Lines of Division

Government actions and sectional responses, 1820 to 1861

SS24.US1.11a "Summarize major legislation and court decisions from 1820 to 1861 that sought to address the issue of slavery, and describe the sectional responses to these government actions."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each law or court decision and what it did. Circle northern and southern responses, then use matching numbers to connect each action to its responses.

When Decisions Deepened Division

1 In 1820, Missouri's request to enter the Union as a slave state raised a sharp question: would slavery spread as the country grew? The Missouri Compromise admitted Missouri as a slave state and Maine as a free state, preserving the Senate's balance. It also barred slavery in most of the remaining Louisiana Purchase territory north of latitude 36°30′. Many northerners supported the limit on slavery's expansion, though some objected to Missouri's admission. Many southerners welcomed Missouri's admission but feared Congress had claimed the power to restrict slavery in territories. The law postponed conflict without ending it.

2 Thirty years later, the Compromise of 1850 addressed territory gained after the Mexican-American War. California entered as a free state, while voters in the Utah and New Mexico territories would decide whether to allow slavery. A tougher Fugitive Slave Act required officials and citizens to help return people who escaped slavery and denied accused people a jury trial. Many white southerners saw the act as essential protection for slaveholders, but complained when northerners resisted it. In the North, some accepted California's admission yet protested the fugitive law; abolitionists and other opponents helped people escape capture.

3 The Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 let settlers vote on slavery in those territories and repealed the Missouri Compromise's restriction north of 36°30′. Many northerners saw this as opening land once closed to slavery; many southerners defended the chance to extend it. Proslavery and antislavery settlers rushed into Kansas, where disputed elections and violence followed. In 1857, the Supreme Court's Dred Scott decision declared that Black people descended from enslaved people could not be U.S. citizens and that Congress could not ban slavery in federal territories. Many southerners praised the ruling; many northerners denounced it as another blow to limits on slavery.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the Missouri Compromise try to balance sectional interests, and why did people in both sections still have concerns?

2. How did northern and southern responses to the Fugitive Slave Act differ?

3. How did the Kansas-Nebraska Act change an earlier rule, and how did people in each section respond?

4. What limit on Congress did the Dred Scott decision announce, and how did northern and southern responses differ?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a five-sentence newspaper editorial dated 1860 comparing two government actions from the passage. Explain what each did, how northerners and southerners reacted to each, and why the actions failed to settle the dispute.

ANSWER KEY

Lines of Division

GRADE 10 · SS24.US1.11a

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each law or court decision and what it did. Circle northern and southern responses, then use matching numbers to connect each action to its responses. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the Missouri Compromise try to balance sectional interests, and why did people in both sections still have concerns?	**It admitted one slave state and one free state and limited slavery in much of the Louisiana Purchase. Some northerners objected to Missouri's admission, while some southerners feared Congress's power to restrict slavery.**
2	How did northern and southern responses to the Fugitive Slave Act differ?	**Many white southerners considered the act essential and complained about northern resistance. Northerners protested it, and some helped people escape capture.**
3	How did the Kansas-Nebraska Act change an earlier rule, and how did people in each section respond?	**It repealed the Missouri Compromise's northern restriction and let settlers vote on slavery. Many northerners opposed opening the territories to slavery, while many southerners supported the chance to extend it.**
4	What limit on Congress did the Dred Scott decision announce, and how did northern and southern responses differ?	**The Court said Congress could not ban slavery in federal territories. Many southerners praised the ruling, while many northerners denounced it.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

As an 1860 editor, I see a pattern: Washington tried to quiet the slavery dispute, but each decision stirred new anger. The Compromise of 1850 admitted California as a free state while strengthening the law that returned people who escaped slavery. Many northerners protested that law, while many white southerners demanded that it be enforced. In 1857, the Supreme Court ruled that Congress could not ban slavery in the territories; many southerners praised the ruling, while many northerners condemned it. Neither action settled the dispute because each side saw its own future in the rules for slavery's expansion.

Accept any two actions from the passage if the editorial accurately states what each did and describes responses in both sections. The final sentence should explain the continued conflict, not simply repeat that people disagreed.