

The Missouri Compromise Student Worksheet

Historical Context

As the United States acquired new territories, the question of whether slavery should be allowed in the new areas became increasingly pressing. This question proved especially controversial with regard to the enormous territory acquired in the **Louisiana Purchase**. The **Missouri Territory**, which permitted slavery, applied for statehood in 1818. At this time, there was an even balance in Congress between free and slave states. Eleven states allowed slavery, and 11 did not. If Missouri were admitted to the Union as a slave state, the balance would be tilted in favor of slavery. The **Mason-Dixon Line** and the **Ohio River** had traditionally formed the boundaries between free and slave territories and states. Missouri, however, was west of the **Mississippi River** and was in the middle of the country from north to south. It therefore did not have a well-recognized boundary by which the country could decide whether it should be a free or a slave state. In 1820, Congress approved the **Missouri Compromise** as a solution to these problems.

Vocabulary

Louisiana Purchase
Missouri Territory
Mason-Dixon Line
Ohio River
Mississippi River
Missouri Compromise

Map Activity

To do this activity, you will need a blank outline map and access to the “Missouri Compromise” digital map. Turn on the layers of the digital map as indicated in the following instructions, and answer the questions in the spaces provided:

1. Look at the map with all the layers turned off except for the two “State, territory, and country” layers and all bodies of water layers.
2. Find Missouri on the map, and label it on your map.
3. Can you identify the free and slave states in 1820, when the Missouri Compromise was enacted?
4. Turn on the “Free states and territories” and “Slave states and territories” layers to show which states were free and which allowed slavery. Shade these states on your outline map.

5. Answer these question in the space provided, based on what you see on the map and on your prior knowledge:
 - a. Which other state was admitted the same year as Missouri as a result of the compromise? Where is this state on the map? Label this state on your map.
 - b. What does the latitude line $36^{\circ}30'$ mean in the context of the Missouri Compromise? Can you identify where this line is?
6. Turn on the “Missouri Compromise line” layer, and label the Missouri Compromise line on your map.
7. Can you identify the boundaries of the territory that the Missouri Compromise explicitly prohibited from allowing slavery? Draw lines in light pencil on your map predicting the boundaries of this territory.
8. Turn on the “Territory closed to slavery” and “Territory opened to slavery” layers. Correct the boundaries on your map as necessary.
9. Answer these question in the space provided, based on what you see on the map and on your prior knowledge:
 - a. Why didn’t the Missouri Compromise line extend farther west?
 - b. Was more territory opened or closed to slavery as a result of the Missouri Compromise? Why do you think this was the case?
 - c. When Arkansas became a state in 1836, did it become a free or a slave state?
 - d. Which part of the country voted in favor of the Missouri Compromise, and which part voted against? Why do you think this was the case?
 - e. Which states’ senators split the vote? What would have happened to the compromise if both of these states’ senators had voted in line with other senators from their region?

10. Turn on the “For” and “Against” layers, and the “Split vote” and “Title/legend” layers to check your work.

Assessment

Write a paragraph answering the following question:

What does this map tell you about the stability of the country in 1820? If you had studied this map in 1820 without knowing what events came next, what challenges might you predict the country would face in the future?