

The Dred Scott Decision



<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/images/4dred10m.jpg>

Dred Scott was an African-American slave to an officer in the U.S. Army. He was taken by his master to live in the Free State of Illinois and the free territory of Wisconsin for a long period of time. Shortly after the Army ordered them back to the Slave State of Missouri, Scott's master died. Abolitionist lawyers helped Scott sue for his freedom since he had lived in Free states for a long period of time. The case went all the way to the Supreme Court. Seven out of Nine Supreme Court Justices ruled against Scott stating that no slave or descendant of a slave could be a U.S. Citizen, and had no right to sue in a Federal Court and must remain a slave. The ruling went on to state that Congress could not stop slavery in any new territories as well. Conflict over the slavery issue increased in 1856 and 1857 as the decision over the Dred Scott Case became public.

Guiding Questions for Discussion:

Why did Dred Scott and his lawyers feel he had a right to sue for his freedom?

Why did the Dred Scott decision upset the abolitionists?

Why do you think the Dred Scott case would cause tension between the Northern and Southern States?