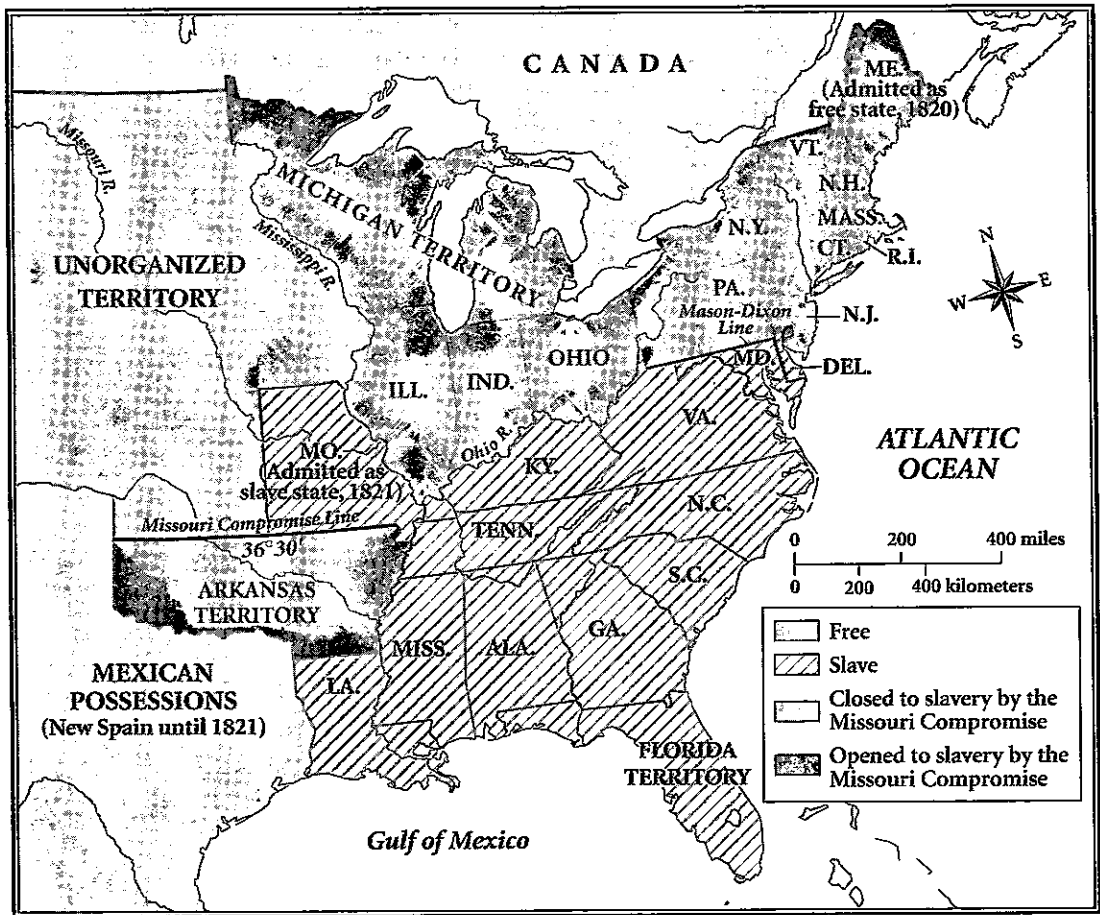


WORKSHEET 9

The Missouri Compromise, 1820–1821



Maptalk

To fully comprehend this map some counting is necessary. Both states and organized territories are labeled. The states and territories are further divided into two categories: free and slave. Although slavery was permitted in some fashion in all of the original thirteen colonies and remnants of the institution still existed in some of the “free states,” by 1820 it was clear that the Union broke down into two types of states, free and slave.

Because each state held two seats in the U.S. Senate regardless of population, great care was taken to evenly balance the number of free and slave states. This balancing was the essence of the national political compromise that dated back to the drafting of the Constitution, where the proponents of slavery insisted on equal representation in the Senate as the price of union. The balance ensured that Congress could not legislate against their “peculiar institution.” Of the original thirteen states, seven eventually became free and six remained slave. Of the three new states admitted to the Union in the 1790s, Vermont was free while Kentucky and Tennessee permitted slavery. When Ohio became a state in 1804, Congress balanced it by adding Louisiana in 1812. The rhythm continued: Indiana entered as a free state in 1816 followed in 1817 by Mississippi as a slave state. Shortly after, Illinois and Alabama entered the Union as a similar match. But Missouri’s application to be admitted as a slave state posed a problem. There was no free state waiting in line to maintain the balance. The solution was the Missouri Compromise. The District of Maine was separated from Massachusetts and was admitted as a free state, and an extension of the southern border of Missouri became the new line dividing slave and free territory.

Reading the Map

1. The Mason-Dixon line, the boundary between Pennsylvania and Maryland, became the symbolic border between the original free and slave states.
2. The Ohio River functioned as a natural extension of the Mason-Dixon line and the Northwest Ordinance specified that the lands north and west of that river were to be free territories.
3. West of the Mississippi, the Missouri River turns north beyond its namesake state and would present geopolitical problems if it were to serve as the boundary between free and slave states because almost all of the western territories would have been opened for slavery. Moreover, Missouri, a slave territory from its beginning as a Spanish possession, not unexpectedly applied for admission as a slave state.
4. Looking ahead in 1821, one could expect Florida and Arkansas to become slave states, balanced by the last two free areas of the Northwest Territory: Michigan and Wisconsin. Then the balancing act would run out because the area north of the Missouri Compromise line of 36° 30’ was much greater than the land to the south.

Working with the Map

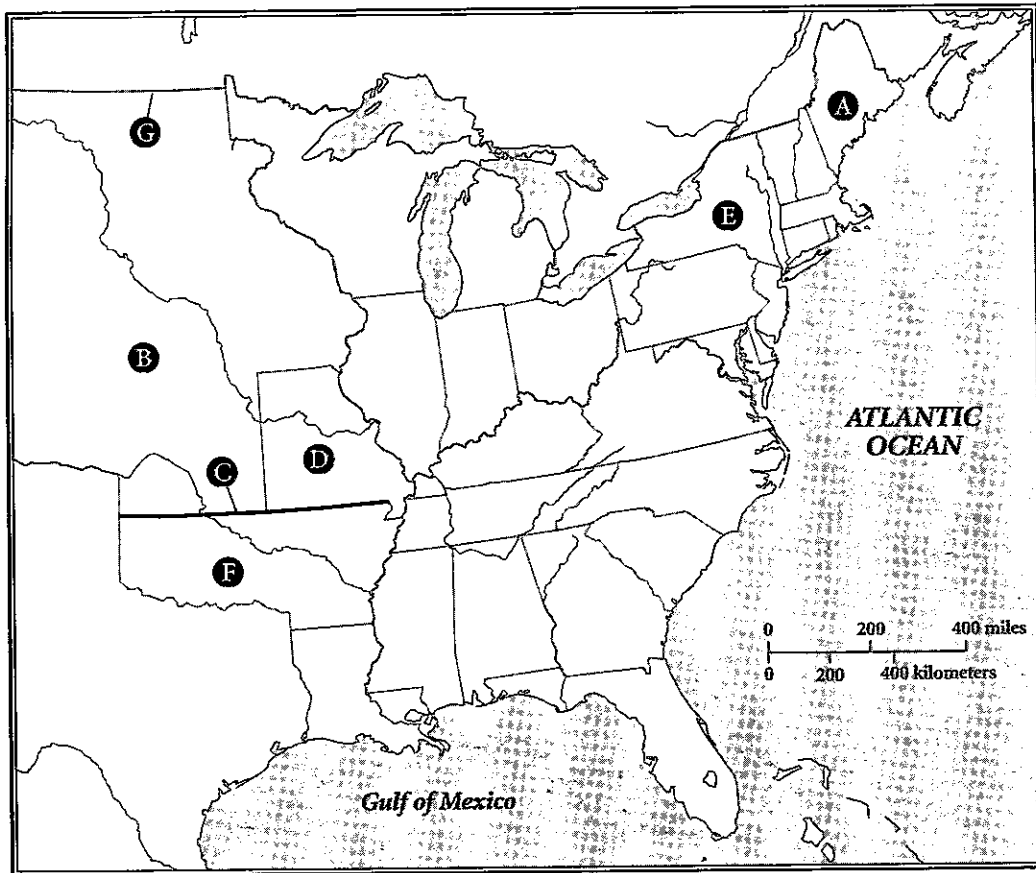
To extend their power in the Union, proponents of slavery tried on a number of occasions between 1821 and 1861 (year when the Civil War began) to alter the Missouri Compromise line. Several notable attempts were:

1. Expanding the nation southward to incorporate Mexican possessions like Texas and New Mexico as slave states;
2. Passing legislation that moved the compromise line northward;
3. Erasing the Missouri Compromise line entirely by a Supreme Court decision ruling that any restriction of the movement of private property, like slaves, was unconstitutional.

Using your American history textbook for reference and the map as a guide, write a short essay that adds historical detail to the outline above.

QUIZ 9

The Missouri Compromise, 1820–1821



Choose the letter on the map that correctly identifies each of the following:

- _____ 1. Missouri Compromise line
- _____ 2. Maine, admitted 1820
- _____ 3. Missouri, admitted 1821
- _____ 4. Area opened to slavery by the Missouri Compromise
- _____ 5. Area closed to slavery by the Missouri Compromise