Choices and Clashes

Trace how decisions over slavery deepened a national conflict

8.C.11.2 "Analyze the impact of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the growing tension, and inevitability of a civil war. Explain how popular sovereignty in new territories regarding the institution of slavery led to factional feuds in "Bleeding Kansas."..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three decisions or actions that changed the debate over slavery, and circle one result of each. Give each action and its result a matching number, 1, 2, or 3, to show how the conflict grew.

When Compromise Broke Down

1. In 1820, the Missouri Compromise barred slavery in most of the Louisiana Purchase north of latitude 36°30′, including the land that became Kansas and Nebraska. In 1854, the Kansas-Nebraska Act organized those territories and let settlers vote on slavery, a policy called popular sovereignty. The act overturned the earlier ban there. Many Northerners opposed it because land long closed to slavery might now allow it. They feared that slavery could spread west and increase the political power of slaveholding states. A law meant to settle an argument instead reopened it.

2. People on both sides of slavery rushed into Kansas, hoping to shape the vote. Some proslavery voters crossed from Missouri to cast illegal ballots, while antislavery settlers formed a rival government. In 1856, proslavery forces attacked the antislavery town of Lawrence. Soon afterward, abolitionist John Brown and his followers killed five proslavery men near Pottawatomie Creek. This cycle of raids and killings became known as "Bleeding Kansas." Popular sovereignty did not produce a peaceful choice because each faction fought to control who would make that choice.

3. In 1857, the Supreme Court ruled in Dred Scott v. Sandford that people of African descent, whether free or enslaved, could not be U.S. citizens and that Congress could not ban slavery in the territories. The Court treated enslaved people as property. This ruling angered Northerners who wanted to stop slavery's spread. In 1859, Brown raided the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, hoping to arm enslaved people and start an uprising. Brown was captured and executed. Some Northerners praised his cause, while Southerners feared more attacks. War seemed harder to avoid.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why did the Kansas-Nebraska Act alarm many Northerners despite the earlier Missouri Compromise?

2. How did the struggle to control the vote in Kansas lead to violence instead of a peaceful decision?

3. How did the Dred Scott ruling make it harder for Northerners to limit slavery's spread?

4. What did Brown hope to accomplish at Harpers Ferry, and how did the raid deepen the divide between North and South?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you are a newspaper editor in late 1859. In 4 to 5 sentences, argue which increased the chance of war most: Bleeding Kansas, the Dred Scott ruling, or Brown's raid. Compare your choice with one other event and use details from the passage to explain your judgment.

ANSWER KEY

Choices and Clashes

GRADE 8 · 8.C.11.2

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline three decisions or actions that changed the debate over slavery, and circle one result of each. Give each action and its result a matching number, 1, 2, or 3, to show how the conflict grew. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why did the Kansas-Nebraska Act alarm many Northerners despite the earlier Missouri Compromise?	**The act overturned the earlier ban in Kansas and Nebraska, so slavery could spread into land that had been closed to it and increase slaveholding states' political power.**
2	How did the struggle to control the vote in Kansas lead to violence instead of a peaceful decision?	**Proslavery voters cast illegal ballots, antislavery settlers formed a rival government, and the opposing factions carried out attacks and killings.**
3	How did the Dred Scott ruling make it harder for Northerners to limit slavery's spread?	**The Court ruled that Congress could not ban slavery in the territories and treated enslaved people as property.**
4	What did Brown hope to accomplish at Harpers Ferry, and how did the raid deepen the divide between North and South?	**Brown hoped to arm enslaved people and start an uprising. After the failed raid, some Northerners praised his cause, while Southerners feared more attacks.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Bleeding Kansas increased the chance of war most because people on both sides fought to control the vote. Illegal ballots, a rival government, and deadly attacks showed that popular sovereignty was not settling the dispute. Brown's raid also frightened Southerners, but it failed and Brown was captured. In Kansas, the fighting had already shown how a national disagreement could become sustained violence.

Accept any of the three events as the strongest choice if the student compares it with another event and supports the judgment with accurate passage details. For the marking task, accept different action-result pairs when the causal links are clear.