



Name \_\_\_\_\_

## The Compromise of 1850

By Cathy Pearl

*Caption: Henry Clay, "the Great Compromiser," introduces the Compromise of 1850 in his last significant act as a senator.*



Every few years there was a new problem between the Slave states and the Free states. Each time, it looked like the country would split into two. This happened again in 1850. But like all the times before this one, a compromise saved the country.

In 1850, there were the same number of Slave states and Free states. That year, California wanted to become a state. That would mean there were more Free states than Slave states. Slave states would be outnumbered in the Senate. Again, they threatened to secede or leave the Union.

Henry Clay begged the North and South to find a way to compromise. He had worked out the Missouri Compromise. Now he was called on to find another compromise. Clay was seventy-three years old. He was sick and weak. Still, he tried to find an answer.

Senator John C. Calhoun was from South Carolina. He was dying from tuberculosis. He was not interested in a compromise. He wanted slavery to be allowed in all the Western territories. If it wasn't, he thought all Slave states should leave the Union.

The debate kept going. In the middle of it, Calhoun died. During that time the president also died. The new president was Millard Fillmore. He agreed with the plan that Henry Clay had worked out.

Henry Clay gave more than seventy speeches. He wanted people to agree to his compromise. Finally, he became too sick to fight anymore. Stephen Douglass took over for him. Douglass helped to

get the plan passed.

The Compromise of 1850 had five parts. First, California was allowed to become a Free state. Second, it decided what to do with the lands that had been won in the Mexican War. This land was split into territories. The voters in the territories would decide whether or not slavery would be allowed there. This is called popular sovereignty.

Third, in Washington, D.C., slave trade was no longer allowed. Washington, D.C., had one of the largest slave markets in the country. Under the compromise, it would be closed. Slavery would still be allowed there.

There was also a fight over the border of Texas at this time. Under the Compromise of 1850, the border was settled. Texas had to give up the land it was fighting over. If it did, Texas would get ten million dollars. Texas could then use the money to pay off the debt they had with Mexico.

Finally, it had a fugitive slave act in it. Under this act, all the people in the country had to help catch runaway slaves. It didn't matter if the slaves had made it to Free states. People living in those states still had to send the slaves back to their owners.

A person who let a runaway slave get away could be fined. The person could also be put into jail. Judges were also paid to send runaway slaves back. They got more money to send a slave back than they did to free one. The extra money meant that some free black men and women were sent back to the South as slaves.

This was the part of the plan that most people were not happy with. It was a disaster for freed African Americans that were living in the North. Many left their homes and went to Canada. Twenty thousand African Americans went to Canada during the next ten years.

Blacks had no way to defend themselves. They couldn't use the court system to help them. Many of them lived in fear of being sent back south.

The Fugitive Slave Act angered a lot of people in the North. The Underground Railroad became more active during this time. It forced many people to make a decision about how they felt about slavery. People became more organized in their fight against it.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

The Compromise of 1850 was only a temporary solution. Many people could clearly see what was coming for the country. A civil war was just around the corner.

The Compromise of 1850

### Questions

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. How many parts were there to the Compromise of 1850?
  - A. Three
  - B. Five
  - C. Seven
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. What Senator argued against Clay's compromise?
  - A. Stephen Douglass
  - B. Millard Fillmore
  - C. John C. Calhoun
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. How many speeches did Henry Clay give for his plan?
 

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. How much was Texas paid to give up the land?
  - A. Twenty million
  - B. Ten million
  - C. Fifty million
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. What was a judge paid more to do?
  - A. Send a slave back to the South
  - B. Free a slave

6. Where did free blacks go after the Fugitive Slave Act was passed?

---



---



---

**Should there have been a compromise, or should the South have been forced to give up slavery? Explain your answer.**

---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---

