# Parties Pull Apart

Trace how sectional conflict reshaped the election of 1860

**SS24.US1.11d** "Analyze the effect of sectionalism and debate over slavery on United States political parties in the 1850s and how this led to Abraham Lincoln's 1860 election and the secession of southern states."

NAME _____ DATE _____

## 1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

**YOUR JOB** Underline each disagreement over slavery, circle each change to a political party, and number the events that connect the 1860 election to secession.

### When Parties Could Not Hold Together

1. In 1854, Congress passed the Kansas-Nebraska Act, allowing settlers in Kansas and Nebraska to vote on whether to permit slavery. This reopened a question many thought the Missouri Compromise had settled: would slavery spread into western territories? Sectionalism, loyalty to one's region over the nation as a whole, turned the issue into a test for national parties. Many northern Whigs opposed the act, while many southern Whigs backed it. The Whig Party, once able to draw support from both regions, broke apart. Voters who opposed slavery's expansion, including former Whigs and some Democrats, helped build the Republican Party.

2. The Democrats survived the Whigs' collapse, but they could not agree on slavery's future in the territories. Northern Democrats generally defended popular sovereignty, letting settlers decide. Southern Democrats demanded stronger federal protection for slavery there. In 1860, the party split: northern Democrats nominated Stephen Douglas, while southern Democrats nominated John C. Breckinridge. A fourth candidate, John Bell, ran for the Constitutional Union Party, which emphasized preserving the Union rather than settling the slavery dispute. Republicans nominated Abraham Lincoln, who opposed slavery's expansion but did not call for abolishing it in states where it existed. Four candidacies now divided voters.

3. Lincoln won enough electoral votes from free states to become president, despite receiving less than half the popular vote and winning no slave state. On December 20, 1860, South Carolina became the first state to secede. Six more Deep South states seceded in January and February 1861, before Lincoln took office. Their leaders argued that a Republican administration threatened slavery and their political power. Lincoln had said he would not interfere with slavery where it already existed, but he opposed its extension. Years of sectional conflict had eroded trust, so an election won without southern electoral support intensified calls for secession.

## 2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did opposing reactions to the Kansas-Nebraska Act weaken the Whigs and help build another party?

2. How did disagreement over slavery in the territories split the Democrats in 1860?

3. How could Lincoln win the presidency without winning a slave state, and what does that show about the election?

4. Why did Lincoln's victory intensify calls for secession, even though he said he would not interfere with slavery where it existed?

## 3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a six-sentence newspaper explanation dated December 22, 1860, correcting this claim: "Lincoln won because most voters wanted slavery abolished immediately." Connect the parties' divisions, the election result, and South Carolina's secession, and distinguish Lincoln's stated position from secessionists' fears.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 10 · SS24.US1.11d

## PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each disagreement over slavery, circle each change to a political party, and number the events that connect the 1860 election to secession. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

## PART 2 · ANSWERS

| # | QUESTION | ANSWER |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | How did opposing reactions to the Kansas-Nebraska Act weaken the Whigs and help build another party? | **Northern and southern Whigs disagreed over the act, and the Whig Party broke apart. Some former Whigs helped build the Republican Party, which opposed slavery's expansion.** |
| 2 | How did disagreement over slavery in the territories split the Democrats in 1860? | **Northern Democrats generally favored letting settlers decide and nominated Douglas. Southern Democrats wanted federal protection for slavery in the territories and nominated Breckinridge.** |
| 3 | How could Lincoln win the presidency without winning a slave state, and what does that show about the election? | **He won enough electoral votes from free states. His victory without a slave state shows how sharply political support was divided by region.** |
| 4 | Why did Lincoln's victory intensify calls for secession, even though he said he would not interfere with slavery where it existed? | **Secessionists feared that a Republican administration threatened slavery and their political power. Lincoln's election without southern electoral support intensified those fears.** |

## PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The claim that Lincoln won because most voters wanted immediate abolition is false. Lincoln opposed slavery's expansion but said he would not end it where it already existed. The Whigs broke apart over slavery's spread, and the Democrats split into northern and southern tickets. With four candidates dividing voters, Lincoln won enough free-state electoral votes despite receiving less than half the popular vote and winning no slave state. South Carolina seceded on December 20 because its leaders feared a Republican administration would threaten slavery and their political power. Its decision followed years of sectional conflict, not a promise by Lincoln to abolish slavery immediately.

Accept answers that accurately trace how disagreements over slavery fractured parties, shaped the election, and contributed to secession. Distinguish Lincoln's opposition to expansion from abolition where slavery already existed.