that Scott was not free simply because he had lived for a time in free territory. Finally, the Court found that the Missouri Compromise was unconstitutional. Slaves were the property of their owners, reasoned the Court, and Congress could not deprive people of their property without due process of law according to the Fifth Amendment.

In his written opinion on the case, Chief Justice Roger Taney stated that “the right of property in a slave is distinctly and expressly affirmed in the Constitution.” Furthermore, he added:

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“No word can be found in the Constitution, which gives Congress a greater power over slave property, or which entitles property of that kind to less protection than property of any other description. The only power conferred [granted] is the power coupled with the duty of guarding and protecting the owner in his rights.”

—Chief Justice Roger Taney

Antislavery forces were disgusted with the Dred Scott decision. It meant that Congress had no power to ban slavery anywhere, including the territories. President Buchanan, however, supported the Court’s decision. He hoped that the national government would no longer be required to deal with the slavery issue.

The Lecompton Constitution

Events soon proved, however, that the political fight over slavery had not ended. In the fall of 1857, a small proslavery group in Kansas elected members to a convention to write their own constitution. A constitution was required to attain statehood. Called the Lecompton constitution, it was as proslavery as its namesake, the proslavery capital. Most Kansans were opposed to slavery and refused even to vote on the constitution when it was offered for their approval. Yet President Buchanan, hoping that the problem of slavery in Kansas would go away as soon as the territory became a state, endorsed the Lecompton constitution.

Though Buchanan was a Democrat, his total disregard for popular sovereignty and the rule of law was too much for northern Democrats to swallow. Democratic leader Stephen Douglas spoke sharply against the Lecompton constitution and criticized Buchanan for accepting it. Congress returned the constitution to Kansas for another vote, and the people soundly defeated it in August 1858. For the time being, Kansas remained a territory where slavery was legal according to the Dred Scott decision. In reality, however, the free-soiler majority prohibited it.

The Lincoln-Douglas Debates

Senator Douglas denounced the Lecompton constitution in part out of principle and in part because he had to be responsive to public opinion. He faced a difficult reelection campaign in Illinois in 1858, where opinion on slavery was sharply divided.

A short, stout man, Douglas was known as “the Little Giant.” Like many whites in the 1850s, he believed that white Americans were superior to African Americans. He went even further, however, and tolerated slavery, because he believed in the absolute right of

white citizens to choose the kind of society and government they wanted.

Though Douglas was one of the most important senators in the nation's history, today he is overshadowed by the man the Republican party nominated to run against him, Abraham Lincoln. The campaign drew nationwide attention when Douglas and Lincoln met in a series of seven debates on the issue of slavery in the territories.

Abraham Lincoln had been born in a log cabin in Kentucky in 1809. As a young man, he studied law and worked at various jobs, including postmaster and rail splitter. In 1837 he settled in Springfield, Illinois, where he practiced law. He served one term in Congress in the 1840s. Known for his strength of character, Lincoln won further recognition for his skillful performance in the Lincoln-Douglas debates.

The debates between Lincoln and Douglas were covered in newspapers throughout the country. Many reporters commented on the great difference in appearances of the two candidates. While Douglas was stout, Lincoln was tall, awkward, and thin. While Douglas dressed in an elegant new suit, Lincoln purposely wore plain, everyday clothes.

The Lincoln and Douglas debates highlighted two important principles in American government, majority rule and minority rights. Douglas supported popular sovereignty. He believed that the majority of people of a state or territory could do anything they wished, including making slavery legal. Lincoln, on the other hand, did not believe that a majority should have the power to deny a minority of their rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Despite this fundamental difference, Lincoln actually shared many of Douglas's views on African Americans. During one of the debates Lincoln stated: "I am not nor ever have been in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and black races." He did not even propose forbidding slavery in the South because he thought the federal government did not have that power. He hoped that if slavery were confined to the states in which it already existed, it would eventually die out.

Yet Lincoln, like millions of other Northerners, knew that slavery was wrong. Lincoln considered slavery a moral issue. During the debates against Douglas, he quoted both the Bible and the Declaration of Independence to justify his stand:

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"The Savior [Jesus] . . . said, 'As your Father in Heaven is perfect, be ye also perfect.' He set that up as a standard, and [whoever] did most towards reaching that standard attained the highest degree of moral perfection. So I say in relation to the principle that all men are created equal, let it be as nearly reached as we can."

—Abraham Lincoln

In a now-famous speech in Springfield in June 1858, Lincoln foresaw the confrontation that the country would soon face. He stated:

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"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. It will become all one thing, or all the other."

—Abraham Lincoln

Though Lincoln gained a large following in 1858, Douglas won the election. In a letter to a friend after losing the election Lincoln wrote that he was glad to have participated in the election. "It gave me a hearing on the great and durable question of the age. . . . I believe I have made some marks which will tell for the cause of



During his 1858 campaign for the Senate, Abraham

Lincoln told one audience that he was driven "by something higher than an anxiety for office"—desire to defend the principle of equality established by the Declaration of Independence.

Government

How did Lincoln's political stance on slavery differ from his personal belief?



Behind John Brown's "glittering, gray-blue eyes" lurked a cool willingness to break the law in order to end slavery. **Culture** How did John Brown's raid deepen the divisions between the North and South?

civil liberty long after I am gone." To another friend he wrote, "The cause of civil liberty must not be surrendered at the end of one, or even, one hundred defeats." Despite his defeat, the tall, gaunt lawyer from Springfield earned a reputation for eloquence and moral commitment that would serve him and the Republicans well just two years later.

John Brown's Raid

On October 16, 1859, an event took place that raised the worst fears of the South. Three years after his raid along Pottawatomie Creek in Kansas, John Brown attacked the federal **arsenal** at Harpers Ferry, Virginia. (An arsenal is a place where weapons are made or stored.) With him were 22 men, including two African Americans. Supported by abolitionists in the North, Brown and his followers hoped to seize the weapons and give them to enslaved people. They had a dream of an uprising of enslaved Americans that would end slavery, punish slaveholders, and lead the United States to moral renewal.

Alerted to the attack, United States troops under the command of Colonel Robert E. Lee surrounded the arsenal. The troops killed half of Brown's men, including two of his sons, before the rest surrendered. Convicted of treason, John Brown was sentenced to be hanged.

Just before his execution, Brown wrote a brief note. Although he had failed as a soldier, his final message proved him a prophet:

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"I John Brown am now quite certain that the crimes of this guilty land will never be purged away; but with Blood."

—John Brown

Northerners hailed Brown as a martyr to the cause of justice and celebrated him in song. Southerners denounced Brown as a tool of Republican abolitionists. In short, Brown's raid only deepened the division, distrust, and anger between North and South.

SECTION 3 REVIEW

Comprehension

- Key Terms** Define: (a) free soiler; (b) *Scott v. Sandford*; (c) arsenal.
- Summarizing the Main Idea** What impact did the violent clashes between 1856 and 1860 have on the antislavery and proslavery forces in the United States?
- Organizing Information** Create a graphic organizer comparing and contrasting the views of Lincoln and Douglas on slavery.

Critical Thinking

- Analyzing Time Lines** Review the time line at the start of the section. What were the main points of the Supreme Court's decision in *Scott v. Sandford*?
- Testing Conclusions** Explain how the events in Kansas and Congress in 1856 support the message of this section's title: "The System Fails."

Writing Activity

- Writing an Expository Essay** Write an essay describing what you think was the greatest impact of John Brown's raid.

1860
Lincoln elected
President

1860
South Carolina
becomes the first
state to secede

1861
Confederacy
created

1861
Confederate
forces bombard
Fort Sumter

1860

1861

1862

4 A Nation Divided Against Itself

SECTION PREVIEW

Objectives

- 1 Describe the outcome and the importance of the election of 1860.
- 2 Explain why states of the Lower South seceded from the Union.
- 3 Summarize events leading to the start of the war at Fort Sumter.
- 4 **Key Terms** Define: Border States; Lower South; secessionist; Confederate States of America; Fort Sumter; Upper South.

Main Idea

Seven southern states left the Union after Abraham Lincoln was elected as President. While politicians and the people debated how to respond, the first shots were fired, and the nation plunged into civil war.

Reading Strategy

Outlining Information As you read the section, create an outline of the events leading up to the outbreak of war.

As the year 1860 began, it was clear that the majority of Northerners would not accept leadership by a Southerner. Southerners, likewise, announced that they would not accept a leader from the ranks of the antislavery Republicans in the North. The next presidential election was looming. Could the Union survive it?

The Election of 1860

When the Democratic party met in Charleston, South Carolina, in April 1860 to nominate its candidate for President, it was still a national party. For ten days, delegates from both North and South debated the issue that had divided the nation for a decade: slavery in the territories. Southern Democrats argued that the party should support protection of slavery in the territories, while Democrats from the North stood by the doctrine of popular sovereignty.

Unable to gain control of the voting, delegates from eight southern states left the convention and agreed to meet separately to nominate their own candidate. In the months ahead the split within the Democratic party

became official. Southern Democrats nominated as their candidate John C. Breckinridge, who was committed to an aggressive policy of expanding slavery in the territories. Northern Democrats nominated Stephen Douglas of Illinois, who supported popular sovereignty.

In the meantime, moderate Southerners who had belonged to the Whig and American parties met in Baltimore to form their own new party. These Southerners, along with a few politicians from the **Border States** (Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri), formed the Constitutional Union party. They chose John Bell of Tennessee, a moderate slaveholder, as their presidential nominee.

When the Republican party convened in Chicago to nominate their candidate, the man favored to win was William Henry Seward of New York. As the days went by, however, many delegates began to worry that Seward was too extreme in his antislavery views to attract the voters they needed.

Another Republican candidate, Abraham Lincoln, offered more moderate views on slavery while at the same standing firmly against

COMPARING PRIMARY SOURCES

SOUTHERN SECESSION

Lincoln's election in November 1860 led South Carolina to plan secession.

For Secession

"In January next we shall take leave of the Union and shall construct with our sister Cotton States a government for ourselves. The condition of affairs at the North since the election of an Abolitionist for President makes it necessary for us to get away as quickly as possible."

—E. B. Heyward, *South Carolina cotton planter, letter to a friend in Connecticut, November 20, 1860*

Against Secession

"I am for the preservation of the Union; I desire to witness no separation of the States; I have a pecuniary [financial] interest both in the South and in the North. . . . Men of South Carolina. . . . No harm will come to you. Mr. Lincoln and his party are your safest and best friends. They will do what is right."

—Anonymous northern merchant, *New York Tribune, November 22, 1860*

ANALYZING VIEWPOINTS Compare the main arguments made by the two writers.

its spread. Though Lincoln was little-known outside his own state, the convention-goers nominated him for President.

The November election made absolutely clear that there were no longer any national political parties. The division between North and South was beyond repair. In the South, the race was between Bell and Breckinridge. (Lincoln's name did not even appear on many southern ballots.) In the North, voters chose between Lincoln and Douglas. Lincoln won in every free state except New Jersey, which he split with Douglas. Breckinridge, meanwhile, won North Carolina, Arkansas, Delaware, Maryland, and the states of the **Lower South**—Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina. Bell carried three Border States, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Virginia. Douglas took Missouri.

Lincoln captured the presidency without winning a single electoral vote in the South. While gaining only 39 percent of the popular vote, Lincoln had won 180 electoral votes—the majority he needed to win. His was a decisive victory, but a sectional one.

The Lower South Secedes

Southerners were outraged that a President could be elected without any southern electoral votes. The government of the nation, it seemed, had passed completely out of their hands. Planters and others who backed slavery called for the South to secede, or withdraw, from the Union. Wrote an Augusta, Georgia, newspaper editor:



“[The Republican party] stands forth today, hideous, revolting, loathsome, a menace not only to the Union of these states, but to Society, to Liberty, and to Law.”

—Augusta, Georgia, newspaper editor

The **secessionists**, or those who wanted the South to secede, argued that since the states had voluntarily joined the United States, they also could choose to leave it. Edmund Ruffin of Virginia, a typical secessionist, stated that because the Republicans controlled the federal government, they could act constitutionally and legally “to produce the most complete subjection and political bondage, degradation, and ruin of the South.”

South Carolina left the Union officially on December 20, 1860. Over the next few weeks, so did six other states of the Lower South. In early February 1861, delegates from the seven states met in Montgomery, Alabama. There they created a new nation, the **Confederate States of America**, also called the Confederacy, shown on the map at the end of this section. As their president they elected Jefferson Davis of Mississippi.

The War Starts

The question on everyone's mind as the winter dragged on was what the federal government would do about the secession of seven of its member states. President Buchanan believed that secession from the Union was illegal. Still, he declared in his message to Congress that he would not try to prevent secession by force.

Last-Minute Compromises Fail Some politicians proposed compromises with the South, including Senator John J. Crittenden of Kentucky. Crittenden proposed a plan by which slavery would be recognized in territories south of 36° 30' N. President-elect Lincoln opposed the plan, however, and convinced the Senate to reject it.