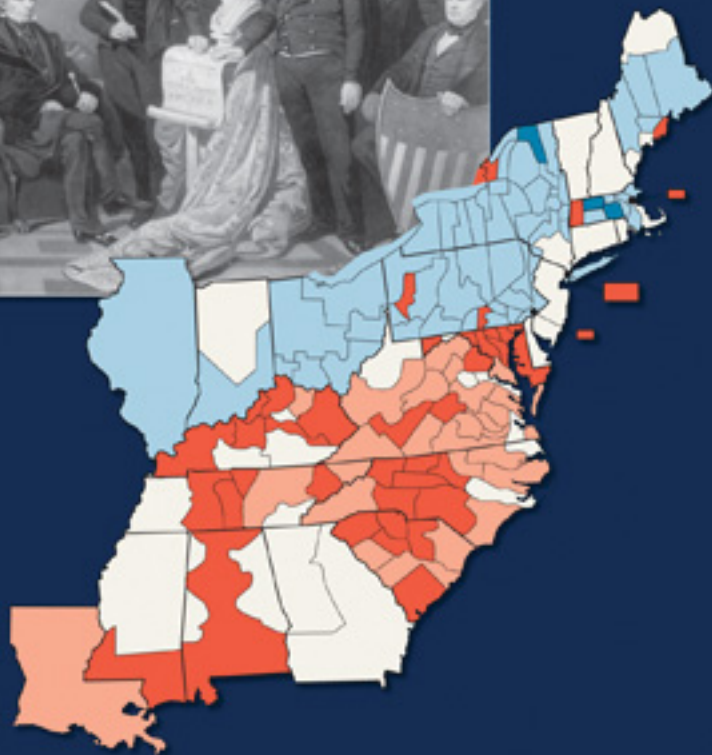


## DOCUMENTS

Interpreting Alternative Viewpoints  
in Primary Source Documents

# The Missouri Compromise

*The Missouri Compromise was supposed to settle the slavery issue for good. Could it have worked?*



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*Debating* the  
**DOCUMENTS**

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# Teacher Introduction

## ★ *Using Primary Sources*

Primary sources are called “primary” because they are first-hand records of a past era or historical event. They are the raw materials, or the evidence, on which historians base their “secondary” accounts of the past.

A rapidly growing number of history teachers today are using primary sources. Why? Perhaps it's because primary sources give students a better sense of what history is and what historians do. Such sources also help students see the past from a variety of viewpoints. Moreover, primary sources make history vivid and bring it to life.

However, primary sources are not easy to use. They can be confusing. They can be biased. They rarely all agree. Primary sources must be interpreted and set in context. To do this, students need historical background knowledge. *Debating the Documents* helps students handle such challenges by giving them a useful framework for analyzing sources that conflict with one another.



*“Multiple,  
conflicting  
perspectives are  
among the truths  
of history.  
No single  
objective or  
universal account  
could ever put an  
end to this endless  
creative dialogue  
within and  
between the past  
and the present.”*

From the 2011 Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct of the Council of the American Historical Association.

## INTRODUCTION

### ★ *The Debating the Documents Series*

Each *Debating the Documents* booklet includes the same sequence of reproducible worksheets. If students use several booklets over time, they will get regular practice at interpreting and comparing conflicting sources. In this way, they can learn the skills and habits needed to get the most out of primary sources.

#### **Each *Debating the Documents* Booklet Includes**

- **Suggestions for the Student and an Introductory Essay.** The student gets instructions and a one-page essay providing background on the booklet's topic. A time line on the topic is also included.
- **Two Groups of Contrasting Primary Source Documents.** In most of the booklets, students get one pair of visual sources and one pair of written sources. In some cases, more than two are provided for each. Background is provided on each source. *Within each group, the sources clash in a very clear way.* (The sources are not always exact opposites, but they do always differ in some obvious way.)
- **Three Worksheets for Each Document Group.** Students use the first two worksheets to take notes on the sources. The third worksheet asks which source the student thinks would be most useful to a historian.
- **One DBQ.** On page 20, a document-based question (DBQ) asks students to write an effective essay using all of the booklet's primary sources.

### ★ *How to Use This Booklet*

#### **1. Have students read “Suggestions for the Student” and the Introductory Essay.**

Give them copies of pages 5–7. Ask them to read the instructions and then read the introductory essay on the topic. The time line gives them additional information on that topic. This reading could be done in class or as a homework assignment.

#### **2. Have students do the worksheets.**

Make copies of the worksheets and the pages with the sources. Ask students to study the background information on each source and the source itself. Then have them take notes on the sources using the worksheets. If students have access to a computer, have them review the primary sources digitally.



### 3. “Debate the documents” as a class.

Have students use their worksheet notes to debate the primary source documents as a class. Urge students to follow these ground rules:

- Use your worksheets as a guide for the discussion or debate.
- Try to reach agreement about the main ideas and the significance of each primary source document.
- Look for points of agreement as well as disagreement between the primary sources.
- Listen closely to all points of view about each primary source.
- Focus on the usefulness of each source to the historian, not merely on whether you agree or disagree with that source’s point of view.

### 4. Have students do the final DBQ.

A DBQ is an essay question about a set of primary source documents. To answer the DBQ, students write essays using evidence from the sources and their own background knowledge of the historical era. (See the next page for a DBQ scoring guide to use in evaluating these essays.)

The DBQ assignment on page 20 includes guidelines for writing a DBQ essay. Here are some additional points to make with students about preparing to write this kind of essay.

#### **The DBQ for this Booklet (see page 20):**

One historian says the Missouri Compromise was not so much a compromise as an “unhappy truce.” What do you think he means? Do you agree or disagree with him? Why?

- Analyze the question carefully.
- Use your background knowledge to set sources in their historical context.
- Question and interpret sources actively. Do not accept them at face value.
- Use sources meaningfully to support your essay’s thesis.
- Pay attention to the overall organization of your essay.

## INTRODUCTION

### ★ *Complete DBQ Scoring Guide*

Use this guide in evaluating the DBQ for this booklet. Use this scoring guide with students who are already familiar with using primary sources and writing DBQ essays.

#### **Excellent Essay**

- Offers a clear answer or thesis explicitly addressing all aspects of the essay question.
- Does a careful job of interpreting many or most of the documents and relating them clearly to the thesis and the DBQ. Deals with conflicting documents effectively.
- Uses details and examples effectively to support the thesis and other main ideas. Explains the significance of those details and examples well.
- Uses background knowledge and the documents in a balanced way.
- Is well written; clear transitions make the essay easy to follow from point to point. Only a few minor writing errors or errors of fact.

#### **Good Essay**

- Offers a reasonable thesis addressing the essential points of the essay question.
- Adequately interprets at least some of the documents and relates them to the thesis and the DBQ.
- Usually relates details and examples meaningfully to the thesis or other main ideas.
- Includes some relevant background knowledge.
- May have some writing errors or errors of fact, as long as these do not invalidate the essay's overall argument or point of view.

#### **Fair Essay**

- Offers at least a partly developed thesis addressing the essay question.
- Adequately interprets at least a few of the documents.
- Relates only a few of the details and examples to the thesis or other main ideas.
- Includes some background knowledge.
- Has several writing errors or errors of fact that make it harder to understand the essay's overall argument or point of view.

#### **Poor Essay**

- Offers no clear thesis or answer addressing the DBQ.
- Uses few documents effectively other than referring to them in "laundry list" style, with no meaningful relationship to a thesis or any main point.
- Uses details and examples unrelated to the thesis or other main ideas. Does not explain the significance of these details and examples.
- Is not clearly written, with some major writing errors or errors of fact.



# Suggestions to the Student

## ★ *Using Primary Sources*

A primary source is any record of evidence from the past. Many things are primary sources: letters, diary entries, official documents, photos, cartoons, wills, maps, charts, etc. They are called “primary” because they are first-hand records of a past event or time period. This *Debating the Documents* lesson is based on two groups of primary source documents. Within each group, the sources conflict with one another. That is, they express different or even opposed points of view. You need to decide which source is more reliable, more useful, or more typical of the time period. This is what historians do all the time. Usually, you will be able to learn something about the past from each source, even when the sources clash with one another in dramatic ways.

## ★ *How to Use This Booklet*

### 1. **Read the one-page introductory essay.**

This gives you background information that will help you analyze the primary source documents and do the exercises for this *Debating the Documents* lesson. The time line gives you additional information you will find helpful.



### 2. **Study the primary source documents for this lesson.**

For this lesson, you get two groups of sources. The sources within each group conflict with one another. Some of these sources are visuals, others are written sources. With visual sources, pay attention not only to the image’s “content” (its subject matter) but also to its artistic style, shading, composition, camera angle, symbols, and other features that add to the image’s meaning. With written sources, notice the writing style, bias, even what the source leaves out or does not talk about. Think about each source’s author, that author’s reasons for writing, and the likely audience for the source. These considerations give you clues as to the source’s historical value.

### 3. **Use the worksheets to analyze each group of primary source documents.**

For each group of sources, you get three worksheets. Use the “Study the Document” worksheets to take notes on each source. Use the “Comparing the Documents” worksheet to decide which of the sources would be most useful to a historian.

### 4. **As a class, debate the documents.**

Use your worksheet notes to help you take part in this debate.

### 5. **Do the final DBQ.**

“DBQ” means “document-based question.” A DBQ is a question along with several primary source documents. To answer the DBQ, write an essay using evidence from the documents and your own background history knowledge.

# *The Missouri Compromise*

Thomas Jefferson famously called the Missouri crisis of 1820 a “firebell in the night.” The “firebell” was the issue of slavery, which he feared would split the nation and end the hope of creating a long-lasting republic here in America. From the nation’s start, such fears led many to seek compromise on this issue—an issue that in the end could not be compromised at all.

The first compromise came at the very birth of the federal union in 1787, with the writing of the U.S. Constitution. The famous “three-fifths” clause gave states the right to count three-fifths of their slaves as part of their population. The number of each state’s lawmakers in the House of Representatives is based on its population. The three-fifths clause gave the Southern states many more House members than they would otherwise have had. Northerners did not want slaves counted at all for this purpose. Southerners wanted each slave counted as a full person. Three-fifths was a compromise the North accepted to keep the Southern states within the new nation. Without it, these states might have formed a slave society separate from the nation from the start.

In 1818, the issue arose again, this time due to the rapid settlement of the West. That year, the Missouri territory asked to join the union as a state. Most people expected it to adopt slavery, since most settlers in Missouri were Southerners. Yet in 1819, when the bill for statehood came up for a vote in the House, one lawmaker took a stand against slavery in Missouri. James Tallmadge of New York offered an amendment that would end slavery in Missouri over time. This caused a huge argument. Tallmadge’s amendment passed in the House, but not in the Senate.

In 1819 there were an equal number of slave states and free states, which also meant they had an equal number of Senators. In January 1820, the House passed a bill to make Maine

a state. Maine was sure to be a free state. If it was admitted with Missouri as a slave state, the balance in the Senate would remain. A bill pairing Maine as a free state with Missouri as a slave state passed in the Senate. This time, it also included a new clause banning slavery in the rest of the Louisiana Purchase lands north of 36°30′ north latitude. Senator Jesse B. Thomas of Illinois came up with this clause.

This Senate bill therefore contained all three parts of the Missouri Compromise (Maine as a free state; Missouri as a slave state; no slavery in the rest of the Louisiana territories). Yet this Missouri Compromise still did not become law. That’s because after the Senate voted for it, the House voted against it.

Then Speaker of the House Henry Clay of Kentucky went to work appealing to both sides to be “reasonable.” Clay managed to get the House to vote on each of the bill’s key parts separately. This allowed those who felt strongly one way or the other to vote as they wished, with just enough vote switchers to pass the parts of the compromise one at a time. Later actions by Missouri made it necessary for Clay to use his skills as the “Great Compromiser” again to push through another and final vote on Missouri, in 1821.

After 1787, many Northern states abolished slavery. As they did so, anti-slavery sentiment there grew among both the Federalists and the Jeffersonian Republicans. The 1820 crisis shows how this sentiment was deepening. The Missouri Compromise smoothed over the crisis for another quarter century. But as the documents in this booklet will suggest, it may have done little to bring the two sections together in any real way. In fact, it may only have prepared the ground for far more bitter battles to come.

# Missouri Compromise Time Line

1777

• • • Vermont becomes the first U.S. territory to abolish slavery.

Congress (under the Articles of Confederation) adopts the Northwest Ordinance. It provides for the creation of new states in the Northwest Territory and also bars slavery from that territory. The U.S. Constitution is written. Its "Grand Compromise" creates a two-house legislature. In the Senate, each state has two Senators. In the House of Representatives, each state's representation is to be based on population. This compromise includes the "three-fifths" formula—counting three-fifths of a state's slaves for purposes of representation and taxation.

1787

1803

• • • The U.S. purchases the entire Louisiana Territory from France. This doubles the size of the country.

1804

• • • New Jersey provides for the gradual end of slavery in its borders. All states north of the Mason-Dixon Line have now acted to end slavery.

1808

• • • The Constitution's 20-year ban on laws against the slave trade runs out. Congress outlaws the importation of slaves.

1812

• • • The War of 1812 begins. Louisiana enters the Union as the eighteenth state. The balance of slave versus free states is now nine slave states and nine free states. Maine as a political unit is separated from the state of Massachusetts.

1814

• • • The Treaty of Ghent ends the War of 1812, which included major defeats of Native American tribes and confederacies. With Native Americans under greater control and the British military presence gone, U.S. lands up to and beyond the Mississippi River are far more open to settlement.

1816

• • • Indiana enters the Union as the nineteenth state. Balance of the states: nine slave states and 10 free states.

1817

• • • Mississippi enters the Union as the twentieth state. Balance of the states: 10 slave states and 10 free states.

1818

• • • Illinois enters the Union as the twenty-first state. Balance of the states: 11 slave states and 10 free states. The Missouri Territory has enough people to seek admission as a state. Many expect Missouri will be a slave state.

1819

• • • As the battle over Missouri heats up, Alabama enters the Union as the twenty-second state. The balance of the states is now: 11 slave states and 11 free states (slave states: VA, MD, DE, KY, TN, NC, SC, GA, AL, MS, LA; free states: MA, CO, RI, VT, NH, NY, NJ, PA, OH, IN, IL). New York Congressman James Tallmadge proposes an amendment to a Missouri statehood bill that would end slavery in that state. The House passes the amendment, but the Senate does not.

1820

• • • After debate and the meeting of a conference committee of House and Senate, Congress passes a bill to admit Maine (sure to be a free state). It then gives Missouri the right to adopt a constitution allowing slavery, and it also bans slavery in the Louisiana Purchase north of 36°30' north latitude, except for Missouri itself.

1821

• • • After further clarification by Missouri's legislature, Missouri is admitted as a slave state. The even balance of free and slave states is maintained.

## DOCUMENT 1

## Visual Primary Source Document 1



Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-14031

*Information on Document 1*

This imaginary group portrait, titled “Union,” was published in 1852. It praises Congressional efforts to preserve the Union, especially the Compromise of 1850. This image is not from the time of the Missouri Compromise and is not exactly a primary source for it. Still, it is a memorial to the ideal of compromising over slavery in order to save the union, an ideal the Missouri Compromise did so much to strengthen. Three key leaders of the day—Henry Clay, John C. Calhoun, and Daniel Webster—all appear in the center of this group. Though all three were dead by the end of 1852, the print seems to express optimism about

the Compromise of 1850. As a memorial to this compromise, however, it is a bit faulty. Calhoun, the central standing figure, opposed the compromise and died before its passage. Yet aside from Calhoun, the men here were generally seen as friendly to the compromise, including many from the South. The figures pictured in the front row are, left to right: Winfield Scott, Lewis Cass, Henry Clay, John Calhoun, Daniel Webster, and (holding a shield) Millard Fillmore. Calhoun and Webster stand with their hands resting on the Constitution, a bust of George Washington between them.