**Chapter 13**

The Impending Crisis

*Reviewing Objectives*

**A thorough study of Chapter Thirteen should enable the student to understand:**

1. Manifest Destiny, and its influence on the nation in the 1840s.
2. The origin of the Republic of Texas, and the controversy concerning its annexation by the United States.
3. The reasons why the United States declared war on Mexico, and how the Mexican War was fought to a successful conclusion.
4. The impact of the Wilmot Proviso on the sectional controversy.
5. The methods used to enact the Compromise of 1850, and its reception by the American people.
6. The role of the major political parties in the widening sectional split.
7. The part played by Stephen A. Douglas in the enactment of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, and the effect of this act on his career and on the attitudes of the people in all sections.
8. The impact of the Dred Scott decision on sectional attitudes and on the prestige of the Supreme Court.
9. The reasons for Abraham Lincoln’s victory in 1860, and the effect of his election on the sectional crisis.

**Chapter 13**

**Pertinent Questions**

**LOOKING WESTWARD**

1. What was Manifest Destiny? What forces created this concept?

2. What was the “empire of liberty”? How was it to be achieved, and what doubts were raised about its desirability?

3. How did Texas become available for annexation? What prevented its immediate annexation?

4. What was the history of the American interest in Oregon?

5. What were the characteristics of western migrants? What problems did they face? How were these overcome?

**EXPANSION AND WAR**

6. Why did Clay and Van Buren wish to avoid taking a stand on the question of the annexation of Texas? What effect did this have on their efforts to be nominated by their party?

7. How did Van Buren’s position on Texas help the candidacy of James K. Polk? How did Polk’s campaign catch the spirit of the time? What effects did Clay’s position on Texas have on his campaign in the presidential election?

8. What were the goals of President Polk? How did he resolve the Oregon question?

9. What tensions emerged in the southwest that threatened to lead the United States into war with Mexico?

10. How far did American interest in California develop?

11. What were the origins of the Slidell mission? What was its goal, what did it accomplish, and what was Polk’s reaction to it?

12. On what grounds did Polk as Congress to declare war on Mexico?

13. On what grounds was Polk’s call for was criticized?

14. What was Polk’s plan for the conduct of the war? How was it set in motion, and what was accomplished on the first offensive of the Mexican War?

15. What were the objections of the next two offensives in the war? What did they accomplish? What were the terms of the Treaty of Guadeloupe Hidalgo?

**THE SECTIONAL DEABTE**

16. What was the Wilmot Proviso? What brought about its introduction, and what arguments were advanced in its favor?

17. What were the South’s arguments about the Wilmot Proviso? On what points did they differ form the arguments of the North?

18. What compromises were proposed to settle the issues raised by the Wilmot Proviso?

19. What part did the issue of slavery in the territories play in the election of 1848?

20. What problems faced President Zachary Taylor when he took office? How did he propose to solve them, and what action did congress initially take?

21. How did the South react to President Taylor’s program?

22. What was the compromise of 1850? How was it passed?

23. Who were the “younger” politicians who emerged after 1850? How did they differ from the leaders they replaced?

24. How did the Compromise of 1850 differ from the Missouri Compromise?

**THE CRISIS OF THE 1850’S**

25. How did the political parties react to the Compromise of 1850?

26. How did the sections of the country react to the Compromise of 1850?

27. What was the “Young America” movement? What national sentiment did it reflect? Who were its spokespersons? What did it accomplish?

28. How was it that American foreign policy objectives in the 1850’s began to reflect the growing sectional divisions in the country?

29. How did the issue of the transcontinental railroad help to reopen the sectional controversy? Explain.

30. How did the North react to the Kansas-Nebraska Act? The South? What effect did it have on the Whigs? The

Democrats?

31. Who were the Republicans? What caused their formation? Which groups compromised this party, and what was the party’s platform?

32. What problems were faced in the attempt to organize a legitimate government in Kansas? Why did these problems arise? How was it that Kansas became a battle ground for sectional controversy?

33. Explain the maneuvering by pro-slavery and antislavery forces to gain control of the Kansas government. What did both sides come to believe that Kansas symbolized for the nation/

34. What were the “immediate, sweeping, and ominous consequences” of the Kansas-Nebraska Act?

35. What type of society did northerners wish to create? How did “free soil” and “free labor” fit into their plans? Why did they feel that the South was holding them back?

36. How did the “free-soil” ideology manifest itself in the Republican Party? What diverse views did it unite?

37. What were the elements of the South’s pro-slavery response? Who were its major spokespersons?

38. What effects did the depression of 1857 have on political divisions in America? How did it increase the tension between the North and the South? What did both sides see as the significance behind this decline?

39. What were the origins of the Dred Scott case? What issues were involved, and what decision did the court hand down? How did the reaction to this case add to the sectional tensions?

40. How did President James Buchanan respond to the Kansas question? What were his reasons, and what was the outcome? What does this tell you about the possibility of compromise on the issue of slavery in the territories?

41. Why did the Lincoln-Douglass debates take place, and why did they draw so much attention? How did Lincoln and Douglas differ on their solution to the question of slavery in the territories?

42. What were the goals of John Brown’s raid, and why did it have such an impact on the South?

43. What caused the split between northern and southern Democrats in 1860, and what was the result of this division?

44. What was the Republican platform of 1860? To what specific political groups were the Republicans trying to appeal, and how did this platform propose to appeal to them?

**PATTERNS OF POPULAR CULTURE**

45. What role did the Lyceum play in educating the American public, especially with regard to public controversies of the period?

46. What sort of people took part in the Lyceum movement?

# Summary

Between 1845 and 1860, critical events and issues seemed to come in a rush, giving Americans little time to analyze what was happening and reflect on long-range solutions. Emotion seemed to replace reason as the debate grew increasingly repetitious and loud. The question, or so it seemed, was the expansion of slavery into the territories gained during the Polk administration. But something far more fundamental was at stake--the future of the nation.

Northerners had become convinced that the expansion of slavery threatened the democratic foundations of the United States and that expansion would give the South control of the government that would lead to economic stagnation, unemployment, and financial ruin--all the effect of the depression of 1837, but magnified. From this point of view, the South, and its "peculiar institution," threatened the nation's growth and progress and had to be overcome. The South, however, convinced of the legality of its position and the validity of its institutions, fought back, and with remarkable success. By combining the power in the Democratic Party (which gave it extraordinary influence in Congress and with the president) with its supporters on the Supreme Court, the slave states seemed secure. But still they were fearful. Convinced that they had given up all they could in earlier compromises, they feared future gains by those they considered to be enemies; and those they feared most were the Republicans.