

Primary Source Set

Views of Slavery

Guiding Question

- How did slavery divide the nation?

Objective

- ☐ I can read primary sources and sort them based on views of slavery.

Directions: Cut out the labels and each primary source. Then read each primary source and work with your group to sort them according to the labels.

**In Support of
Slavery**

**In Support of
Abolition**



The Free Soil Party Platform (1848)

Source: <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/free-soil-party-platform-1848>

Text	Vocabulary and Context
That in the judgment of this Convention, Congress has no more power to make a Slave than to make a King; no more power to institute or establish Slavery than to institute or establish a Monarchy: no such power can be found among those specifically conferred by the Constitution, or derived by just implication from them .	institute or establish - create, make law conferred - given or granted derived by just implication - created through “implied powers,” which are not stated in the Constitution, but are deemed necessary to carry out powers that are listed.
That we accept the issue which the Slave power has forced upon us; and to their demand for more Slave States, and more Slave Territory, our calm but final answer is, no more Slave States and no more Slave Territory.	accept - understand
Let the soil of our extensive domains be kept free for the hardy pioneers of our own land, and the oppressed and banished of other lands, seeking homes of comfort and fields of enterprise in the new world.	extensive domains - vast amounts of land banished - cast out, banned enterprise - opportunity for hard work and new ventures

Harriett Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852)

Source: <https://gutenberg.org/files/203/203-h/203-h.htm#chap05>

Text	Vocabulary and Context
“This is God’s curse on slavery!—a bitter, bitter, most accursed thing!—a curse to the master and a curse to the slave! I was a fool to think I could make anything good out of such a deadly evil. It is a sin to hold a slave under laws like ours,—I always felt it was,—I always thought so when I was a girl,—I thought so still more after I joined the church; but I thought I could gild it over,—I thought, by kindness, and care, and instruction, I could make the condition of mine better than freedom—fool that I was!”	In chapter 5 of <i>Uncle Tom’s Cabin</i>, a character named Mrs. Shelby struggles with feeling guilty about owning slaves. She knows slavery is wrong, even though she tries to treat the people she owns kindly. accursed- cursed or evil gild it over- To make something seem better or more attractive than it really is. Like in gilding, where a cheap metal is covered in a thin layer of gold. condition of mine- the living conditions of her slaves

Stephen A. Douglas, *First Debate for the Illinois Senate* (1858)

Source: <https://www.nps.gov/liho/learn/historyculture/debate1.htm>

Text	Vocabulary and Context
...I am opposed to negro citizenship in any and every form. I believe this Government was made on the white basis. I believe it was made by white men for the benefit of white men and their posterity for ever, and I am in favor of confining citizenship to white men, men of European birth and descent, instead	negro- an outdated and now offensive word that was once commonly used in English, especially in the 18th to mid-20th centuries, to refer to Black people, particularly those of African descent. posterity- descendants confining- restricting

of **conferring** it upon negroes, Indians, and other inferior races.

conferring- giving or granting

Abraham Lincoln First Debate for the Illinois Senate (1858)

Source: <https://www.nps.gov/liho/learn/historyculture/debate1.htm>

Text	Vocabulary and Context
There is no reason in the world why the negro is not entitled to all the natural rights enumerated in the Declaration of Independence, the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. I hold that he is as much entitled to these as the white man. I agree with Judge Douglas he is not my equal in many respects-certainly not in color, perhaps not in moral or intellectual endowment. But in the right to eat the bread, without the leave of anybody else, which his own hand earns, he is my equal and the equal of Judge Douglas, and the equal of every living man.	enumerated- specifically stated, or listed one-by-one Judge Douglas- Stephen A. Douglas, a prominent U.S. senator from Illinois and Lincoln's political rival. endowment- natural gift or ability

Sojourner Truth, "Ain't I a Woman?" (1851)

Source: <https://billofrightsinstitute.org/activities/sojourner-truth-aint-i-a-woman-1851>

Text	Vocabulary and Context
And ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! [and she bared her right arm to the shoulder, showing her tremendous muscular power]. I have ploughed, and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man—when I could get it—and bear de lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen chilern,	head- get ahead, or beat in a race bear de lash- withstand physical punishments chilern- children mos'- most

and seen ‘em **mos**’ all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother’s **grief**, none but Jesus heard me! And ain’t I a woman? . . .

grief- immense sadness following loss

William Lloyd Garrison, *The American Union* (1845)

Source: <https://teachingamericanhistory.org/document/the-american-union/>

Text	Vocabulary and Context
Tyrants! know that the rights of man are inherent and unalienable , and therefore, not to be forfeited by the failure of any form of government, however democratic. Let the American Union perish ; let these allied States be torn with faction , . . .	inherent and unalienable- rights every person is born with and cannot lose forfeited- given up perish- die, dissolve faction- division or separation

Frederick Douglass, *What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?* (1852)

Source: <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/what-to-the-slave-is-the-fourth-of-july/>

Text	Vocabulary and Context
What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July? I answer; a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. To him, your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty, an unholy license; your national greatness, swelling vanity; your sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless;	sham- fraud or deception

your **denunciations** of tyrants, brass fronted **impudence**;

your shouts of liberty and equality, hollow mockery;

your prayers and hymns, your sermons and thanksgivings, with all your religious parade and solemnity, are, to him, mere **bombast**, fraud, deception, **impiety**, and hypocrisy—a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages. There is not a nation on the earth guilty of practices, more shocking and bloody, than are the people of these United States, at this very hour. . . .

denunciations-
expressions of strong
disapproval

impudence- showing no
respect

bombast- language with
little meaning used to
impress people

impiety- lack of respect,
especially in relation to
God in religion.

Negro Spiritual, Go Down Moses

Source: https://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/active_learning/explorations/spirituals/go_down_moses.cfm

Text	Vocabulary and Context
When Israel was in Egypt's land Let my people go Oppressed so hard they could not stand Let my people go Go down Moses, Way down in Egypt land; Tell ol' Pharaoh, Let my people go	

Thus spoke the Lord, bold Moses said, Let my people go If not I'll smite your first-born dead Let my people go No more shall they in bondage toil, Let my people go Let them come out with Egypt's spoil Let my people go	smite- to strike forcefully
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Daniel Webster, “7th of March” Speech (1850)

Source: <https://billofrightsinstitute.org/activities/daniel-webster-7th-of-march-1850>

Text	Vocabulary and Context
Mr. President, three things are quite clear as historical truths. One is, that there was an expectation that, on the ceasing of the importation of slaves from Africa, slavery would begin to run out here. That was hoped and expected. Another is, that, as far as there was any power in Congress to prevent the spread of slavery in the United States, that power was executed in the most absolute manner, and to the fullest extent. . . [The] Ordinance prohibiting slavery for ever northwest of the Ohio has the	Ordinance- The North-west Ordinance banned slavery in the territory of much of the modern-day Midwest. It was passed by the U.S. Government under the Articles of Confederation in 1787.

hand and seal and every Southern member in Congress. It was therefore no aggression of the North on the South.

The other and third clear historical truth is, that the **Convention** meant to leave slavery in the State as they found it, entirely under the authority and control of the States themselves.

...has the **hand and seal and every Southern member in Congress**- Webster is saying the South agreed to the terms of the Northwest Ordinance and did so willingly.

Convention- referring to the Constitutional Convention in 1787, where the Constitution was written.

John C. Calhoun's Speech on Abolition Petitions (1837)

Source: <https://billofrightsinstitute.org/activities/john-c-calhoun-speech-on-abolition-petitions-1837>

Text	Vocabulary and Context
Abolition and the Union cannot coexist. . . We of the South will not, cannot, surrender our institutions. To maintain the existing relations between the two races, inhabiting that section of the Union, is indispensable to the peace and happiness of both. It cannot be subverted without drenching the country in blood, and extirpating one or the other of the races. Be it good or bad, [slavery] has grown up with our society and institutions, and is so interwoven with them that to destroy it would be to destroy us as a people. But let me not be understood as admitting, even by implication, that the existing relations between the two races in the slaveholding states is an evil: far otherwise; I hold it to be a good. . .	subverted- challenged or overthrown extirpating- removing or exiling implication- the conclusion that can be drawn from something although it is not explicitly stated.

I hold that in the present state of civilization, where two races of different origin, and distinguished by color, and other physical differences, as well as intellectual, are brought together, the relation now existing in the slaveholding states between the two, is, instead of an evil, a good—a positive good. . . . I may say with truth, that in few countries so much is left to the share of the laborer, and so little **exacted** from him, or where there is more kind attention paid to him in sickness or **infirmities** of age.

exacted- asked or demanded

infirmities- physical or mental infirmities- physical or mental weakness

Majority Opinion by Chief Justice Roger B. Taney, *Dred Scott v. Sandford* (1856)

Source: <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/60/393/>

Text	Vocabulary and Context
It is difficult at this day to realize the state of public opinion in relation to that unfortunate race which prevailed in the civilized and enlightened portions of the world at the time of the Declaration of Independence and when the Constitution of the United States was framed and adopted. But the public history of every European nation displays it in a manner too plain to be mistaken. They had for more than a century before been regarded as beings of an inferior order, and altogether unfit to associate with the white race either in social or political relations, and so far inferior that they had no rights which the white man was bound to respect, and that the negro might justly and lawfully be reduced to slavery for his benefit.	public opinion- what most people thought or believed prevailed- common or widespread inferior- less than unfit to associate- not allowed to interact with

George Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South, or, The Failure of Free Society* (1854)

Source: <https://teachingamericanhistory.org/document/sociology-for-the-south-or-the-failure-of-free-society/>

Text	Vocabulary and Context
... There is no rivalry, no competition to get employment among slaves, as among free laborers. Nor is there a war between master and slave. The master's interest prevents his reducing the slave's allowance or wages in infancy or sickness, for he might lose the slave by so doing. His feeling for his slave never permits him to stint him in old age. The slaves are all well fed, well clad, have plenty of fuel, and are happy. They have no dread of the future – no fear of want. A state of dependence is the only condition in which reciprocal affection can exist among human beings – the only situation in which the war of competition ceases, and peace, amity and good will arise. ... We are better husbands, better fathers, better friends, and better neighbors than our Northern brethren ...	rivalry- another word for competition stint- to withhold generosity reciprocal- given in return amity- friendship

