

# 3

## A New Party Challenges Slavery

As You Read

### Explore These Questions

- Why did the Republican party come into being in the mid-1850s?
- What were Abraham Lincoln's views on slavery?
- How did northerners and southerners respond differently to the raid on Harpers Ferry?

### Define

- arsenal
- martyr

### Identify

- Republican party
- John C. Frémont
- James Buchanan
- Abraham Lincoln

### SETTING the Scene

In the mid-1850s, people who opposed slavery in the territories needed a new political voice. Neither Whigs nor Democrats would take a strong stand against slavery. "We have submitted to slavery long enough," an Ohio Democrat declared.

Free Soilers, northern Democrats, and antislavery Whigs met in towns and cities across the North. In 1854, a group gathered in Michigan to form the **Republican party**. The new party grew quickly. By 1856, it was ready to challenge the older parties for power.

### The Republican Party

In the 1850s, the main goal of the Republican party was to keep slavery out of the western territories. A few Republicans were abolitionists. They hoped to end slavery in the South as well. Most Republicans, however, wanted only to stop the spread of slavery.

In 1856, Republicans selected **John C. Frémont** to run for President. Frémont was a frontiersman who had fought for California's independence. (See page 362.) He had little political experience, but he opposed the spread of slavery.

Frémont's main opponent was Democrat **James Buchanan** of Pennsylvania. He had served as a senator and as Secretary of State. Many Democrats considered Buchanan to be a "compromise" candidate because he was a "northern man with southern principles." They hoped that he would attract voters in both the North and the South.

Buchanan won the election with support from a large majority of southerners and many northerners. Still, the Republicans made a strong showing in the election. Without the support of a single southern state, Frémont won one third of the popular vote. Southerners worried that their influence in the national government was fading.



John C. Frémont

### Abe Lincoln of Illinois

The next test for the Republican party came in 1858 in the state of Illinois. **Abraham Lincoln**, a Republican, challenged Democrat Stephen Douglas for his seat in the Senate. The election captured the attention of the whole nation. The race was important because most Americans thought that Douglas would run for President in 1860.

In this painting, Stephen Douglas sits to Lincoln's right during a debate held at Charleston, Illinois, in September 1858. Thousands of people attended the Lincoln-Douglas debates. ★ What was the most important issue discussed in the debates?



### A self-starter from Kentucky

Abraham Lincoln was born in the backcountry of Kentucky. Like many frontier people, his parents moved often to find better land. The family lived in Indiana and later in Illinois. As a child, Lincoln spent only a year in school. Still, he taught himself to read and spent many hours reading by firelight.

After Lincoln left home, he opened a store in Illinois. There, he studied law on his own and launched a career in politics. After spending eight years in the state legislature, Lincoln served one term in Congress. Bitterly opposed to the Kansas-Nebraska Act, he decided to run for the Senate in 1858.

### “Just folks”

When the race began, Lincoln was not a national figure. Still, people in Illinois knew him well and liked him. To them, he was “just folks”—someone who enjoyed picnics, wrestling contests, and all their other favorite pastimes.

People also admired his honesty and wit. His plainspoken manner made him a good speaker. Even so, a listener once complained that he could not understand one of Lincoln's speeches. “There are always some fleas a dog can't reach” was Lincoln's reply.

## Lincoln-Douglas Debates

During the Senate campaign, Lincoln challenged Douglas to a series of debates. Douglas was not eager to accept, but he did. During the campaign, the two debated seven times. Slavery was the important issue.

### Views on slavery

Douglas wanted to settle the slavery question by popular sovereignty. He disliked slavery, but he thought that people in the territories should be able to vote “down or up” for it.

Lincoln, like nearly all whites of his day, did not believe in “perfect equality” between blacks and whites. He did, however, believe that slavery was a “moral, social, and political wrong.” He believed that blacks were entitled to the rights named in the Declaration of Independence—“life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

Since slavery was wrong, said Lincoln, Douglas and other Americans should not treat it as an unimportant question to be voted “down or up.” Lincoln was totally opposed to slavery in the territories. Still, he was not an abolitionist. He had no wish to interfere with slavery in the states where it already existed.

Lincoln believed that the nation could not survive if it remained divided by slavery. On June 16, 1858, Lincoln spoke in a crowded hall in Springfield, Illinois:

“A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved—I do not expect the house to fall—but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing, or all the other.”

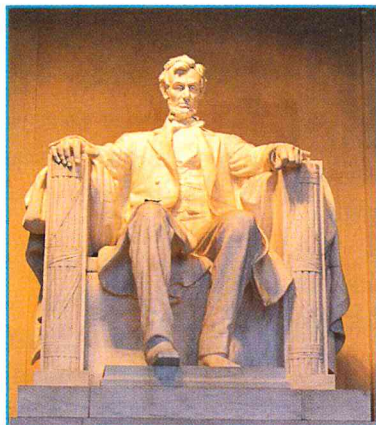
# Why Study *History?*

## Because Heroes of the Past Can Be Models for Today

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### Historical Background

Many consider Abraham Lincoln one of the truly heroic figures in American history. Through education and hard work, “Honest Abe” rose from humble beginnings to national leadership. As President, he would lead the nation through the horrors of a civil war and help bring an end to slavery.



Lincoln Memorial

### Connections to Today

Today, we still honor Lincoln. Each year, we remember him on Presidents’ Day. His image is on the money we use every day. In addition, thousands of people show their respect by visiting the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C.

Admirers of Lincoln consider him a model for others to imitate. They point to his easygoing manner, keen wit, high sense of morality, and ability to make wise decisions in tough situations.

### Connections to You

Do you think Lincoln is an American hero? Should you look to him as a role model? To help you decide, read the following excerpts from Lincoln’s conversations, speeches, and writings.

“I have no other [ambition] so great as that of being truly esteemed of my fellow men, by rendering myself worthy of their esteem.”—June 13, 1836

“The better part of one’s life consists in his friendships.”  
—May 19, 1849

“Let us have faith that Right makes Might, and in that faith, let us to the end, dare to do our duty.”  
—February 27, 1860

“I want every man to have a chance—and I believe a black man is entitled to it—in which he can better his condition.”—March 6, 1860

“The people’s will, constitutionally expressed, is the ultimate law for all.”—October 19, 1864

“Whenever I hear anyone arguing for slavery, I feel a strong impulse to see it tried on him personally.”  
—March 17, 1865

**1. Comprehension** How do Americans show their respect for Abraham Lincoln today?

**2. Critical Thinking** (a) Which quotation deals most directly with the idea of racial equality? (b) What was Lincoln’s position on equality?

### *Activity*

**Writing an Essay** Do you consider Lincoln an American hero and role model?

Develop your answer in a brief essay, using the quotations above to describe some of Lincoln’s ideas and values.

## A leader emerges

Week after week, both men spoke nearly every day to large crowds. Newspapers reprinted their campaign speeches. The more northerners read Lincoln's speeches, the more they thought about the injustice of slavery.

In the end, Douglas won the election by a slim margin. However, Lincoln was a winner, too. He was now known throughout the country. Two years later, the two rivals would again meet face to face—both seeking the office of President.

## John Brown's Raid

In the meantime, more bloodshed pushed the North and South farther apart. In 1859, John Brown carried his antislavery campaign from Kansas to the East. He led a group of followers, including five African Americans, to Harpers Ferry, Virginia.

There, Brown planned to raid a federal **arsenal**, or gun warehouse. He thought that enslaved African Americans would flock to him at the arsenal. He would then give them weapons and lead them in a revolt.

## Sentenced to death

Brown quickly gained control of the arsenal. No slave uprising took place, however.

Instead, troops led by Robert E. Lee killed 10 of the raiders and captured Brown.

Most people, in both the North and the South, thought that Brown's plan to lead a slave revolt was insane. After all, there were not many enslaved African Americans in Harpers Ferry. At his trial, however, Brown seemed perfectly sane. He sat quietly as the court found him guilty of murder and treason and sentenced him to death.

## Hero or villain?

Brown became a hero to many northerners. Some considered him a **martyr** because he was willing to give up his life for his beliefs. On the morning he was hanged, church bells rang solemnly throughout the North. In years to come, New Englanders would sing a popular song: "John Brown's body lies a mold'ring in the grave, but his soul is marching on."

To white southerners, the northern response to John Brown's death was outrageous. People were singing the praises of a man who had tried to lead a slave revolt! Many southerners became convinced that the North wanted to destroy slavery—and the South along with it. The nation was poised for a violent clash.

## ★ Section 3 Review ★

### Recall

1. **Identify** (a) Republican party, (b) John C. Frémont, (c) James Buchanan, (d) Abraham Lincoln.
2. **Define** (a) arsenal, (b) martyr.

### Comprehension

3. What was the main goal of the Republican party?
4. How did Abraham Lincoln's opinions on slavery differ from those of Stephen Douglas?

5. (a) How did Northerners respond to John Brown's execution? (b) How did Southerners respond?

### Critical Thinking and Writing

6. **Identifying Main Ideas** Reread the subsection on page 436 called Just folks. State the main idea of this subsection.
7. **Analyzing Ideas** Lincoln said the nation could not "endure permanently half slave and half free." Do you agree that slavery was too great an issue to allow differences among the states? Explain.



**Activity Writing Headlines** You are a journalist in the 1850s. Choose three events discussed in Section 3. Write two headlines for each event—one for a northern newspaper, the other for a southern newspaper.