

American History Honors
Sectional Tensions, 1820 – 1861
**** Please do not write on this copy ****

In groups, your assignment is to analyze the primary source documents below and determine the following:

- Who is the author?
- What time period is this from?
- What is the intent? Is there a message to a particular audience?
- What historical event is this related to?
- How does this particular document reflect sectional tensions?

The purpose of doing this type of activity is to draw on your knowledge of the antebellum period leading to the Civil War (our class discussions since early October), and to help you brainstorm for your research paper.

You should not split up the work for this assignment. Instead, discuss each document as a group so as to benefit from everyone's input. Have one member of the group write down the answers to the questions for each document.

DOCUMENT 1

Source: Senator Henry Clay, speech to the Senate, February 12, 1833

I merely throw out these sentiments for the purpose of showing you that South Carolina, having declared her purpose to be this, to make an experiment whether, by a course of legislation, in a conventional form, or legislative form of enactment, she can defeat the execution of certain laws of the United States, I for one, will express my opinion that I believe it is utterly impracticable, whatever course of legislation she may choose to adopt, for her to succeed. . . . I say it is impossible that South Carolina ever desired for a moment to become a separate and independent state.

DOCUMENT 2

Source: "Declaration of the National Anti-Slavery Convention," first annual report of the American Anti-Slavery Society, 1834

[W]e believe and affirm:

That every American citizen who retains a human being in involuntary bondage as his property is (according to Scripture) a MAN STEALER.

That the slaves ought instantly to be set free. . . .

That all those laws which are now in force, admitting the right of slavery, are . . . , before God, utterly null and void, being an audacious usurpation of the Divine prerogative. . . .

[T]hat no compensation should be given to the planters emancipating their slaves. . . . [That], if compensation is to be given at all, it should be given to the outraged and guiltless slaves and not to those who have plundered and abused them.

[That] we concede the Congress under the present national compact, has no right to interfere with any of the slave states, in relation to this momentous subject [slavery]. But we maintain that Congress has a right . . . to suppress the domestic slave trade between the several states, and to abolish slavery in those portions of our territory which the Constitution has placed under its [Congress's] exclusive jurisdiction.

DOCUMENT 3

Source: Resolution of the Pinckney Committee, House of Representatives, May 18, 1836

And whereas it is extremely important and desirable, that the agitation of this subject should be finally arrested, for the purpose of restoring tranquillity to the public mind, your committee respectfully recommend the adoption of the following additional resolution:

All petitions, memorials, resolutions, propositions, or papers relating in any way or to any extent whatsoever, to the subject of slavery or the abolition of slavery, shall without being either printed or referred, be laid on the table and that no further action whatever shall be had thereon.

DOCUMENT 4

Source: Illustration by J.L. Magee, 1856



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CAUTION!!

COLORED PEOPLE

OF BOSTON, ONE & ALL,

You are hereby respectfully CAUTIONED and advised, to avoid conversing with the
Watchmen and Police Officers
of Boston,

For since the recent **ORDER OF THE MAYOR & ALDERMEN**, they are empowered to act as

KIDNAPPERS

AND

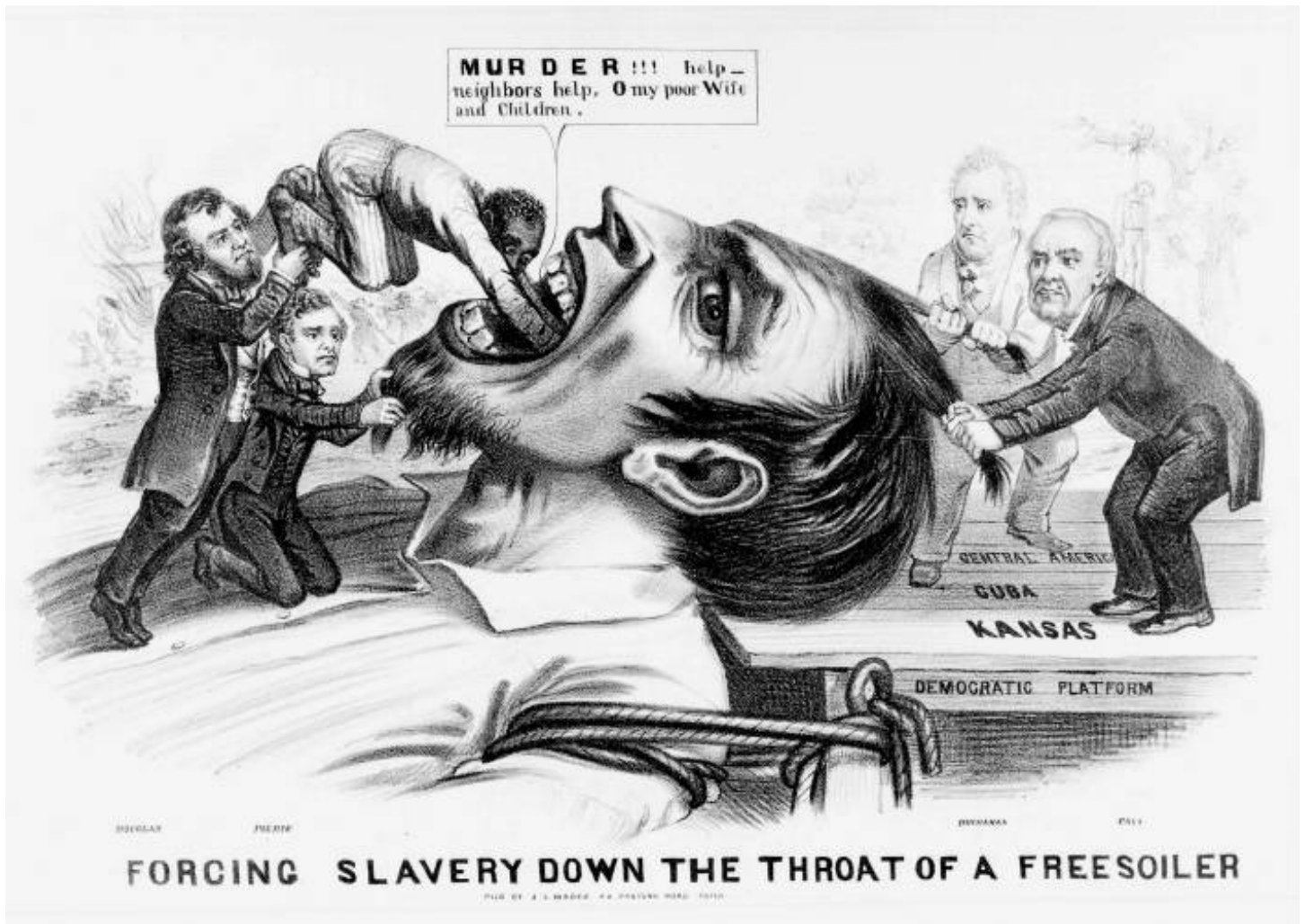
Slave Catchers,

And they have already been actually employed in **KIDNAPPING, CATCHING, AND KEEPING SLAVES**. Therefore, if you value your **LIBERTY**, and the *Welfare of the Fugitives* among you, *Shun* them in every possible manner, as so many **HOUNDS** on the track of the most unfortunate of your race.

Keep a Sharp Look Out for
KIDNAPPERS, and have
TOP EYE open.

APRIL 24, 1851.

DOCUMENT 6



Names below characters:

Douglas

Pierce

Buchanan

Cass

Document F

Source: Muscogee, Georgia, *Herald*, quoted in the *New York Tribune*, September 10, 1856

Free society! We sicken at the name. What is it but a conglomeration of greasy mechanics, filthy operatives, small-fisted farmers, and moon-struck theorists? All northern, and especially the New England, states are devoid of society fitted for well-bred southern gentlemen. The prevailing class one meets with is that of mechanics struggling to be genteel, and small farmers who do their own drudgery, and yet are hardly fit for association with a southern gentleman's body servant.

Document G

Source: Abraham Lincoln, speech at Alton, Illinois, October 15, 1858

You may say . . . that all of this difficulty in regard to the institution of slavery is the mere agitation of office seekers and ambitious Northern politicians. . . . But is it true that all of the difficulty and agitation we have in regard to this institution of slavery springs from office seeking—from the mere ambition of politicians? . . . How many times have we had danger from this question? . . . [D]oes not this question make a disturbance outside of political circles? Does it not enter into the churches and rend them asunder? . . . Is it not this same mighty, deep-seated power that somehow operates on the minds of men, exciting and stirring them up in every avenue of society—in politics, in religion, in literature, in morals, in all manifold relations in life? Is this the work of politicians?

DOCUMENT 9

Thomas Jefferson,
Letter to Congressman John Holmes of Massachusetts (April 22, 1820)

I thank you, dear sir, for the copy you have been so kind to send me of the letter to your constituents on the Missouri question. It is perfect justification to them. I had for a long time ceased to read newspapers, or pay any attention to public affairs, confident they were in good hands... But this momentous question, like a firebell in the night, awakened and filled me with terror. I considered it at once as the knell of the union. It is hushed, indeed, for the moment. But this is a reprieve only, not a final sentence. A geographical line, coinciding with a marked principle, moral and political, once conceived and held up to the angry passions of men, will never be obliterated; and every new irritation will mark it deeper and deeper.