

Franklin Pierce

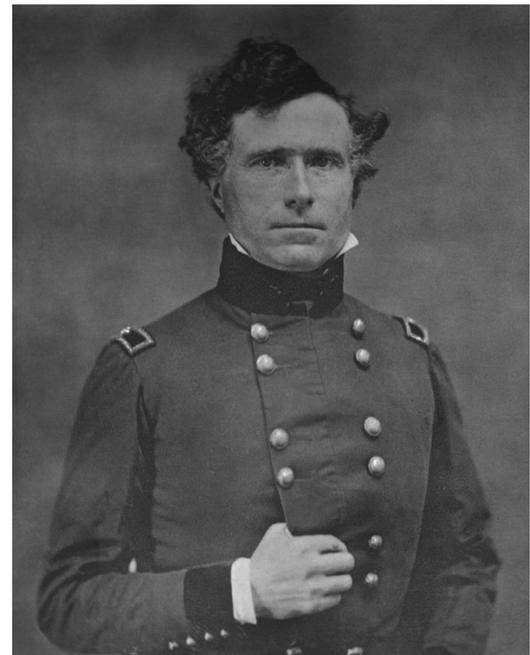
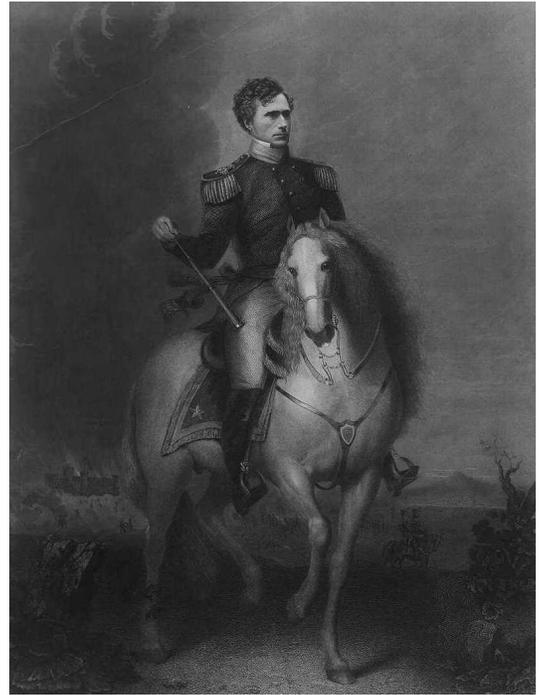
BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Franklin Pierce may have been a native of Yankee New Hampshire, but as a Democrat with national aspirations, he had to be a strong supporter of the Compromise of 1850 and the expansion of slavery. Pierce defeated the Whig candidate and the conqueror of Mexico, General Winfield Scott, in the presidential election of 1852. As Chief Executive of the United States, it was his responsibility to enforce a part of the Compromise called the Fugitive Slave Act. He had to return all escaped slaves to their constitutionally legal owners. In addition, he had received strong support from the slave states which allowed the Democrat to win a narrow victory over the hero of the Mexican War. It was in his political interest to strongly support the Fugitive Slave Act. When Pierce was inaugurated, he spoke of the Compromise of 1850 and recorded that "I fervently hope that the [slavery] question is at rest."

Pierce entered the Presidency during a prosperous time and with the Compromise now being enforced, he turned his attention toward imperialistic aspirations and proposed that the nation should further expand its borders. He believed that the expansion of territory and the expansion of slavery would greatly benefit the American economy and the nation.

As President, Pierce strongly supported the Kansas-Nebraska Act which ended the Missouri Compromise and allowed slavery above the 36°30' parallel. Slave owning planters were extremely supportive of the Act, while radical abolitionists and Free-Soilers fought hard against it. Many New England terrorists moved to Kansas to kill slave-owning settlers. The notorious terrorist, John Brown, even killed five proslavery settlers in Pottawatomie, Kansas and turned the territory into "Bleeding Kansas," a statewide civil war that preceded and became a part of the larger American Civil War.

Madame Tussauds
WASHINGTON D.C. ★



Pierce's brief term as a general in the Mexican-American War boosted his public image.



Franklin Pierce



Pierce looked to expand the United States to secure to the United States' place as a great world empire. He bought present-day southern Arizona and New Mexico from Mexico in the Gadsden Purchase for \$15 million. The treaty would also allow the United States to build a canal across the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. The purchase would permit a much easier route for a southern transcontinental railroad. Earlier, the adventurer, William Walker had invaded Lower (Baha) California in 1853 and declared it an independent republic. Walker then annexed the nearby Mexican state of Sonora and dubbed it the Republic of Sonora. He became the Republic's President. The Mexican Army forced him out the following year and he surrendered to United States forces. The U.S. government tried him for violating Neutrality Act of 1818, but was acquitted by a sympathetic jury. Walker would again try to make incursions into Latin America. Pierce believed Walker could be used to actualize American expansion and the expansion of American slavery.

Pierce then looked to buy Cuba from Spain for \$130 million in order to expand the United States and American slavery into the Caribbean. His chief negotiator, the United States ambassador to Spain, Pierre Soulé, failed to cut a deal with the Spaniards because of his egotistical and arrogant behavior. Pierce was outraged that Soulé had put his own narcissistic need for aggrandizement above the interests of the American nation. After Spanish authorities in Havana seized the United States vessel Black Warrior in February 1854, the Pierce Administration, Soulé, along with the United States ambassador to the United Kingdom, future President James Buchanan and the United States ambassador to France, John Mason, drafted the Ostend Manifesto, to justify the American possession of Cuba.

In the *Manifesto*, they advanced that Spanish instability might cause slave revolts in Cuba and subsequently have a pernicious effect on slavery in the United States. American slaves might follow the possible Cuban example and rise up. The United States would thus have to conquer the island. Eventually, Pierce had to renounce the Manifesto, through his Secretary of State, even though he supported its objectives. The ardent uproar in the North and throughout Europe over the possible conquest of Cuba was just too much for Pierce to contest.

Looking westward, Commodore Matthew C. Perry who had first taken his ships to Japan in 1852, led the negotiation of a treaty that opened trade with Japan in 1854 after years of Dutch monopoly. After the Mexican War the United States had quickly and forcibly expanded westward. Pierce believed that it was time to also look south. Many northerners, especially those who formed the new Republican Party had organized in opposition to the expansion of slavery and to promote industrial interests. They zealously fought against Pierce's attempt to annex Cuba.

Pierce's desire for expansion even had led him to support an adventurer, William Walker's next adventure. Walker invaded Nicaragua and captured the city of Granada, where he set up a puppet government and named himself president in 1856. Many southerners, especially Pierre Soulé, strongly supported the idea that Nicaragua could serve as an area to expand the nation's borders and slavery. It was Pierce's fervent desire that Walker would succeed and then bring Nicaragua into the United States. Unfortunately for Pierce, the Costa Rican, El Salvadoran and Honduran forces ran him out of the capital in December 1856. American Industrialist Cornelius Vanderbilt's supported the Central Americans, as they crushed Walker's foray.

Franklin Pierce



Vanderbilt wanted to build a railroad and canal across Nicaragua. He pressured Pierce to use the U. S. Navy to force Walker give up the nation to the United States. Walker surrendered in May 1857, roughly two months into the Buchanan Presidency.

In other foreign developments, Pierce also was able to conclude a tariff agreement with the British government. He then expelled their minister (ambassador) from the United States because the British had been recruiting former British (English, Irish, Scots, and Welsh) subjects who were now American citizens to fight in the British Army against the Russian Tsar in the Crimean War. The British never recognized American naturalization and believed that once a subject to the British Monarch, always a subject to the Monarch. Pierce also opposed any British settlement in Central America and threatened enforce the Monroe Doctrine and use military action if they proceeded with settlement.

Many abolitionists strongly opposed Pierce and his Democratic administration, yet these same people often fought to deny rights to the recent Catholic immigrants from Ireland and Germany. Immigrants came to the United States for refuge; yet, many of these same abolitionists were also "Know-nothings" and worked to repudiate immigrants the ability to become citizens and then vote. Democrats often pointed out that the abolitionists worried about enslaved Africans in far off southern states; yet, they oppressed Catholic immigrants living in their own cities. Many of the immigrants quickly gravitated toward the Democratic Party.

The Franklin Pierce Administration is often considered to have little value to the development of the United States. Ironically, Pierce served during a prosperous time. He believed the Compromise of 1850 had settled the nation so that prosperity could continue. The Kansas- Nebraska Act did allow Kansas to slip into a near civil war, but the ripples of division and violence were not yet threatening the other states, along with American stability and prosperity. Pierce had deliberate focus on southern expansion, and if he had secured either Cuba or Nicaragua and then annexed those nations into the United States, his name would be much more well-know today, either as a hero of American expansion, or infamously as an agent of the expansion of chattel American slavery.

Franklin Pierce Lesson Plan

- Grade Level:** Middle School
Subject: United States History
Time Required: Four Days
Objectives: The students will be able to:
- determine what changes/conflicts have to occur in a society for a war to begin
 - determine what skills a political leader would need to have in order to avoid conflict
 - analyze major conflicts in the 1850s
 - determine how the divisions in political leadership would lead a nation down a path that would end in the deaths of over half a million Americans

Materials:

1. Franklin Pierce: Life In Brief
 - a. The Miller Center
 - i. <http://millercenter.org/president/biography/pierce-life-in-brief>
2. Stephen A. Douglas
 - a. Biographical Directory of the United States Congress
 - i. <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=d000457>
3. Kansas Nebraska Act
 - a. 100 Milestone Documents
 - i. <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=28>
4. The National Archives Cartoon Analysis Worksheet
 - a. The National Archives: Document Analysis Worksheets
 - i. <http://www.archives.gov/education/special-topics.html>
5. Canefight! Preston Brooks and Charles Sumner
 - a. USHistory.org
 - i. <http://www.ushistory.org/us/31e.asp>
 - ii. Charles Sumner, US Representative Massachusetts
 - iii. Preston Brooks, US Representative South Carolina
 - iv. The Attack-May 22, 1856



Franklin Pierce



LESSON DETAILS:

Objective:

Students will be able to analyze major conflicts in the 1850s and how the divisions in political leadership would lead a nation down a path that would end in the deaths of over half a million Americans.

Lesson Plan:

Day One: Begin the lesson by displaying the image of Preston Brooks' attack on Charles Sumner during the spring of 1856.

In partners have students analyze the political cartoon using the National Archives Cartoon Analysis Worksheet (Document Analysis Worksheets: <http://www.archives.gov/education/special-topics.html>) .

While still in partners have each student in the team write up a quick bio (4-6 sentences) on Charles Sumner or Preston Brooks that would explain the attack.

Canefight! Charles Sumner and Preston Brooks:

<http://www.ushistory.org/us/31e.asp>

Individually have students read the essay 'Franklin Pierce: Life in Brief'. In a Pro-Con T-Chart have students identify skills that would make it possible for him to become the 14th President of the United States(Pro) and skills that would make it difficult for him to be a successful President (Con).

Bonus: Students who are done early should read the brief bio of Jane Pierce and add to their chart(<http://millercenter.org/president/gallery-image/jane-pierce>).



Franklin Pierce



LESSON DETAILS continued:

Day Two: The Kansas-Nebraska Act was submitted by Senator Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois in January of 1854 and became law with Franklin Pierce's signature on May 30, 1854. Individually, have students read the excerpts from the Kansas-Nebraska Act below and answer the 3 questions following the selection;

(Full transcript- <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=28>)
Nebraska Territory:



Franklin Pierce



LESSON DETAILS continued:

- ii. This law was passed in 1854, what was the status of slavery within the United States at this time?

1. *Possible Answer:* At this time in history the United States was trying to maintain a balance of power with an equal number of free and slave states. This law eliminated the details of the Missouri Compromise (1820) and could potentially upset the balance of power in the United States.

- iii. What would happen to slaves that escaped from Missouri into the new territories?

1. *Possible Answer:* Slaves escaping from the service of their masters would have to be returned according to the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850.

3. Day Three of Lesson Procedure:

- a. The following is a timeline of events in Kansas from 1854-1856, during Pierce's administration that would result in the Kansas Territory being renamed "Bleeding Kansas."
- b. Working in teams of 3 or 4 brainstorm what actions President Pierce should have taken after each act of violence.

- i. See Excerpts from Pierce Speeches and Proclamations following the selections for actual Presidential reactions

- ii. <http://millercenter.org/president/pierce/key-events>

1. **Franklin Pierce - 09/05/1855: Antislavery settlers in Kansas form an army**

- a. Antislavery settlers in Kansas form an army -- entitled the Free State forces -- with munitions from Northern states. Abolitionist John Brown follows five of his sons to the territory to lead the group. September 05, 1855

i. *President Franklin Pierce Takes Action: You Decide*

2. **Franklin Pierce - 10/23/1855: In response to the pro-slavery territorial government**

- a. In response to the pro-slavery territorial government and its illegal political proceedings, the Topeka Constitution, written by Free State forces and outlawing slavery, creates a second government in Kansas. October 23, 1855

i. *President Franklin Pierce Takes Action: You Decide*

3. **Franklin Pierce - 11/26/1855: The Wakarusa War threatens Lawrence, Kansas. Fifte...**

- a. *The Wakarusa War threatens Lawrence, Kansas. Fifteen hundred Border Ruffians attack the town, only to retreat after finding it defended by Free State forces. Lawrence -- originally named Wakarusa -- becomes the center of Free-State activities after being founded by the Massachusetts Emigrant Aid Society. November 26, 1855 (Border Ruffians-Pro Slave Forces from Missouri)*



Franklin Pierce



LESSON DETAILS continued:

i. President Franklin Pierce Takes Action: You Decide

4. Franklin Pierce - 05/22/1856: The Sumner-Brooks Affair occurs,

- a. The Sumner-Brooks Affair occurs, in which cane-wielding Representative Preston Brooks (D-SC) attacks abolitionist Senator Charles Sumner (R-MA) on the Senate floor. The fight is provoked by conversation and derogatory remarks made two days earlier during the Senate debate on the admission of Kansas. Following the beating, Brooks is arrested and fined \$500; he subsequently resigns (although he will be re-elected). Sumner suffers severe injuries, taking three years to recover from the beating. May 22, 1856

i. President Franklin Pierce Takes Action: You Decide

5. Franklin Pierce - 05/24/1856: In retaliation for the pro-slavery raid

- a. In retaliation for the pro-slavery raid on Lawrence, Kansas, John Brown and several followers massacre five unarmed, pro-slavery Kansans along the Pottawatomie Creek. May 24, 1856

i. President Franklin Pierce Takes Action: You Decide

6. Franklin Pierce - 08/01/1856: "Bleeding Kansas" continues to rage ...

- a. *"Bleeding Kansas" continues to rage without a settled government. Raids persist, with 200 dead and \$2 million in property lost during the two years of strife. From August 24-26, 1856, an army of 400 to 600 hundred pro-slavery Missourians attack John Brown and 40 defenders. In the Battle of Osawatomie, the settlement (all but four homes) is burned by the invaders and John Brown's son Frederick is killed. Four wagonloads of dead and wounded are brought to Booneville, Missouri, when the invading army returns. August 01, 1856*

i. President Franklin Pierce Takes Action: You Decide



Franklin Pierce



TEACHER RESOURCES

Teacher Resources:

1. Excerpts from speeches given by President Pierce Concerning the problems in the Kansas Territory.

a. <http://millercenter.org/president/speeches#pierce>

i. *President Franklin Pierce on an Address to Congress December 31, 1855*

1. *Third Annual Message*

2. *An Excerpt:*

a. In the Territory of Kansas there have been acts prejudicial to good order, but as yet none have occurred under circumstances to justify the interposition of the Federal Executive. That could only be in case of obstruction to Federal law or of organized resistance to Territorial law, assuming the character of insurrection, which, if it should occur, it would be my duty promptly to overcome and suppress.

ii. *Message Regarding Disturbances in Kansas January 24, 1856*

1. *An Excerpt:*

a. In other respects the governor, instead of exercising constant vigilance and putting forth all his energies to prevent or counteract the tendencies to illegality which are prone to exist in all imperfectly organized and newly associated communities, allowed his attention to be diverted from official obligations by other objects, and himself set an example of the violation of law in the performance of acts which rendered it my duty in the sequel to remove him from the office of chief executive magistrate of the Territory.

b. Although serious and threatening disturbances in the Territory of Kansas, announced to me by the governor in December last, were speedily quieted without the effusion of blood and in a satisfactory manner, there is, I regret to say, reason to apprehend that disorders will continue to occur there, with increasing tendency to violence, until some decisive measure be taken to dispose of the question itself which constitutes the inducement or occasion of internal agitation and of external interference. This, it seems to me, can best be accomplished by providing that when the inhabitants of Kansas may desire it and shall be of sufficient number to constitute a State, a convention of delegates, duly elected by the qualified voters, shall assemble to frame a constitution, and thus to prepare through regular and lawful means for its admission into the Union as a State.

c. I respectfully recommend the enactment of a law to that effect.

I recommend also that a special appropriation be made to defray any expense which may become requisite in the execution of the laws or the maintenance of public order in the Territory of Kansas.



Franklin Pierce



TEACHER RESOURCES

1. List the objects or people you see in the cartoon.
 - Identify the cartoon caption and/or title.
 - Locate three words or phrases used by the cartoonist to identify objects or people within the cartoon.
 - Record any important dates or numbers that appear in the cartoon.
 - Describe the action taking place in the cartoon.
 - Explain how the words in the cartoon clarify the symbols.
 - Explain the message of the cartoon.
 - What special interest groups would agree/disagree with the cartoon's message? Why?
 - Which words or phrases in the cartoon appear to be the most significant? Why do you think so?
 - List adjectives that describe the emotions portrayed in the cartoon.

(c) Copyright Madame Tussaud's Washington D.C.

