

Answers Chapter Fifteen

Rising Waters

1. Slavery
2. If individual states could accept or reject federal laws at will, the federal government was powerless to enforce the laws.
3. John C. Calhoun/1849 (credit can be given for New England / the Hartford convention during the War of 1812)
4. He wrote a public letter exposing Calhoun's motives and showing his ideas to be destructive
5. If Northern states were to outnumber Southern states, where slavery was legal, it was feared that the Senate would make slavery illegal everywhere. If a new state was a "slave" state, it would mean the addition of two more senators who would presumably protect slavery in the Senate. [to understand this students need to remember that each state is represented in the U. S. Senate by two senators regardless of population.]
6. Neighbors was a Democrat. Whigs were now in power, and the "civil service" was still influenced by the "spoils system" in which political connections were important in obtaining an office.
7. Henry Clay
8. Daniel Webster
9. Harriet Beecher Stowe wanted to expose the evils of slavery.
10. Vicious attacks by Comanche had caused Texans to view all Indians as evil and subhuman.
11. Neighbors served in the Texas legislature, urging the passing of a bill to set aside land for the Indians where they could live in peace.

Discussion/Essay:

1. Calhoun based his argument on a tacit (unwritten) understanding that the Union would not exist if it were not for an agreement by the Founders on the question of slavery when the Constitution was written. At that time they could not resolve differences about slavery, so they “agreed to disagree” on the subject. In other words, the private property (slaves) of Southerners would be respected. Whether this argument is valid is debatable. His belief that states could individually nullify laws or even secede from the Union was dubious at best and was shot down by Houston and many others. Depending on the understanding of your student or class, you may wish to require only that he wished to preserve “personal property” (slaves) or that he viewed the Constitution as an agreement between sovereign states.
2. In states where slavery was illegal, a person could not travel with his slave and expect the government of that state to enforce slavery law (i.e., return a runaway). If a slaveholder migrated into a new territory, the area would either become slave or free; if free, then he would no longer be able to keep slaves. (You may want to compare this to a modern issue: i.e., “gay” marriage. Each state must respect the laws of the others in regards to marriage, which is a problem in this situation, just as it was with slavery.)
3. The Senate and indeed the entire nation was becoming polarized over the issue of slavery. Because Houston defended the Union, he excoriated extremists on both sides and refused to put slavery above all other issues. He put the Union and the rule of law above everything else. He thought that this polarization would be destructive to the South—he called the Missouri Compromise a “wall of fire” protecting the South and its institutions.
4. The Army was not very effective. Indian Agents had a difficult job, and some of them, unlike Major Neighbors, were unscrupulous. In addition, an influx of settlers and travelers to California made the situation more precarious.
5. Houston had seen the need of his soul before, but now in the E Street Baptist Church, he heard a sermon which greatly affected him.