Adapted by Steve Orton from Hillsdale College's K-12 American History curriculum. Hillsdale College has not reviewed, sponsored or endorsed this material.

Lesson 2 Quiz: Answer Key

Toward Civil War, 1854–1861

This quiz covers Bleeding Kansas, the Republican Party, Dred Scott v. Sandford, the Lincoln-Douglas debates, John Brown, the election of 1860, secession, and Lincoln's writings on the Union. Multiple-choice questions are worth 1 point each, and short-answer questions are worth 3 points each (16 points total).

Total: 16 points (10 multiple choice × 1 pt; 2 short answer × 3 pts)

Part 1: Multiple Choice (1 point each)

1. What was "Bleeding Kansas"?

A. A disease that spread among settlers in Kansas

B. Violence between proslavery and antislavery settlers fighting over whether Kansas would allow slavery ✔ CORRECT

C. A battle between the U.S. Army and Mexico

D. A drought that ruined Kansas farms

Why: Popular sovereignty under the Kansas-Nebraska Act led both sides to rush settlers into Kansas, and fighting broke out.

2. The Republican Party was founded in 1854 mainly to…

A. Protect slavery in the territories

B. Bring back the Federalist Party

C. Return the country to the Articles of Confederation

D. Stop the spread of slavery into the western territories ✔ CORRECT

Why: Former Whigs, Free-Soilers, and antislavery Democrats united in opposition to the Kansas-Nebraska Act.

3. In Dred Scott v. Sandford (1857), the Supreme Court ruled that…

A. Black Americans could not be citizens, and Congress could not ban slavery in the territories ✔ CORRECT

B. Slavery was unconstitutional everywhere

C. Dred Scott was free because he had lived in a free territory

D. States could leave the Union whenever they wished

Why: Chief Justice Taney's ruling declared the Missouri Compromise unconstitutional and outraged many Northerners.

4. In the "House Divided" speech, Lincoln predicted that the nation would…

A. Split into two countries peacefully

B. Stay half slave and half free forever

C. Become all slave or all free, because it could not remain half slave and half free ✔ CORRECT

D. Return to British rule

Why: "It will become all one thing, or all the other."

5. What was Stephen Douglas's position in the Lincoln-Douglas debates of 1858?

A. Slavery should be abolished immediately

B. Congress must ban slavery in all territories

C. The Supreme Court should be abolished

D. Settlers in each territory should decide for themselves whether to allow slavery ✔ CORRECT

Why: Douglas defended popular sovereignty and said he did not care whether slavery was "voted down or voted up."

6. What did John Brown attempt at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, in 1859?

A. To negotiate a peaceful end to slavery

B. To seize a federal armory and start an armed uprising against slavery ✔ CORRECT

C. To capture Washington, DC, for the South

D. To rescue Dred Scott from prison

Why: Brown's raid failed and he was hanged, but Northerners and Southerners reacted very differently, deepening the divide.

7. What happened after Abraham Lincoln won the election of 1860?

A. South Carolina and six other Deep South states seceded and formed the Confederacy ✔ CORRECT

B. The South accepted Lincoln peacefully

C. Congress abolished slavery immediately

D. Lincoln refused to take office

Why: Lincoln won without carrying a single Southern state, and secession began in December 1860.

8. In his "Fragment on the Constitution and the Union," Lincoln compared the Declaration's principle of "Liberty to all" to…

A. A house divided against itself

B. A ship in a storm

C. An apple of gold, with the Constitution and Union as the picture (frame) of silver around it ✔ CORRECT

D. A tree with deep roots

Why: "The picture was made for the apple—not the apple for the picture."

9. In his First Inaugural Address, Lincoln argued that…

A. States may leave whenever a majority of their citizens vote to

B. The Union is perpetual, and no state can lawfully leave it on its own ✔ CORRECT

C. The Constitution allows the President to abolish slavery

D. The South should be punished for secession

Why: He called secession "the essence of anarchy" and said resolves of secession were "legally void."

10. How did the Civil War begin in April 1861?

A. Union troops invaded Richmond

B. Lincoln declared war on the Confederacy in his inaugural address

C. Britain attacked the Union navy

D. Confederate forces fired on Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor ✔ CORRECT

Why: Lincoln had promised "the government will not assail you"; the Confederate attack on Fort Sumter started the war.

Part 2: Short Answer (3 points each)

11. In the "House Divided" speech, why did Lincoln believe the nation could not "endure, permanently half slave and half free"? Use evidence from the speech. (4–6 sentences)

Sample answer: Lincoln argued that the policy meant to end the slavery agitation had only made it worse, and that the conflict would not stop until a crisis was reached. He believed that either opponents of slavery would stop its spread and put it "in the course of ultimate extinction," or its supporters would push it until it became "alike lawful in all the States." He pointed to the "machinery" of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the Dred Scott decision, and Douglas's "care not" attitude as evidence that slavery was being spread. He even warned that a future Supreme Court decision might make Illinois a slave state. So the nation would have to become "all one thing, or all the other."

Scoring: 3 points: 1 for the main claim (the nation must become all slave or all free); 1 for evidence from the speech (the machinery, Dred Scott, Douglas's indifference, the next decision); 1 for explaining Lincoln's reasoning or hope (ultimate extinction).

12. Using the Fragment on the Constitution and the Union and the First Inaugural Address, explain how Lincoln understood the relationship among the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Union. (4–6 sentences)

Sample answer: In the Fragment, Lincoln said the Declaration's principle of "Liberty to all" was the apple of gold, the real cause of American freedom and prosperity, and the Constitution and Union were the silver frame made to "adorn, and preserve it." That means the Constitution and Union exist to protect liberty, not the other way around. In the First Inaugural, Lincoln argued that the Union was perpetual and older than the Constitution, so no state could lawfully leave it. He believed keeping the Union together was necessary to protect the principle of equality, because secession would lead to "anarchy or despotism."

Scoring: 3 points: 1 for explaining the apple (Declaration's principle) and the picture (Constitution/Union); 1 for Lincoln's argument for a perpetual Union or against secession; 1 for connecting the two (the Union preserves the principle of liberty).

Sources for questions: Unit 4, Lesson 2 content; Lincoln's "House Divided" speech (1858), "Fragment on the Constitution and the Union" (c. 1861), and First Inaugural Address (1861).