

# A.P. United States History

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**James K. Polk**  
“The Dark Horse”  
11<sup>th</sup> President of the United  
States, 1845-1849

## Unit 5: Crisis of the Union - Road to Civil War

### Unit Outline

- 1) Territorial Expansion and Sectional Crisis
  - a) Manifest Destiny and mission
  - b) Texas
  - c) Oregon
  - d) California
  - e) James K. Polk and the Mexican War
  - f) Slavery and the Wilmot Proviso
- 2) The 1850s: Decade of Crisis
  - a) Compromise of 1850
  - b) Fugitive Slave Act and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*
  - c) Kansas-Nebraska Act
  - d) Re-Alignment of political parties
    - i) Whigs
    - ii) Republicans
    - iii) Democrats
  - e) Dred Scott decision, Lecompton Crisis
  - f) Lincoln-Douglas debates
  - g) Harper's Ferry Raid
  - h) Election of 1860, Abraham Lincoln
  - i) The secession crisis
- 3) Slavery & Abolition

### Learning Objectives

*At the end of this unit, students should be able to:*

- Understand the sequence of events leading to the Civil War in 1861.
- Assess the failures of Compromise to prevent Civil War.
- Explain rationales for keeping and abolishing slavery before the Civil War.
- Explain what role Jacksonian Democracy had in causing the Civil War.

### Essential Questions

1. What political and economic events led to the crisis of the Union in 1861?
2. Was the Civil War an inevitable solution to an irrepressible conflict?
3. Could Civil War have been avoided?
4. Was slavery a viable economic and political institution?
5. What was becoming of the nation's conscience by the mid-nineteenth century? What intellectual movements fueled this?

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**Jim Bowie,**  
*Defender of the Alamo*

# Terms, People & Concepts

Manifest Destiny  
Texas (annexation)  
The Alamo  
Oregon Territory  
Mexican Cession  
Webster-Ashburton Treaty  
Gadsden Purchase  
Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo  
54-40 or Fight  
49ers  
Lone Star Republic  
Slidell Mission  
Liberty Party  
Free Soil Party  
American Party  
Uncle Tom's Cabin  
Harriet Beecher Stowe  
Nat Turner's Rebellion  
Wilmot Proviso  
Compromise of 1850  
Henry Clay  
Fugitive Slave Act  
Kansas-Nebraska Act  
Popular sovereignty  
Dred Scott decision  
Lincoln-Douglas debates  
Election of 1860  
Nullification  
Secession  
Bleeding Kansas  
Freeport Doctrine  
Harper's Ferry  
Crittenden Compromise

Whigs  
Republicans  
Democrats  
Abolitionism  
William Lloyd Garrison  
Sojourner Truth  
Frederick Douglass  
Mexican War  
William Henry Harrison  
John Tyler  
James K. Polk  
Zachary Taylor  
Millard Fillmore  
Franklin Pierce  
James Buchanan

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### Unit 5: AP Exam Essay Questions/ ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

The following questions have been asked as AP Free Response (FRQ) and Document Based Questions (DBQ) on this unit.

1. Discuss the impact of territorial expansion on national unity between 1800 and 1850.
2. Assess the moral arguments and political actions of those opposed to the spread of slavery in the context of TWO of the following.
  - Missouri Compromise
  - Mexican War
  - Compromise of 1850
  - Kansas-Nebraska Act
3. “Reform movements in the United States sought to expand democratic ideals.”
  - Assess the validity of this statement.
4. The Jacksonian Period (1824-1848) has been celebrated as the era of the “common man.” To what extent did the period live up to its characterization? Consider TWO of the following in your response.
  - Economic development
  - Politics
  - Reform movements
5. How did TWO of the following contribute to the reemergence of the two party system in the period 1820 and 1840?
  - Major political personalities
  - States Rights
  - Economic Issues
6. Analyze the ways in which supporters of slavery in the nineteenth century used legal, religious and economic arguments to defend the institution of slavery.
7. Compare the expansionist foreign policies of Presidents Thomas Jefferson and James K. Polk. To what extent did their policies strengthen the United States?
8. “Developments in transportation, rather than in manufacturing and agriculture, sparked American economic growth in the first half of the nineteenth century.”
  - Assess the validity of this statement.
9. “By the 1850s the Constitution, originally framed as an instrument of nation unity, had become a source of sectional discord and tension and ultimately contributed to the failure of the union it had created.”
10. “In the first half of the nineteenth century, the American cultural and intellectual community contributed to the development of a distinct American national consciousness.”
  - Assess the validity of this statement.
11. Discuss the changing ideals of American womanhood between the American Revolution (1770s) and the outbreak of the Civil War. What factors fostered the emergence of “republican motherhood” and the “cult of domesticity”? Assess the extent to which these ideals influenced the lives of women during this period. In your answer be sure to consider issues of race and class.

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### Assignments

It is expected that you will complete all reading assignments and homework thoroughly and carefully *before* you come to class. “Norton” refers to the textbook, *A People & A Nation*.

Work to be completed by:

December 18

**Political Quagmire, or “Kicking the Can Down the Road”: The Political, Economic, and Social Causes of the Civil War: Part I**  
Kennedy pp. 340-362

December 20

**Political Quagmire, or “Kicking the Can Down the Road”: The Political, Economic, and Social Causes of the Civil War: Part II**  
Kennedy, pp. 381-398

January 7

**A Power Vacuum: The Presidency, 1840-1860 and the Polk Exception**  
Kennedy, pp. 363-380

January 9

**Conditions of Secession: Lincoln, Douglass and the Precipice of War**  
Kennedy pp. 399-420  
Extra Readings - Lincoln/Douglas Debates  
J. W. Shenk, “Lincoln’s Great Depression” (handout)

January 13

**The Civil War Brief & With Malice Toward None: The Reconstruction Plans of Lincoln, Johnson, and Congress**  
Kennedy pp. 465-485, (pp. 438-464 optional)

January 15

**Seminar - Antebellum South & Slavery: The Peculiar Institution**  
Readings TBD

January 17

**The Strange Career of Jim Crow: Segregation and the “New South”**  
Kennedy, pp. 421-25, 431-437, 494-496

January 22

**Unit V Take Home DBQ**