

Sectionalism

Analyzing Visual Primary Sources

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Introduction

Primary sources are the building blocks of history. Using these sources to introduce students to historical periods offers students the opportunity to become historians themselves—to analyze the evidence, form hypotheses, and learn how to support arguments based on evidence. They learn what it means to interpret the past in ways that provide meaning for the present. Textual primary sources can often be difficult for students to engage with because they are often couched in unfamiliar language from a different historical era. Visual primary sources can prove more appealing and accessible to students, and they also involve different types of “reading” skills.

How to Use This Product

This PowerPoint® presentation is designed to walk students through the process of primary source interpretation. Slides help to focus students’ attention and train them how to “read” visual primary sources. Targeted questions and enlarged insets from images help to train students to see deeper into the historical record, to uncover evidence that, though plainly before their eyes, is not always obvious at first glance.

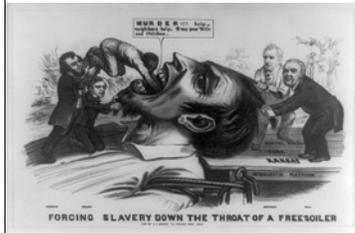
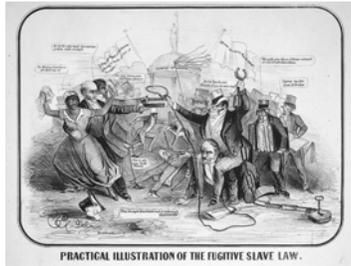
The posters provide visual reinforcement for the images analyzed in the presentation. Use them before or after the PowerPoint® analysis for either pre- or post-reading activities. In addition, we have provided extra images on each disc so that once the students are trained in the skills of analyzing visual primary sources they can further hone their skills. You can print them out and distribute as handouts for in-class or independent study, or you can import the images into PowerPoint® for students to analyze individually or with the class as a whole.

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We look forward to hearing from you.

Dr. Aaron Willis
Chief Education Officer
Social Studies School Service



Sectionalism

Sectionalism



- The Compromise of 1850
- The Kansas-Nebraska Act
- Brooks and Sumner
- John Brown
- The Election of 1860

Between 1850 and 1860, the split between North and South over slavery widened immensely. Several incidents served to highlight the increasing differences between the two regions, and it started to seem as if the carefully crafted compromises that had preserved the delicate balance between free and slave states—and therefore allowed the Union to persevere—would no longer work. Though the 1850s started off with a hope that the country might be able to overcome its sectional differences, as the decade progressed the situation became more and more volatile. Earlier decades had laid the groundwork for the Civil War; the 1850s provided the spark that set it off.

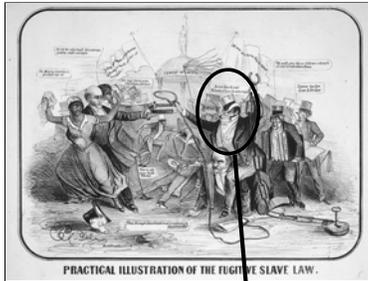
The Compromise of 1850

- California statehood provoked debate in Congress
- Compromise package engineered by Clay, Webster, and Douglas
- California admitted as a free state
- New Mexico and Utah territories organized; slavery there to be decided by popular sovereignty
- Fugitive Slave Law

When gold was discovered in California in the late 1840s, thousands of people flocked to the region hoping to make their fortunes. California's population expanded quickly, and by November of 1849 residents took the first step toward statehood by ratifying a state constitution. This constitution prohibited slavery; therefore, admitting California to the Union would upset the delicate balance in Congress between free states and slave states. Southern senators decided to block California's admission unless their Northern colleagues made concessions in favor of slavery's future expansion. A huge debate ensued, and some Southern states even talked of seceding. The crisis was solved only when Senators Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, and Stephen Douglas pushed through a compromise package.

In the end, the Compromise of 1850 included the following: California was admitted to the Union as a free state; New Mexico and Utah were formally organized as territories, with the question of slavery in these territories to be decided by popular sovereignty, a doctrine which stated that the people of a U.S. territory had the right to determine whether their territory would prohibit slavery; the slave trade (but not slavery itself) was abolished in the District of Columbia; Congress passed the Fugitive Slave Law, which required federal marshals in free states to help return runaway slaves. Failure to do so would result in penalties. In addition, blacks captured under the law could not testify on their own behalf, nor did they receive the right to a trial by jury.

The Compromise of 1850 temporarily preserved the Union; however, its most controversial component—the Fugitive Slave Law—ultimately worsened sectional tensions. The law led many Northerners who had previously been neutral to become abolitionists; the Underground Railroad stepped up its activities; violent confrontations between slavecatchers and abolitionists sometimes occurred; and states passed “personal-liberty laws” making it difficult to enforce the Fugitive Slave Law.



- Who do you think this man represents? What clues does the cartoon offer as to his identity?



- How is he dressed?
- Why do you think the cartoonist chose to dress him this way?

This man represents a slavecatcher. We can tell this because he holds a manacle and a rope, implements used to restrain runaway slaves once they'd been caught.

He is dressed in expensive clothes, most likely because the cartoonist wanted to imply that those authorized to capture runaway slaves under the Fugitive Slave Law were becoming rich doing so.