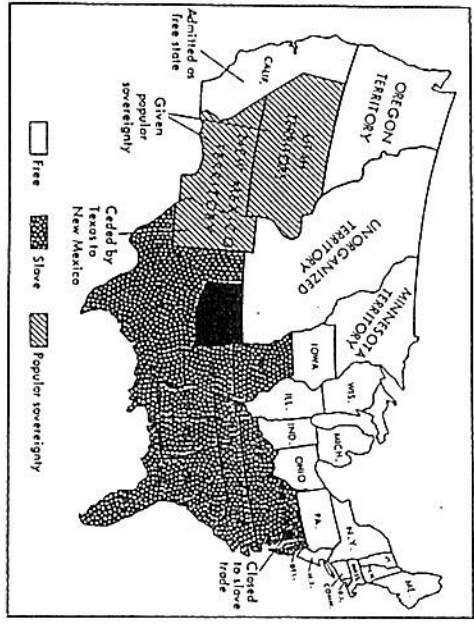


1. **The Issue.** Congress now faced the problem of the status of slavery in California and in the rest of the newly acquired territory. In Congress and throughout the country, Northerners and Southerners debated bitterly regarding the extension of slavery. Finally, Henry Clay, the "Great Compromiser," proposed an all-inclusive plan.

Clay's compromise was denounced by extremists on both sides. Senator John Calhoun of South Carolina, ill and near death, had another Southerner read his speech opposing the compromise. Senator William H. Seward of New York cited a "higher law" than the Constitution in opposing the extension of slavery and the compromise.

Clay's compromise was supported by moderate Northerners, especially Senator Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois and Senator Daniel Webster of Massachusetts. In his Seventh of March speech, Webster declared that he spoke "not as a northern man, but as an American" who sought "the preservation of the Union." Webster argued that a law to prohibit slavery was unnecessary since the acquired territory was not suited for slavery because of its soil and climate. The compromise—really a series of five separate bills—was easily approved.



2. **Provisions of the Compromise.** (a) California was admitted as a free state. (b) The rest of the Mexican Cession was divided into the territories of New Mexico and Utah and was to follow the principle of popular, or squatter, sovereignty. This principle permitted the territorial inhabitants themselves to decide whether or not they wanted slavery. (c) Texas was given \$10 million in exchange for a strip of land, most of which was assigned to New Mexico. (d) Slave trade, but not slavery, was prohibited in the District of Columbia. (e) A strict fugitive slave law was adopted to make it easier for Southerners to recover runaway slaves found in the North.

The Compromise of 1850, many moderate white Americans hoped, would finally settle the slavery issue—but it was not to be so.

Name _____ Chapter 17 P. _____

1. In your own words, describe what was the issue that to be compromised.

2. Why was the Compromise of 1850 easily approved?

3. Using "bullets", put the Compromise of 1850 into your own words:

The Compromise of 1850

As America expanded and grew in the decade prior to 1850, **sectionalism**, or the holding of similar attitudes by people living in a particular section of the country, developed and took an important position in the minds of many Americans. Differences between geographical areas such as the North, the South, and the West had always been understood to exist, yet rarely had they taken precedence over the national feelings of a region's citizens. By 1850, however, the nation and the people were in the midst of change. With expansion of the United States into the territory which once belonged to Mexico, the North began to split from the South. At this time, the balance of slave and free states stood at fifteen states each. As new territories applied for statehood, the threat of tipping the balance one way or the other became a feared reality.

In 1846, this fear on the South's part came to a peak with the attempted passage of the Wilmot Proviso. This bill, which stated that no territory acquired from Mexico could be made into a slave state, was passed by the House of Representatives (in which the free states were in the majority) but was not passed by the Senate (in which the free and slave states had an equal number of votes).

Also prominent during this time was the movement for **popular sovereignty**, a concept which would allow the voters in a new territory to vote for or against slavery at the time that the territory entered the Union as a state. Following the split in the Democratic Party in 1848, the proslavery faction supported Lewis Cass of Michigan as

its candidate for President. Cass campaigned on the concept of popular sovereignty. The Whig candidate, Zachary Taylor, won with 163 electoral votes.

The issue came to a head when, in 1850, the new territory of California requested admission into the Union as a free state. The South, in an uproar, threatened to **secede**, or leave the Union, if the balance of slave and free states was not maintained.

The problem was settled by Henry Clay, who was in a large way responsible for the resulting Compromise of 1850. The main points of the Compromise follow.

1. California would enter the Union as a free state.
2. Slave trade in the capital would be ended.
3. New Mexico and Utah were to be organized as territories to enter the Union by popular sovereignty.
4. A stronger fugitive slave law would be passed.
5. Texas would give up some of its claims to land in the New Mexico Territory in exchange for federal assistance in paying its state debt.



Use the Map

Complete the map of the United States and its territories. Label all the territories.

1. Color free states blue: ME, NH, VT, MA, RI, CT, NJ, NY, PA, OH, IN, IL, MI, WI, IA, and CA.
2. Color slave states orange: DE, MD, VA, NC, SC, GA, FL, AL, MS, TN, KY, MO, AR, LA, and TX.
3. Color territories open to slavery yellow: Utah Territory, New Mexico Territory, and the Unorganized Territory (now Oklahoma).
4. Color territories closed to slavery brown: Oregon, Minnesota, and the area lying between these territories and north of the 36° 30' parallel (northern border of modern-day Oklahoma).

Review and Write

Some have said that the Compromise of 1850 merely put off what was inevitable concerning slavery and its expansion. What could that statement mean? Do you agree or disagree? Why?

46 The Compromise of 1850

