

# Thomas Jefferson's Nightmare



Politics and Slavery, part 1

## ACTIVITY KEY

**Rewrite** = rewrite the sentence to make correct

**Complete** = write the correct answer that completes the idea

**Cloze** = underline the correct word in the reading

**Text** = define the word or revise a text feature

**Interact** = interact with media/text

**Opinion** = give your own opinion



= complete the interactive notebook and/or test

There is a famous quote from Thomas Jefferson about slavery:

"But, as it is, we have the **wolf by the ear**, and we can neither hold him, nor safely let him go. Justice is in one scale, and self-preservation in the other."

The USA has this wolf. The wolf is dangerous. They can't hold the wolf. This is not justice. This is not fair to the wolf. Besides, the wolf won't allow himself to be held. But they can't let the wolf go. The wolf will consume and kill the new country.

### Opinion

1. What do you think Thomas Jefferson is saying about slavery?
2. Does the quote sound optimistic or pessimistic about the future?



The wolf is slavery. You can't kill him. If you kill "slavery," you abolish it. **Abolish** means to end slavery. Jefferson wrote this in 1820. The South depended on slavery. The Southerners had natural rights. They are the rights to life, liberty, and property. Slaves were considered property. So, you couldn't take away Southerners property. You couldn't abolish slavery. The Southerners called slavery their "**peculiar institution**." This was a cute name for a big thing. Without slavery, there is no economy in the South.

You couldn't kill the wolf. You had to control it... by the ears.

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**Abolish** means to...

**Peculiar institution** is a euphemism for....

**Complete**

1. Slaves were considered \_\_\_\_\_, which was a natural right.
2. The Southern \_\_\_\_\_ depended on slavery, so the whole region would be poor without it.



When we think about slavery now, we just think: “It’s horrible! How can people own other people and treat them like animals!?!” But things were different back then. Yes, there were many people who wanted to end slavery because it is bad; they are called **abolitionists**. The abolitionists believed slavery was wrong and should end now! But there were more people who didn’t really care. Often, people feared the government more than anything else. So, the idea that the government can take people’s property—slaves—made them very nervous. We will see that people start caring more during the time of Jackson: the Age of the Common Man. Then, free workers have to compete with slave-owners for land.

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### Rewrite

1. Abolitionists supported the institution of slavery.
2. Slaves were considered people with natural rights in the early years.

**Predict** Why do you think “the common man” didn’t like slavery?

Thomas Jefferson owned slaves. But he believed slavery was evil and would destroy the United States.... Why?

We have to remember what Thomas Jefferson imagined about the USA. He imagined a paradise of farmers in the West.

Jefferson's dream is like this:

In America, a free man can get his family together and go West. He can get a nice plot of land. He can make a farm, get some animals, have some more kids.... The American farmer is a free man. He takes care of himself. He doesn't answer to anyone. He can have his own opinion. He is perfect for democracy.

A free farmer answers to nobody. He can feed himself! A free farmer can have his own opinion! This is democracy! The United States can be a land of justice.



## Rewrite/Complete

1. Thomas Jefferson's dream was a nation of slave-owners.
2. The farmer is free because...
3. The United States can become a land of slavery.



Thomas Jefferson's dream doesn't work so well if the USA becomes dependent on slavery. Thomas Jefferson's nightmare is like this:

America can't decide whether to be free or slave. America gets bigger and bigger, and the problem of slavery gets bigger and bigger. So, there has to be a war. The wolf can't be destroyed!

Or even worse.... Slavery gets out of control. It expands to the West. Slavery takes over every new state. Protecting slavery becomes more important than justice! The Constitution exists not to protect freedom, but to protect slavery. The United States becomes a democracy of slave-owners. If the wolf gets loose, it destroys the entire country. It destroys justice! It destroys democracy!

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### Complete

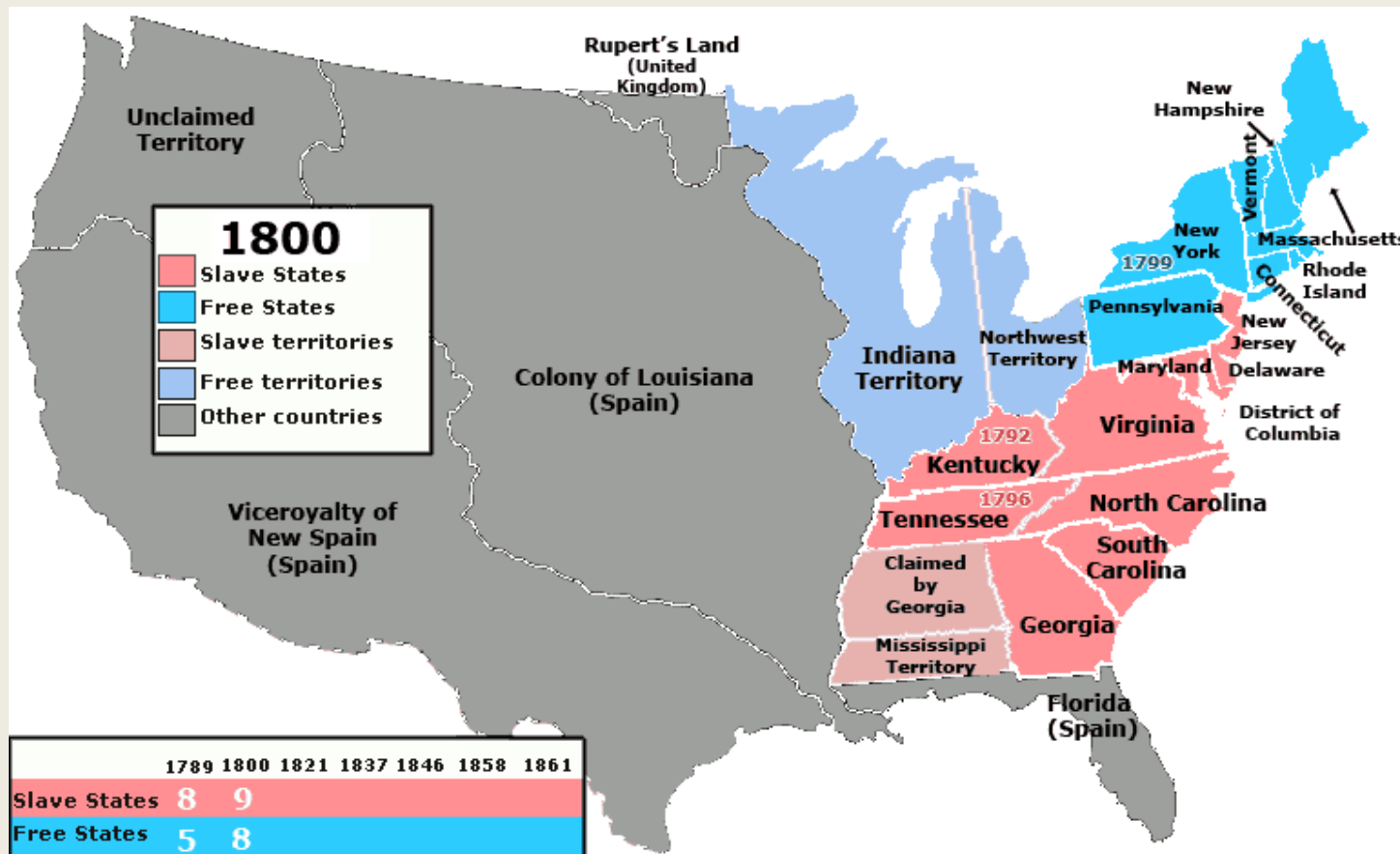
1. Thomas Jefferson's wolf represents \_\_\_\_\_.
2. If slavery expands to the West, then the Constitution exists to protect \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Thomas Jefferson worried about preserving \_\_\_\_\_, not slavery.

Slavery was always a political problem. The Southern economy always depended on slavery. Even before the United States was a country, the Southern economy ran on slavery. Slavery was like the gasoline of the South. No slavery... and the South doesn't go forward like the rest of the young country. From the beginning, the Constitution framers tried to keep a **balance of power**. The balance of power had to do with representation. Representation refers to the number of Senators and Representatives in Congress. They needed to balance power between free and slave states or the USA couldn't be together. It would break apart into two countries.

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### Complete

1. Slavery was important to the \_\_\_\_\_ of the South. They were poor without it.
2. The Constitution needed to keep the \_\_\_\_\_ between slave states and free states.
3. Balance of power referred to \_\_\_\_\_ in the Senate and the House of Representatives.



**Interact** by circling the slave states/territories and making a rectangle on the free states/territories.

**Complete** According to the chart, are there more slave states or free states in 1800?

The 3/5 Compromise is an example. This Compromise **legitimized** slavery. It didn't say that slavery was legal. But it said that three slaves = five white people, when it came to representatives. So, slavery seemed like it was protected by the Constitution. This created a competition for representatives. More representatives from slave states = more support for **expanding** slavery  
More representatives from free states = more support for **restricting** slavery

(See: Making the Constitution: 3/5 Compromise)

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## **Vocab**

1. Even though the Constitution didn't officially make slavery legal, it \_\_\_\_\_ slavery, so it seemed like slavery was protected.
2. Free states wanted to \_\_\_\_\_ slavery, or keep it where it already exists.
3. Slave states wanted to \_\_\_\_\_ slavery, or move it to new territories.

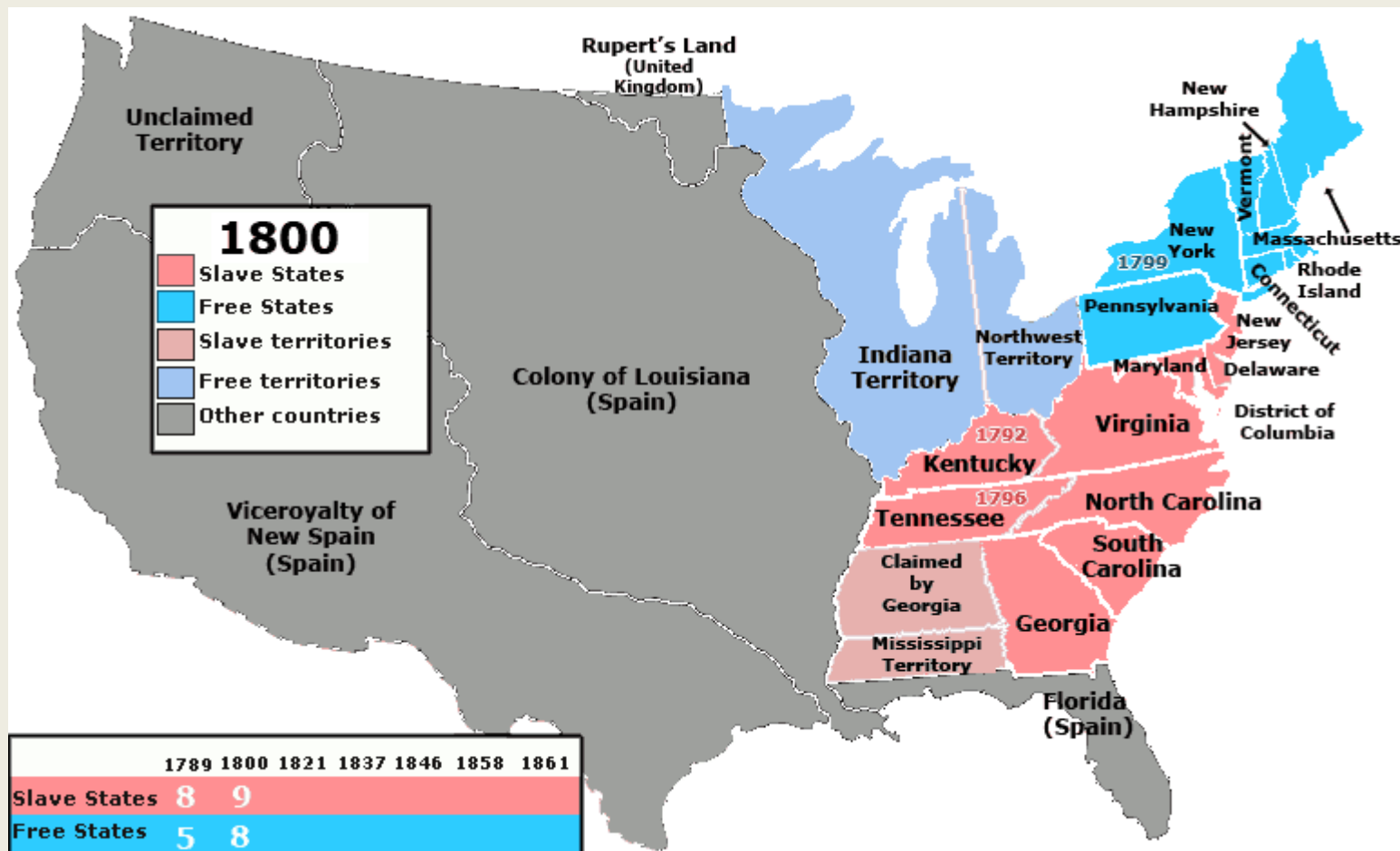
So, what's the solution when a new territory wants to become a state? The simple answer is, of course, to make an **East-West** line right across the United States. Anything to the North of that line should be free; anything to the South of that line can have slaves. This seems fair. Slavery is better for the southern areas, anyway. They have soil that is better for **cash crops**. Slavery wasn't very helpful in northern places anyway! They didn't have large plantations and cash crops. The only problem is: where should this line be?

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### Complete/Rewrite

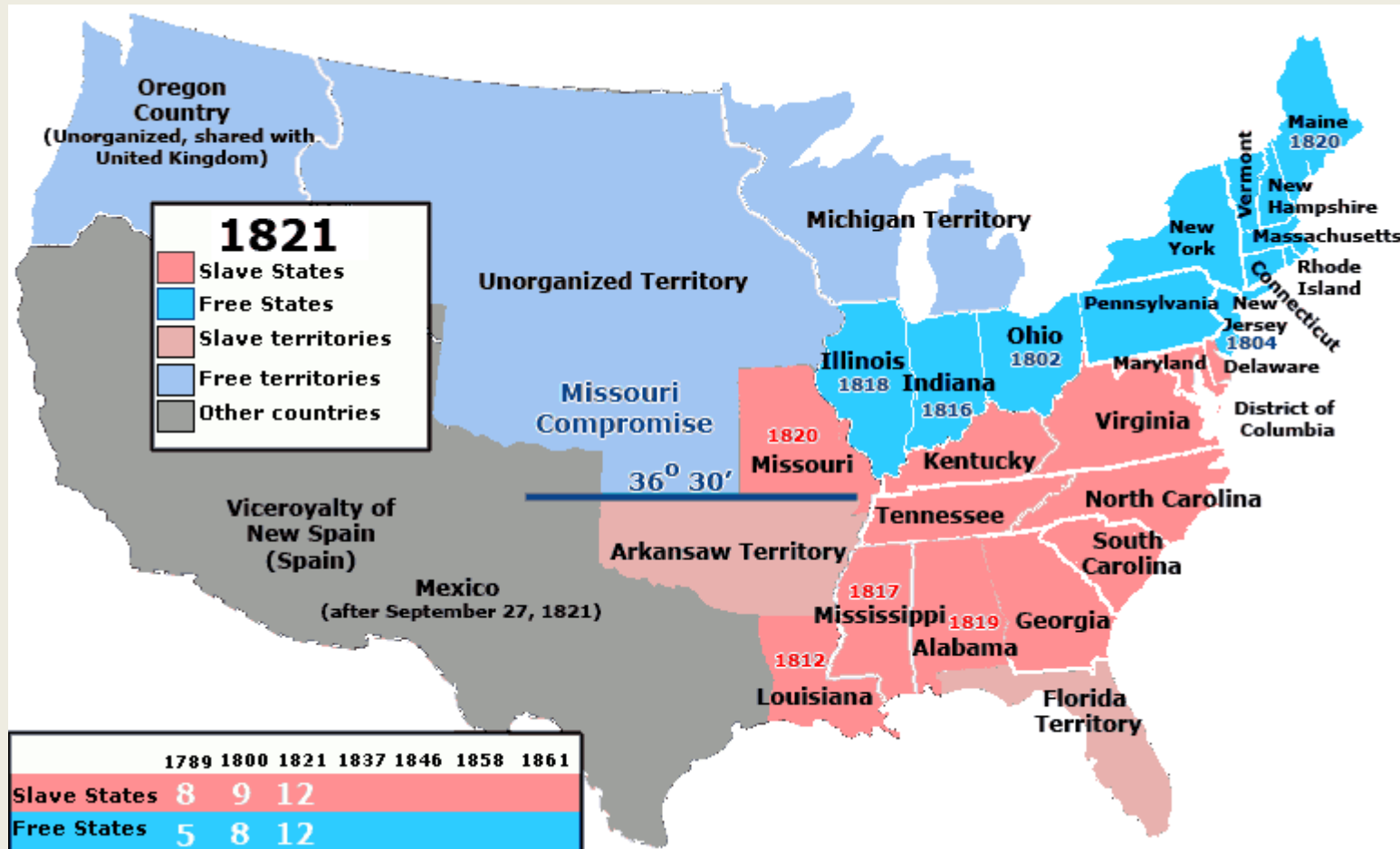
1. After the Constitution was ratified, the problem became what to do when a territory wanted to become a \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The solution was to make a North-South line.
3. The South was better suited to slavery because it was better for producing \_\_\_\_\_ like tobacco and cotton.





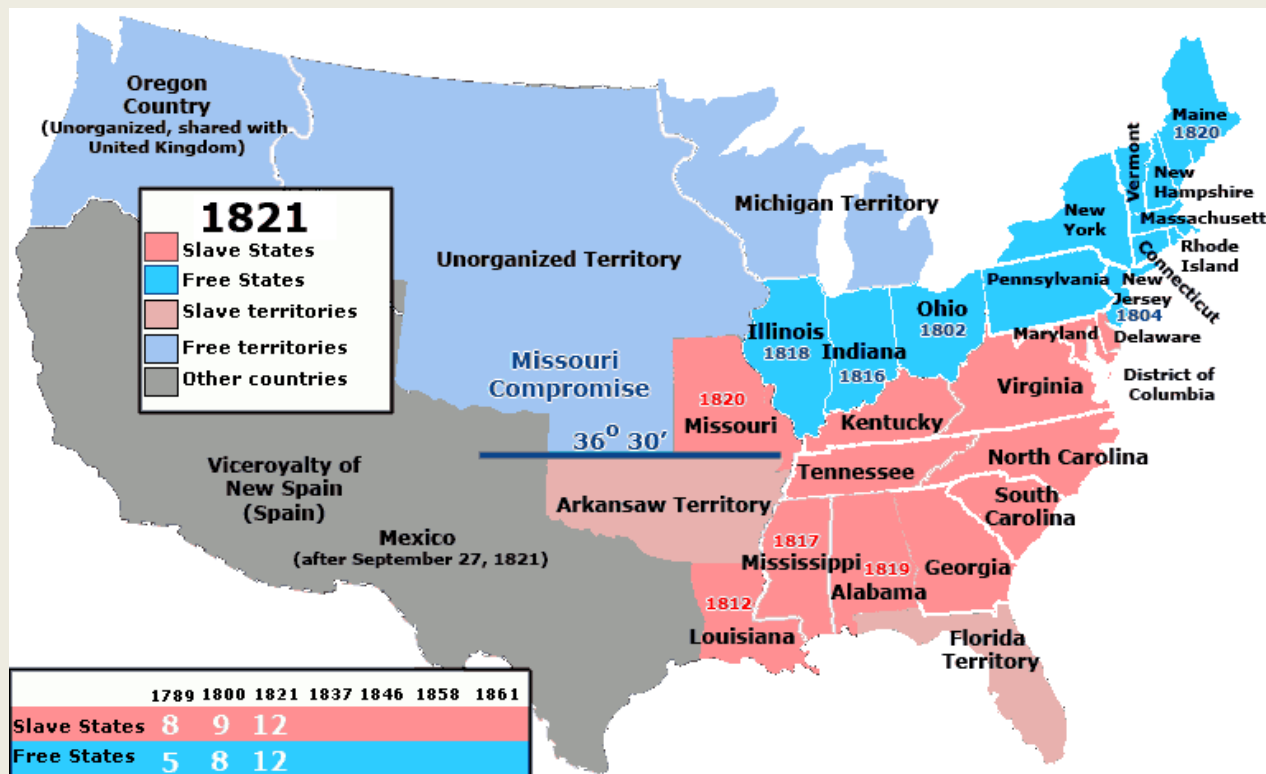
**Draw** an East-West line (left-right) where you think the line should be. **Label** the Northern part FREE and the Southern part SLAVE.

You probably made your line too high. Look at the map. Draw an arrow to the 36°30' line that is labeled the Missouri Compromise.

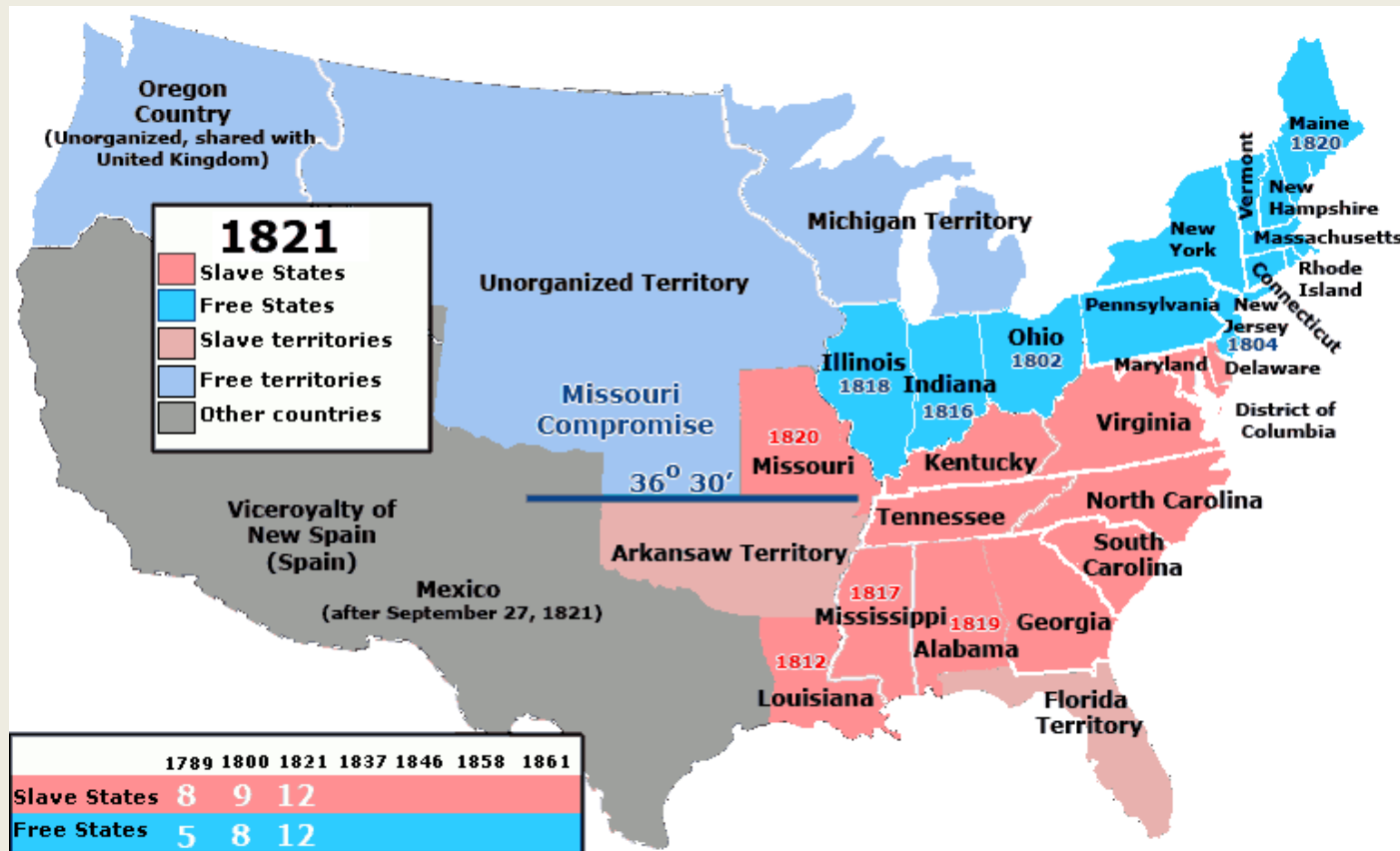


Now, circle Missouri. What do you notice about it? It's above the line.

There were some reasons that they made the line so far south. It has to do with the people who settled Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. They came from the Northern states. These new states would become part of the Northern economy. Also, the Louisiana Purchase lands weren't supposed to have slavery. However, the people who settled Missouri came from Southern areas. They had slaves. So, they wanted Missouri to be a slave state.



Circle the state of Missouri



Now, look at the chart at the bottom.

Are there more slave states or free states or is it equal?

If you said it's equal, you are right. This is a map from the Missouri Compromise. Missouri wanted to become a state. But it was a slave state. To keep the balance of power, they made a new state from Massachusetts. Look at the map again: There is a new state in the North called Maine. This kept the number of slave and free states at twelve. Then, they made the Missouri Compromise line. Starting then, everything below the line would be slave and everything above the line would be free. It seems simple! Maybe it will work.

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### Complete

1. The Missouri Compromise allowed Missouri to come in as a \_\_\_\_\_ state.
2. Then, the northern part of Massachusetts became a free state called \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The East-West line indicated whether a new state would be \_\_\_\_\_ or slave.
4. Any state north of the line should be a \_\_\_\_\_ state.
5. Any state south of the line should be a \_\_\_\_\_ state.
6. The only exception was the state of \_\_\_\_\_, which was a slave state.



**Complete:** (underline the correct answer)

Missouri wants to become a new [state/territory]. Missouri started with immigrants from the [North/South], so it considered itself a [free/slave] state. Some important people in the [North/South] had a problem with this. If Missouri enters as a slave state, then there will be more slave states than free states. They make a solution: Missouri can enter as a [free/slave] state, and they take a little piece of Massachusetts and make it into a new state called [Maine/Missouri]. So, the balance of power stays. They add two states: Maine enters free; Missouri enters as a slave state.

They need to make an East-West line. Missouri is pretty far north. The line can't be above Missouri because actually they had already agreed not to have slavery that far north. They make the line [above/below] Missouri. From 1820 on, the rule is: NO SLAVE STATES [ABOVE/BELOW] THE MISSOURI COMPROMISE LINE. It seems like a good plan, but it doesn't work.

The Missouri Compromise is the East-West line: north of the line is free; south of the line is slave. But now we go forward in time to **the Age of the Common Man and Andrew Jackson**. After Andrew Jackson, working men or wage-workers have more influence in American politics. So do businessmen from the North and Midwest, who want to expand the Market Revolution to new territories with railroads and factories. The United States gets divided into two parties: the **Democrats**, who like Jackson, and the **Whigs**, who don't. The crazy thing is that neither of these parties really wants to take a position on slavery. They don't want to talk about **slavery**. They don't want to talk about the wolf! The wolf is getting free, and they are covering their eyes!

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### Complete

1. After Andrew Jackson, \_\_\_\_\_ participate in politics more.
2. The political party that supports Andrew Jackson are the \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The political party that is against Andrew Jackson are the \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Both sides refuse to take a stand on the issue of \_\_\_\_\_.

People are still ignoring the wolf in the 1840s. Most Congressmen try to avoid talking about slavery. The **Democrats** cannot oppose slavery. They cannot talk against slavery because their power is in the South. The South will always vote Democrat. The Democrats also win in rural states with many farmers because they are the party of the Common Man. The **Whigs** are the party of business. They are like the Federalists. They want to keep expanding the economy and federal power. They win in big cities and areas like the Northeast, where the Federalists used to win. They never win in the South. But they do win in areas with many white wage-workers. They start to win in places like Ohio and Kentucky. They win some votes in the frontier, but mostly they are interested in business and stopping the **Democrats**.

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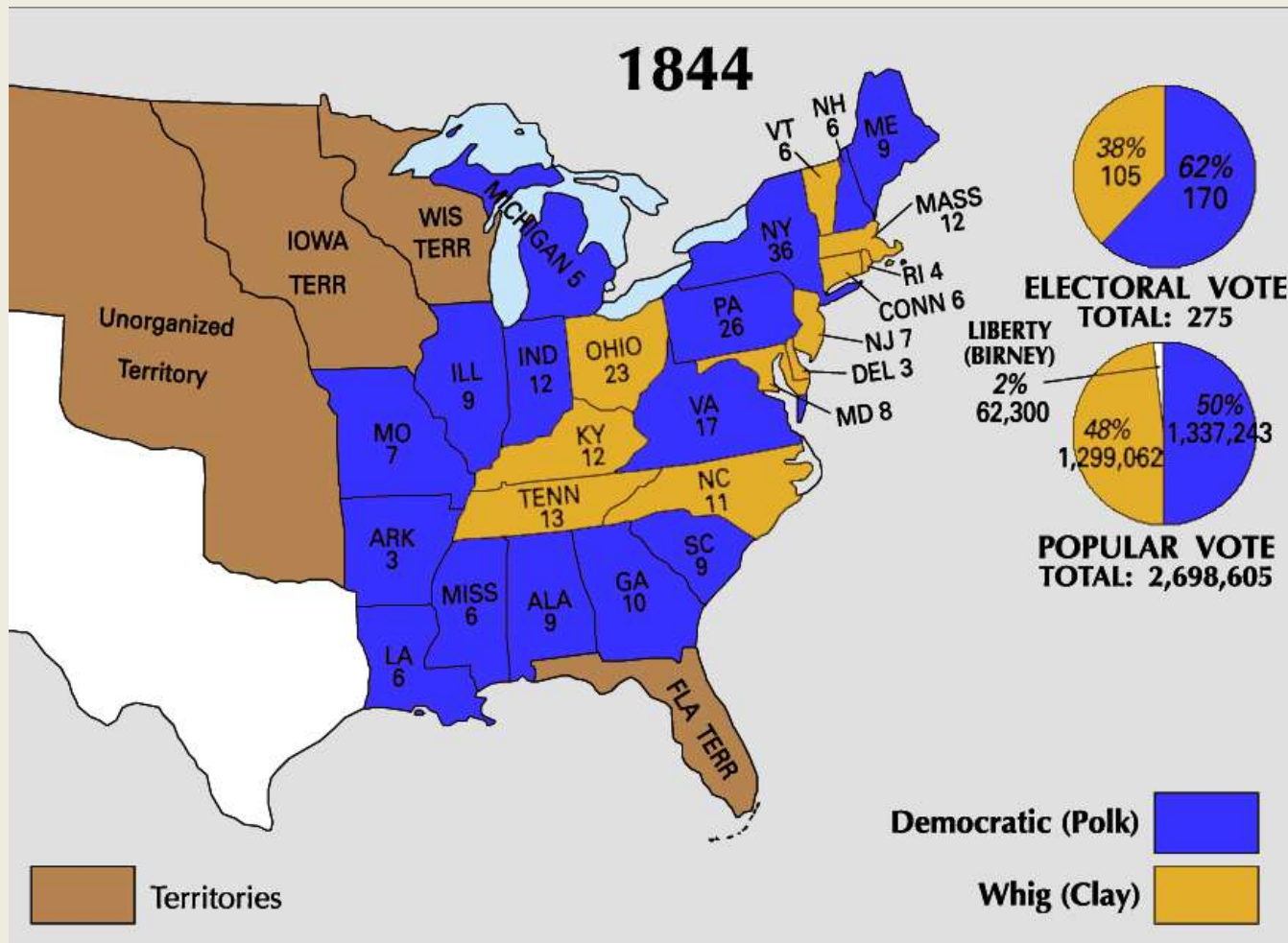
### Rewrite

1. The Democrats dominate the North because they are the party of business.
2. The Whigs dominate the South because they are the party of farmers.



Interact

What do you think this meme means?



This is a map of the 1844 election between the Whigs and Democrats.

Shade // the areas that the Whigs win. Are they connected?



So, the US political parties in the 1840s seem like they are still ignoring slavery. It's still the wolf by the ears. But it's not true. Not all Congressmen are ignoring it. It's a very **contentious** problem. Contentious means that people get passionate about it. All representatives from the South had to support slavery. There was no question. **When Northern representatives insulted slavery, the Southerners responded with passion!** The Southerners used racism to support slavery. They said: **"Blacks are like animals and can't help themselves.** If we let the slaves go, they would just come back to us. We are like their fathers." This is called **Paternalism**. This "myth" helped some Northerners feel better about slavery. They felt like the South had things under control so best not get involved.

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**Contentious** means \_\_\_\_\_

Someone who accepts **paternalism** would believe that black people...



THE OLD PLANTATION HOME.

Southerners called slavery their **peculiar institution**. It's like a cute name that says: "It's our thing. You all just won't understand, so just let's not talk about it." But Southern representatives were ready to fight, if the idea of **abolition** came up. Remember: abolition means ending slavery. Southern congressmen came from rural areas. They often came to the Senate or the House with guns and knives. This was part of their **heritage**. They talked about "**honor**." For some, slavery was part of their heritage, which means traditions. So, if you talked bad about it, you were hurting their honor. They had a tradition of **duels**, or fighting to the death. Remember: Andrew Jackson killed a man in duel. There was no CNN back then, so you could get away with a lot more back then.

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## Complete

1. Southerners believed that \_\_\_\_\_ was part of their heritage.
2. Heritage is another word for their \_\_\_\_\_. So, if you insult their traditions, you insult their \_\_\_\_\_.
3. People who supported slavery were more likely to have experience with \_\_\_\_\_, or fighting to the death over honor.

## Predict

Imagine you are a Whig from Boston. You've never used a gun in your life. You come from a rich family. You don't like slavery but you don't feel so strongly.

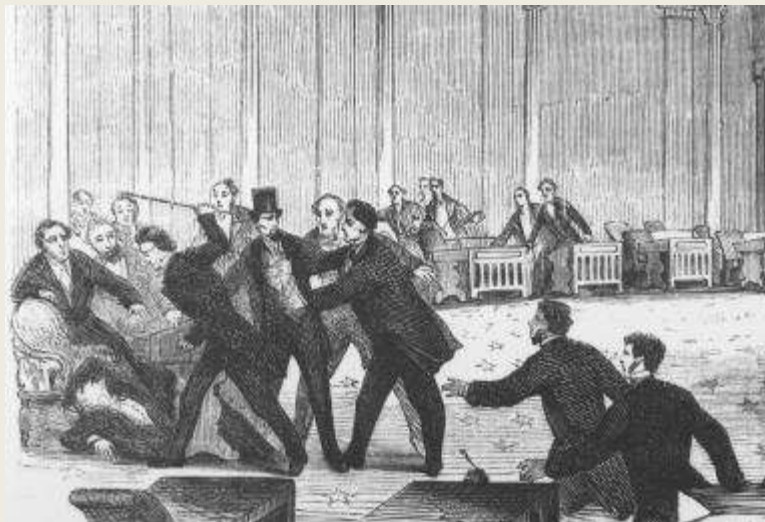
-Why might you keep your mouth shut about slavery?

**Whigs** from the cities in the North didn't want to "ruffle any feathers" about slavery. This means that they didn't want to get in a debate. They didn't like slavery! But they felt threatened. **Pro-Slavery Democrats and Anti-Slavery Whigs did get in physical fights over slavery.** We didn't know about this until recently but it actually happened a lot. The Democrats always won. They were tougher. Slavery is based on violence, so it makes sense.

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Courtesy State  
Historical  
Society of  
Missouri





Pro-slavery forces also used **procedures** to shut everyone up about slavery. Procedures have to do with how you pass a law. In the House of Representatives, they made **gag rules**. Gag is when you stick your finger down your throat. The gag rule said that you couldn't even talk or introduce anti-slavery laws. In other words, you couldn't directly talk about why slavery should be controlled.

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1. **Procedures** are \_\_\_\_\_ in the House of Representatives or Senate.
2. A **gag rule** kept anti-slavery bills out of the \_\_\_\_\_.  
You couldn't even talk about it.

Slavery couldn't be ignored forever. The Whigs never united against slavery. So, they disappeared. They are replaced by the Republican Party and Abraham Lincoln. The United States will be divided into North and South. More on that later... In the next part of the story, the wolf gets loose. As the USA moves west, the Missouri Compromise isn't enough to keep the wolf by the ears.



## Summary Cloze

- Thomas Jefferson feared that slavery would [help/destroy] the nation.
- One of the biggest problems was what to do about slavery as the nation [contracts/expands] into the West.
- This became a problem in 1820. The problem was that [Ohio/Missouri] wanted to enter as a slave state.
- Many northerners didn't want more slave states than free states; they wanted to keep the [separation of powers/balance of powers].
- The Missouri Compromise create another state, Maine, and an [North-South/East-West] line.
- The line [opened/closed] territory above the line to slavery. It became free land.
- The political parties—Democrats and Whigs—divided over the issue of [slavery/Andrew Jackson.]

- The [Whigs/Democrats] hated Andrew Jackson, but couldn't agree on anything else.
- The Democrats dominated in the [North/South] and defended slavery.
- Pro-slavery congressmen used the [silence petition/gag rule] to keep Congress from addressing slavery.
- The Whig party disappeared because it never took a stand on \_\_\_\_\_.
- The party that emerges because slavery can't be ignored is the \_\_\_\_\_ Party.