Aditya Patel

APUSH

Period 4

10/30/2020

Chapter 13 Focus Questions 1,2,6,7

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1. The 1850s were extremely turbulent times for the US government due to the issue of Slavery, and many congressmen were eager to try and reduce tensions. The decade began with the Compromise of 1850, which, after much bargaining, formed slave-friendly governments in lands gained from the Mexican War, admitted California as a free state, removed the slave trade from DC, and created the Fugitive Slave Law. However, despite attempting to calm conflict over slavery in the territory, they created heavy opposition to the Fugitive Slave Act, by those in the North opposing southern interference in their states. Another attempt to solve slavery in Territories was the Kansas-Nebraska Act. While anti-slavery and pro-slavery sides believed this would result in one slave state and one free by popular sovereignty, voting in Kansas became deadly. Instead of residents voting, radicals from outside flooded in to vote for their cause, with many in arms on both sides1 over violence claimed by their opponents.

2. Sectional conflict was hitting new highs in the 1850s, due to a variety of causes. The Northern Economy industrializing rapidly, leaving the southern economy and culture at a different time, and extremely dependent on slavery. While the north embraced a free-labor ideology and believed that slavery was a threat to their freedom and individuality, the South became further intrenched into their way of life, arguing that their society was much more stable, organized, and that the biologically inferior Africans benefited from slavery. Some northerners even believed that the South was committed in a “Slave Power Conspiracy” to destroy northern capitalism and bring southern aristocracy to the north. These sectional differences were brought to conflict during Bleedin Kansas, calling a new phase of the conflict of slavery. The Dred Scott decision by Justice Taney was just as consequential, depriving Congress of authority to prohibit slavery in its Territories. Taney believed the constitution believed blacks inferior and unfit to have rights2, outraging Northerners and driving tensions further.

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6. The Nationalism that engulfed America in the early 1800s eventually solidified into the Manifest Destiny, or the belief that America would continue to expand its borders westward and encompass the world with democracy. Much of this was racially motivated, and many whites believed non-white people of the West were unfit to control that land. This contradiction in spreading democracy while oppressing natives is, from today’s view, completely undermining its message. The Mexican American War was when America gained much of the land, and these imperial actions once again undermined the freedom and democracy Manifest Destiny boasted, especially considering the atrocities and violence committed by Americans during war3. However, the movement of Americans leaving their life in the Easton the Oregon Trail in search of economic and religious freedom, facing much hardship, does draw a clearly American story. Through the Manifest destiny was imagined though racial undertones and it was made possible by terrible brutality, the experience of Americans on it symbolizes the spirit of the US.

7. President Buchanan had proved to be an extremely disappointing president, unable to unite the country after the divisive 1856 election and leading the country into a depression. Empowered by the depression and a divided Democratic party, the Republican Party was ready to take power. While the Democrat Stephen Douglas advocated for popular sovereignty and was without opinion on the morality4, the Republicans were ready for abolition and stopping its expansion. After the chaos of the 1850s and rising tensions, many believed that this would be culmination of the lack of compromise. Many Southerners believed the future of slavery lied on the election, and that John Brown’s Raid on South Carolina proved that the Republicans was plotting with slaves against them. The Republican candidate, Lincoln, was morally against slavery, but put its abolition below the security of the Union. The South obviously didn’t get this memo, because 7 states seceded before his inauguration.

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Works Cited

1. Bleedin Kansas – John Brown (University of Houston)

2- The Dred Scott Decision (University of Houston)

1. The Mexican War- Zachary Taylor (University of Houston)
2. Stephen Douglas and Slavery (University of Houston)