**Period 5**

**1844-1877**

**OVERVIEW**

The years of Period 5 see the nation expand across the continent, though that growth comes with confrontations over slavery and different views of the place of the United States in the world. Many believed in the concept of Manifest Destiny – that the United States was ordained by God to rule the continent through a combination of racial and cultural superiority. As the country grew, however, the controversy over the extension of slavery followed. Another minority, American Indians faced increasing pressure as more of their lands were forcibly taken from them. U.S. economic, diplomatic, and cultural interests and began to look beyond the West Coast to the possible extension of American influence into Asia.

As immigrants continued to pour into the United States, tensions grew between the new arrivals and established communities. Immigrants were often met with violent nativist movements, particularly aimed at Catholics. Many sought refuge in the West in the years after the Civil War. The need for labor to promote economic development often trumped nativist sentiment. As the settlement of the West progressed, Hispanics and American Indians came under particular hardship as many refused to accept their assimilation into American society.

Tensions between the North and the South over issues involving slavery came to a head in the 1840s and 1850s. The North relied increasingly on free labor, while the South grew more dependent on slave-based agriculture. Abolitionist groups became more outspoken and activist, leading to a growing paranoia among slaveholders. Southerners responded with states’ rights claims, nullification bills, and increased reliance of racial stereotyping to bolster their case for maintaining slavery.

The 1850s saw repeated attempts to defuse the conflict, resulting in the Compromise of 1850, the Kansas-Nebraska Act, and the *Dred Scott* decision by the Supreme Court. Nothing seemed to slow down the growing sectionalism. Issues of slavery and nativism led to the realignment of political parties, with the Republican Party emerging in the Midwest and North, while Democrats still tried to hold the northern and southern factions of their party together. The election of Lincoln in 1860 on a platform calling for the end of the extension of slavery into new territories proved to be the tipping point that led to the breakup of the Union and the Civil War.

The Union victory in the war ended the constitutional issues of slavery and secession but left unresolved many disputes over what should be the limits of federal power. The North triumphed over the South in the war through a combination of industrial power, leadership, and the moral high ground of calling for an end to slavery. Lincoln’s decision to issue the Emancipation Proclamation gained the Union cause support in Europe and mobilized many African Americans to fight for the northern cause. Northern strength eventually overcame southern resistance, as the war destroyed both the South’s environment and its infrastructure.

While the Union victory settled the question of slavery once and for all, Reconstruction left unresolved many questions about federal versus state power, as well as many prewar social and economic patterns. The Thirteenth Amendment ended slavery, but many former slaves fell into the almost equally oppressive sharecropping system during Reconstruction and beyond. Some temporary progress was made in terms of African American voting rights and political participation, but these gains were short-lived when the rest of the country began to lose interest in Reconstruction programs as the country put the Civil War behind it. The Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments promised full citizenship and voting rights to African American men, but as interest in Reconstruction faded, so did a commitment to the enforcement of these promises. Women felt particularly betrayed when the Fifteenth Amendment specified male voting rights but left women out altogether. In spite of these shortcomings, these two amendments became the basis for effective civil rights legislation in the twentieth century.

**KEY TERMS**

Abolitionism Manifest Destiny

Carpetbaggers Nativism

Free-soil movement Nullification

Ideal of domesticity Personal liberty laws

Ideological debate Popular sovereignty

Impeachment “Redemption”

Imperialism Sectional parties

Jingoism Sectional tensions

Laissez-faire

**GUIDING QUESTIONS**

1. How did westward expansion and the quest for “manifest destiny” both reflect and shape Americans’ views on progress and identity?
2. Why was the Mexican War, which ended in 1848, such an important factor in leading the U.S. into a civil war thirteen years later?
3. Why did Americans and immigrants move west, and how did the federal government promote westward expansion?
4. How did the different economies of the North and South contribute to both the outbreak of the Civil War and its outcome?
5. From the reading, identify and describe three specific attempts to defuse the slavery conflict in the 1850s.
6. From the reading, identify and describe three reasons the North defeated the South and won the Civil War.
7. How successful was Reconstruction in achieving its goals? Account for the successes and shortcomings of the effort to rebuild the nation and to guarantee the slaves rights and opportunities that others had.
8. How did the Civil War and Reconstruction affect the balance of power between branches of the federal government and between the federal government and the states?
9. Describe the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments.

13th

14th

15th

1. In what ways was expansion of republican ideals at the heart of debates over Manifest Destiny, slavery, and Reconstruction?