

Questions for Classroom Discussion

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The Thirteenth Amendment: Opposing Visions

1. Which was the first Southern State to secede from the Union after Lincoln's election in November 1860 (but before his inauguration on March 4, 1861)?
2. What did James Buchanan, the outgoing president, assure Southern leaders of about the incoming Lincoln administration?
3. What did President Buchanan ask Congress to do in order to mollify the South?
4. What did the House of Representatives do in response to President Buchanan's request?
5. How long did it take the Congressional committee to deliver their proposed amendment to the Constitution? What does the speed with which the Congressional committee drafted and delivered this proposal suggest about how they felt about this issue?
6. What two words did the proposed amendment **not use**?
7. What part of the US Government would have its powers limited by the proposed amendment?
8. What a specific law would Congress have been prevented from passing in the proposed Thirteenth Amendment?
9. What future action was the Congress **not forbidden** from using in the proposed amendment?
10. What decision had the Supreme Court made regarding the spread of slavery into the territories in 1857?
11. Based upon the Dred Scott decision and the threat of the South breaking away from the Union, why do you think the proposed Thirteenth Amendment made no mention of the expansion of slavery into the territories?
12. What was the Republican Party's position on the expansion of slavery into the territories?
13. What was the Southern view regarding slavery and its expansion? What was the Southern belief regarding the future of slavery **if it was not allowed to expand**?
14. What name did the proposed Thirteenth Amendment go by? What happened to the proposed amendment when it reached the US Senate?
15. With the proposed amendment deadlocked in the Senate, what broad compromise did Kentucky Senator John Crittenden propose?
16. What 1820 Compromise would be reanimated by the proposed Crittenden Compromise?
17. Under the proposed Crittenden Compromise where would slavery be free to expand?
18. What was Lincoln's and the Republican's position on the proposed Crittenden Compromise?
19. What does the current Thirteenth Amendment, which went into effect in 1865, outlaw?
20. The Thirteenth Amendment was the first change to the Constitution in how long?
21. Professor Horton, the author of this explanation of the document, says that the Thirteenth Amendment marked the first substantive change to the nation's conception of individual freedoms since what?
22. Why did Lincoln feel the need to have a Constitutional Amendment which banned slavery? Why wasn't the Emancipation Proclamation enough?
23. What were John Wilkes Booth's reasons for assassinating President Lincoln?
24. What "blunted" the affect of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments in the decades after the Civil War?
25. What twentieth-century movement called for the promises made in the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to finally be put into effect?